

enough commitment for someone to see you walk down the street and to say, "Here comes the Kiwanis club president."

They excel in every category

They're generous caring fun growing

They're great!

What does it take to be a great Kiwanis club? To find answers, **Kiwanis**

magazine searched for clubs that excel in four categories: consistent membership growth, generous giving, effective service, and engaging fellowship. From a host of qualified clubs, Kiwanis singled out four "great" clubs and sought to identify practices that keep them in top-notch shape.

Great clubs deliberately work on being great.

They plan, strategize, and set goals. They insist on relevancy, conducting surveys and adjusting service, fundraising, meetings, social activities, and membership efforts accordingly. And they develop leaders, with members involved at the division, district, and International levels.

Here, representing all great Kiwanis clubs, are Stuttgart, Germany; **Weston, Connecticut**; Las Vegas Strip, Nevada; and Lombard, Illinois.



Las Vegas Strip members stencil the Kiwanis name onto a piece of playground equipment.
Photo by Jeff Coleman

Weston, Connecticut

Growth: 1 percent of town's 10,000 residents are Kiwanians

Giving: \$50,000 annually

Service: 18th century carriage barn renovation, alcohol-free New Year's Eve party, clean-up day

Fellowship: Golf and tennis tournaments

Other: Nine members qualify for Ruby K award by sponsoring five or more new members

It's Saturday morning, and seemingly everyone in Weston, Connecticut, is

headed to the Norfield Congregation Church for breakfast. Included in the crowd are some of the community's most influential leaders. They all are on their way to their weekly Kiwanis club meeting.

In addition to attracting high-profile people to its membership, the club strongly encourages members to take on positions of responsibility within the club. It's easy to say yes, because everyone knows they'll never be alone.

"Senior members rally around to help the junior members do an effective job," says immediate past club president John Babyak. "The club also maintains fairly well-organized project books, containing all the steps that have proved to be useful in organizing a project or event. This allows new leaders to feel more confident in their ability to get a job done."

Another key to the club's success is its vigorous and ongoing public relations process. Weston Kiwanians attend most community events, setting up a foldout display board, distributing handouts, and keeping membership application forms close at hand.



Weston Kiwanis members often mix business with pleasure. While evaluating the outcome of a recent fundraisers, members enjoy a few snacks and laughs.
Photo by Gale Zucker

Las Vegas Strip, Nevada

Growth: 38 percent growth over the past 10 years

Giving: Annual contributions to Kiwanis district and International foundations

Service: At-risk school, seven Key Clubs, Scout camp

Fellowship: Stuffing Social combines service and fellowship

Other: Members are active at the district level, serving as lieutenant governors, foundation board members, and Key Club advisors

If energy attracts people, Las Vegas Strip Kiwanians are volunteer magnets.

The club, which admits to a casual attitude toward traditional protocol, frequently adopts new members' new ideas while remaining true to past projects. Members continue their longstanding support of a Scout camp but add projects to address new needs.

Accompanying Las Vegas' population explosion has been an increase in

homelessness and at-risk families. So the club has instituted coat and food drives and adopted an at-risk school. Plus, it co-hosts a hospital Christmas party for indigent patients.

Two highlights on the club's calendar are the twice-a-year "Stuffing Socials." While volunteers "stuff" themselves at a potluck dinner, they "stuff" packages for various service agencies. In 2007, for example, they packed duffle bags for street teens and gifts for National Guard personnel in Iraq.



Las Vegas Strip Kiwanians observe Kiwanis One Day by conducting one of their popular "Stuffing Socials." Members stuffed buckets with supplies for needy families and "stuffed" themselves at a cookout party.

Photo by Jeff Coleman

"We often hear comments that we stand out because we really 'do' community service," says member Marti Marek. "It keeps us active, and that energy attracts people."

Stuttgart, Germany

Growth: Nearly doubled it's roster since 1994

Giving: 42,500 euros in 2007

Service: Homeless children, blind school, children's village

Fellowship: Outings to sporting events and museums

In the prosperous, hightech metropolis of Stuttgart, where more than 40 service clubs compete for members, Kiwanis thrives.

A key reason for its success is that members enjoy being Stuttgart Kiwanians. In addition to service endeavors, the club's social calendar keeps members engaged. They visit museums, theaters, and a planetarium together. They bowl together, watch soccer games together, and compete fervently against one another in club foosball tournaments.

Often, they invite the children they serve. It's another way to keep in touch with local needs.

Every year, club secretary Gerhard H. W. Bach explains, the club evaluates its charitable and service activities, selects programs that are not already overfunded or overserved, and adapts its projects to the community's needs.

Lombard, Illinois

Growth: Membership doubled to 44 in five years

Giving: Scholarships; cancer camp, home for teen mothers

Service: Kiwanis dolls, school bags for children in developing nations, Bring Up Grades, Aktion Club, Key Club Fellowship: Inter-club/shopping "road trips"

Other: Partnership with assisted living facility to make Kiwanis dolls is occasion to enjoy one another's company.

If he is asked why the Lombard Kiwanis club is so successful and popular, secretary Erik Johnson replies: "We're fun. We care. We're outgoing. We're

involved. We're happy. We're 66 percent female. We meet at 7 a.m. and drink a lot of coffee. We're Kiwanians!"

That may sound easy enough, but the club diligently works at maintaining its sterling reputation. All members are invited to help compose the club's SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). And once a month, a club meeting focuses on promoting membership growth or Kiwanis education.

Every couple of years, the club conducts a community analysis and adjusts its service and giving programs so they remain relevant in the community and interesting to members.

In addition to asking guests to meetings, Kiwanians invite potential members to volunteer in the club's home tour fundraiser, child safety program, or some other club project. Then they invite prospects to a membership-information meeting. The annual home tour, for example, usually adds two or three "experienced" newcomers to the Lombard roster.