

# Kiwanis Insider



Rob Parker • Chief Executive Officer

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To the Leadership of Kiwanis International

Dear Kiwanis Leader:

## **Global Leadership Imperative**

Current economic conditions have created something I would describe as a global leadership imperative. It is essential that the right people step up and lead at all levels—from our local communities to the highest levels of government, including businesses and non-governmental agencies. History is replete with examples of leaders who were defined and shaped during times of crisis. Rather than run and hide from the pain, real leaders embrace the challenges of the day and rise to the occasion.

Kiwanis is an organization with a rich history of leading through difficult times. When people were struggling during the Great Depression, Kiwanis was there. When major wars and armed conflicts rocked the world, Kiwanis was there. When natural disasters devastated communities, Kiwanis was there. Whenever and wherever people are hurting, Kiwanis has been there.

Now, more than ever, we need men and women to lead our clubs, districts and the international organization with strength and passion. Now is not the time to be timid or conservative. Now is the time to listen to new voices and try new ideas.

Now is the time to refresh our club meetings and make sure they are attractive and relevant to all kinds of people. Now is the time to make sure the service projects we support are ones that meet critical needs. Now is the time to invite people to join a vibrant, dynamic organization that truly cares about people and is working to make a difference.

If you are a Kiwanis leader who wants to continue to improve and grow as a leader, I encourage you to join the online leadership conversation at [www.kiwanisleader.org](http://www.kiwanisleader.org). We need intelligent, passionate leaders like you to join us as we discuss the challenges and opportunities we face as Kiwanis leaders. And as you lead your local clubs to greatness, please share your ideas and best practices so that we can learn from your experiences. Now, more than ever, our clubs need you to lead.

## **The Great Depression**

Over the past eight months, we have all been inundated with bad news regarding the global economic situation. Economists and world leaders have suggested that we are in unprecedented territory that makes predicting future behavior very difficult. It is clear that this is no small economic speed bump and that Kiwanis must be prepared to respond to current and future financial conditions in a thoughtful and strategic way.

In 1930, at the beginning of the Great Depression, Kiwanis had 102,150 members. By 1934, that number dropped to 74,577, a 26 percent drop in four years. It took six years for Kiwanis to build its membership back to 100,000. Convention attendance during this same period dropped from 4,228 in 1930 to 2,582 in 1934, climbing back to 4,188 in 1940.

International President Carl Endicott (1932-33) was a banker whose Citizens State Bank of Huntington, Indiana, failed during the Depression, costing him everything. President Endicott offered the following comments regarding that year: “The principles and ideals of Kiwanis, the sincerity and loyalty of individual Kiwanians, the ability of the organization to face its responsibility, and the determination of Kiwanis to go forward have been severely tested during the past year.... Kiwanis is passing through the most critical period of its history.”

President Joshua Johns (1933-34) noted, “These are times of exceptional conditions, which demand courage and unity. We must all pull together, and, by our cooperation, strive to put a new spirit and new hope in all people.”

In April, your Kiwanis International Board will consider pro-active steps to ensure that Kiwanis survives and thrives during these difficult financial times. Any ideas you would like to share with the Board can be posted at [www.kiwanisleader.org](http://www.kiwanisleader.org), or by e-mail directly to me at [robparker@kiwanis.org](mailto:robparker@kiwanis.org). Your input is very important to us and I thank you in advance for your participation.

### **Kiwanis Next** (part 3)

Last month, I introduced you to Michelle Sperr, our new Director of Special Projects, who is leading the research and development for Kiwanis Next. A number of you reached out to Michelle to share your ideas about how to make Kiwanis attractive to a next generation. These ideas, along with targeted surveys and generational research, will help shape approaches that will be piloted throughout the Kiwanis world in the coming months.

The goal is to pilot as many variations as possible while mining best practices among these new clubs. We will be sharing these ideas with our leaders so that you are aware of the progress we are making and can help ensure the success of these efforts. Michelle will be blogging on the topic of Kiwanis Next at [www.kiwanisleader.org](http://www.kiwanisleader.org), where you are invited to join in. You can also reach her through e-mail at [msperr@kiwanis.org](mailto:msperr@kiwanis.org), or by calling 1-800-KIWANIS, extension 139. I know she would be happy to hear from you.

Thanks for leading,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob".