

Kiwanis Club has served city for 85 years

By ANN KELLY, FOR THE SUN TIMES

The tides of time change many things but not the Kiwanis Club of Owen Sound.

Eighty-five years ago when a group of enterprising business and professional men in this community formed a Kiwanis Club, their focus was on underprivileged children. Today's focus has shifted, only slightly, to include all young children.

Kiwanis was founded in Detroit, Michigan, Jan. 21, 1915. The original name was, "The Benevolent Order of Brothers," and its purpose was the mutual exchange of preferred treatment in professional and business dealings.

Within a year the name was changed to "Kiwanis" taken from an Indian term "Nun Keewanis" which loosely translated means "self expression" The purpose of the organization became community service, a humanitarian concept from which Kiwanis has never deviated.

In 1916 Kiwanis entered Canada (Hamilton, Ont.) thus becoming international. Kiwanis moved into Mexico in 1962, breaking with its long-standing tradition of serving only the United States and Canada. International expansion has d Kiwanis, at its peak, has served the needs of more than 80 countries through as many as 9,000 clubs and 380,000 members around the world.

It was in July of 1987, at the 72nd annual Kiwanis International Convention in Washington, D.C. that it was voted to permit women to be sponsored for membership.

The history of the Owen Sound Kiwanis Club began in April, 1925 when Walden Thomson, a hardware merchant, believed the time was right for Owen Sound to have a Kiwanis Club. Within two weeks

prospective Kiwanians, and their wives, held an organizational meeting. J. Walden Thomson was elected president and the Kiwanis Club has never looked back. Sponsored by the Barrie Kiwanis Club, Owen Sound's Charter Night took place July 15, 1925.

Although projects have come and gone, the Kiwanis Club of Owen Sound has survived such difficult times as a Depression and the Second World War. The constant has always been young children.

There was a time in the 1930s when the Kiwanis Club operated a camp at Vail's Point for underprivileged children. A highlight of the camp was a trip on the bay in a fish boat from the old Vail's Point dock. The late Mr. and Mrs. John Capel were Kiwanis Club managers.

Now the Kiwanis Club owns Whispering Pines, a campground on the edge of Hepworth, where families throughout the summer enjoy hiking paths, swimming pools, campfires to name but a few memorable experiences.

Early years had Kiwanians involved in learn-to-swim programs, the purchase of an audiometer to test children's hearing in schools and Kiwanians arranged for a dentist to examine the teeth of young.

As the 85th anniversary of the Owen Sound Kiwanis Club is drawing to a close, members can reflect with pride on a banner year.

Last year launched an agreement with the city of Owen Sound to establish a Kiwanis playground at Harrison Park, designed to accommodate all children, including those with disabilities. Throughout the park, the laughter of children can be heard above the tinkling of musical playground "instruments".

The Kiwanis Club has committed \$150,000, over five years, to this project. To move the funding forward this anniversary year marked the launch of a Celebrity Service Auction with all proceeds for the playground. The evening was a huge success with more than \$20,000 raised through the outstanding support of local, and district, celebrities.

To enhance the Kiwanis playground, the club has planted an 85th anniversary red oak tree, which is quick growing, and will offer shade for years to come.

Other major contributions over the years have included \$150,000 to the new soccer complex, considered one of the top facilities in Ontario. Approximately 1,400 children in the Owen Sound area use this park weekly during soccer season.

In co-operation with the city the Kiwanis Club was part of the J. Irvine Brown accessible playground, north of the Bayshore, the Kiwanis apartments, a \$50,000 contribution to the OSCVI auditorium and \$50,000 to the Grey Bruce Regional Health Centre. At its peak, the Kiwanis Music Festival has drawn up to 5,000 youthful participants annually with many going on to be music teachers or full time musicians. The club commits \$10,000 annually to the festival.

The Kiwanis Santa Claus parade, now in its 65th year, is the oldest parade in Ontario, if not Canada, under the same continuous sponsorship. The Kiwanis parade float is valued at \$60,000. Much of the time and effort that went into the design was voluntary with outstanding art work that was donated. The annual parade cost is some \$7,500.

For several years the Kiwanis Club has helped fund a dental program in partnership with the local health unit. Toothbrushes are purchased and distributed to all Grade 2 children in Grey and Bruce counties. They also provide corrective dental surgery, where possible, when parents can't afford it for their children.

It was the Kiwanis Club who donated \$75,000 to help build the Adult Rehabilitation Centre. The club has purchased two life-sized "puppets" for use by the Canadian Mental Health Association to help teach self-esteem and other youth issues to children ages four to 11.

The Kiwanis Club has helped fund the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority White Water safety program delivered in 22 different schools in Grey and Bruce counties to teach students the dangers of swift running water, especially during the spring snow melt season.

A Terrific Kids program was launched last year at Keppel Sarawak Public School and has been expanded this year to include Alexandra Community School.

Terrific Kids is a Kiwanis International program which recognizes children who exemplify positive character traits including respect, responsibility, enthusiasm and thoughtfulness. Students receive a certificate of achievement and a token gift from the club.

Parents and Kiwanians attend monthly assemblies to celebrate the success of the children in achieving Kiwanis goals. It is the club's belief that fostering good citizenship in today's youth will help create tomorrow's community leaders.

Another successful Kiwanis/student project is "Read Around the World." Kiwanians from the Owen Sound club visit public and separate elementary schools in a twice yearly program to support literacy. Kiwanians share their love of reading with young children. At the conclusion of the visit the book, purchased by the Kiwanis Club, is left at the school to expand the library and encourage additional children to enjoy reading.

This anniversary year has launched a new outreach project partnering with the Owen Sound Police Services Safety Village.

Const. Chris Hartley will take bicycle helmets with him when he makes Safety Village local school visits. In partnership with Canadian Tire, the Owen Sound Kiwanis Club is supplying 80 helmets to this project. Too often children are biking without the benefit of helmets or are wearing helmets that don't fit. The project is designed to help keep children safe while biking.

During the 85th anniversary year Kiwanian Gary Levine travelled extensively throughout eastern Canada and the

Caribbean as the elected Governor. Where possible he was accompanied by his wife, First Lady Julia. Governor Gary served the previous year as Governor Elect on behalf of Kiwanis.

From Ontario through to Newfoundland and 17 nations in the Caribbean and Northern South America, Governor Gary has led its 20,000 Kiwanis family members, assisted by 28 Divisional Lieutenant Governors.

The Owen Sound Kiwanis Club exceeded the District request and raised \$5,500 in the battle against aids. Money has gone to Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad Tobago and money has been raised for invitro antiretrovirals to stop the spread of aids mother to child.

Kiwanis comprises all age groups from Builders Clubs in elementary schools, Key Clubs in high schools, Circle Ks in colleges and universities through to Golden K Clubs for seniors.

A successful Builders' Club was launched at Notre Dame Catholic School in 1999, one of more than 1,500 such Kiwanis Club-sponsored youth organizations in seven nations. At the time the local club was formed there were some 43,000 members across the nations

Projects for the local Builders Club have included 3 on 3 basketball in support of Cops for Cancer, cleaning the school yard and gardens in the spring, visiting nursing homes, working in the Kiwanis food booth at Summerfolk, helping at Whispering Pines campground, providing a clean up crew for the Santa Claus parade and launching a reading club and a games day.

At an international level, they have raised money for such projects as Sleeping Children Around the World and Psunami relief.

Governor Gary and Kiwanians take pride in seeing many projects launched in every country, whether a new library in a school in Jamaica, distributing supplies to a crowded school in Tobago or touring a Kiwanis residence for the elderly in New Brunswick. Kiwanis does outstanding work in all corners of a diverse district.

In recognition of Governor Gary's dedication and service to others, Kiwanis Foundation of Canada presented him with a Diamond Level Mel Osbourne Award and his own Owen Sound Club presented him with a George F. Hixon Fellowship Award.

First Lady Julia, a Kiwanian in her own right, travelled and supported not only Governor Gary but also Kiwanis. For her outstanding efforts, she was presented with a Mel Osbourne award on behalf of the Owen Sound Kiwanis Club.

Although some Kiwanis Clubs have never had a Lieutenant Governor, Owen Sound Kiwanis has distinguished itself with 10 in an 85-year-history. To be eligible as Lt. Governor a member must have served as president of his/her own club.

Owen Sound Kiwanis Lt. Governors have been;

* T. Walden Thomson, the charter president, 1935,

* J. Fred Brown, 1948,

* C.C. Middlebro, 1952,

* William A. Forsyth, 1957,

* Ray Allen, 1966,

* Jim Mackay, 1980-81,

* Bob Nicol, 1990-91,

* Allen Kelly, 1996-97 and 1998-99

* Gary Levine, 2003-04 and 2004-05

* Linda Van Aalst, 2008-10 Two Lieutenant Governors,

the late Ray Allen and Gary Levine, have gone on in Kiwanis to distinguish themselves as Governors.

Ken Reimer from the Scenic City Kiwanis Club, no longer functioning, served as Lt. Governor in 1976-77.

Past President Elwood Moore, still a Kiwanian, has been more than 50 years a member. The late Howard Hindman was 55 years a Kiwanian and a member at the time of his passing.

Kiwanians come from all walks of life. The requirement is a dedication to children and a commitment to service.

Dr. Mac Phillips was a Cabinet Minister, Mac Craig was an Ontario Supreme Court Judge, Vic Porteous, Gus Mitges were Members of Parliament, Al Bye, Elwood Moore were Grey County wardens, Walden Thomson, Ernie Knox and William Forsyth were Owen Sound mayors, Harold Holding, Jack McCutcheon, were mayors and Reeves of adjacent municipalities and a large number have served as municipal councillors. Their common denominator has been the Owen Sound Kiwanis Club.

From potato clubs, to adventure tours, from a Christmas tree farm, to raising funds for Haiti, from Farmers' Nights, to Iodine deficiency disorders, from Sleeping Children Around the World to county council days Kiwanis has ver 85 years, to exemplify their motto, "We Serve."