



# A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR



As we begin another year in the Florida District, let me first thank you for the opportunity to be your governor and express what a privilege it is to have this opportunity. We face great challenges in our district, including the recovery from a devastating hurricane season so far. Many of our friends, neighbors, and fellow Kiwanians will face difficult times in the rebuilding process, and the lives of children will be greatly impacted. So now, more than ever, kids need Kiwanis. Let us face these challenges together and instead of simply letting the future happen as we watch it go by, we must commit ourselves to make our own future. Continuing to do things the same way we always have because “that’s how we’ve always done it” is not the way forward in a world that is changing at lightning speed. We must chart a path to the future that embraces change with new ideas and new approaches to better serve our members, and our potential members.

Despite our best efforts, our district has seen membership loss year after year for the past decade. The math is simple yet dire, and leads us to a difficult question. What if Kiwanis didn’t exist? Would anyone miss us if we were gone? Ask the countless lives that have been touched by Kiwanis, or the children who have been fed or clothed because of Kiwanians. How many lives have literally been saved because of Kiwanis? We know the answer – too many lives to count and the impact immeasurable. So it’s up to us to move forward with a sense of urgency to make sure that Kiwanis will not only survive, but thrive for another hundred years.

To chart our path forward will require focus in three key areas. First, we must turn around our negative membership trend and grow our organization because **KIDS NEED MORE KIWANIANs**. Did you know that Florida ranks 40th in the nation in child well-being? Almost 1 million children in Florida are living in poverty. Do you think they need more Kiwanians? And while we need to strengthen existing clubs, let’s not forget that every one of our clubs started as a new club. We can’t have positive growth without adding new clubs.

For much of our Kiwanis history, our focus has been on meetings, but today people are looking for more meaning in their life, not more meetings. For a busy society, we need flexible membership options like Club Satellites and Corporate Memberships. One size does not fit all, and if your club isn’t ready to change with the times, then your club isn’t ready for new members. Simply put, we’ve got to make it easier to be a member of Kiwanis, not harder. If potential members perceive joining Kiwanis as a burden, they simply will not join us.

Next, we must **DEVELOP NEW LEADERS**. The strength of our organization lies in the diversity of our membership and the diversity of the generations that make up our Kiwanis family. We must use that strength to our advantage by developing new leaders and empowering new voices, and form stronger relationships within the Kiwanis family through mentoring. And while that sometimes requires our more experienced Kiwanians to make room for new leaders, it also requires new members and younger members to step up and answer the call to lead. Younger members can’t just sit on the sidelines and wait for someone else to lead. We need you and your ideas, now more than ever.

Imagine the impact we’d have if every Kiwanis club in Florida sponsored a service leadership program. Even then it is simply not enough that your club financially supports your SLP, but your club members must have a relationship with your SLP members. If you are not doing service with and mentoring your SLP members, you’re missing out on what makes Kiwanis truly special.

And last, our clubs must have a **PLAN FOR SUCCESS**. If you don’t know where you’re going, then any road can take you there. Too many of our clubs have been doing things based on tradition instead of mission. At my governor visits to your divisions, Formula chair Stewart Ross and I will be teaching a membership workshop that will help your club create a strategy for growth and a written action plan for your club’s success. And once you have a plan, you have to be accountable and review it regularly.

There was a time in Kiwanis when every mayor or business leader automatically joined the Kiwanis club. Times were different then. Today, you probably know many good people in your community who don’t want to join Kiwanis. The all too common response of “I would love to join, I just don’t have the time” is all too familiar. But their reluctance to make the time to join us doesn’t give us an excuse to throw our hands up and blame a changing society for our decline. No, it means that we have to work even harder because the more of those among us that we call Kiwanians the more light we can shine, the more children we can help, the more lives we can save, and the more hope we can give to the world. Our communities are full of people like that right now who want to join us, they just haven’t heard of us yet. Let’s find them, and let’s make sure they can find us, so they can join us in making a brighter future for the children of Florida and the world.