

A Brief History of the Kiwanis Club of Panama City, FL

“Kiwanis is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to improving the world, one child and one community at a time.”

The Kiwanis Club of Panama City has been a significant influence in the Bay County area since its inception on April 16, 1926. We find it difficult to summarize the activities of a club that has served their community for more than 80 years and has done so much, for so many. Much of the following information was taken from various articles written by local historian, and honored Kiwanian, Mr. Tommy Smith.

Around the mid 1910s, Civic Clubs were coming into existence and forming into national and international organizations. One such group was Kiwanis International. It began in Detroit, Michigan in 1915 as a trade promotion club. It was reformed in 1918 as an organization directed toward improvement of all forms of community betterment.

Florida Kiwanis Clubs formed into a separate Florida District in 1924, and was divided into 3 geographic divisions, which encompassed the Bay County area. The real estate boom in Florida during the 1920s stimulated growth in this area and forty-six business and civic leaders of Bay County met at the Pelican Café in 1924 to affiliate with Kiwanis International. However, due to the reforming of the Florida District, it was not approved until April 16, 1926. The Kiwanis Club of Panama City was the first national civic club to be organized in Bay County, and has had over 80 rich years of growth. The only other organized clubs were the Chamber of Commerce and the Women’s Club.

The club began its meetings at the Pelican Café on Thursdays, at noon each week. However, the Café burned within a year and prompted a move to the newly constructed Dixie Sherman Hotel, on Wednesdays. The Hotel was demolished in 1970 and luncheons were scheduled at the Elegant Onion, on Eleventh Street. After this business closed, the meeting was held for a short time at the Panama Country Club and then moved for several years to the Four Winds Restaurant, on the Panama City Marina. After the Four Winds was removed, the club moved briefly to the Best Western Bayside Inn and now currently meets every Wednesday at noon at the St Andrew Bay Yacht Club.

In addition to a club that enjoys lively fellowship at their weekly meetings, programs expounding some phase of community activity are arranged each week. Dedicated for youth, spiritual and human values, and community service, the club raises over \$35,000 each year to finance projects in the county. Funds are raised through various events including; Pancake Days, Radio for a Day, Christmas Auction, Golf Tournament, and others. The motto of Kiwanis is “Serving the Children of the World” and this is accomplished through community projects that benefit not only children but, the community as a whole, including the elderly. Kiwanians mentor our youth by sponsoring our Service Leadership Programs, beginning with K-Kids Clubs in Elementary grades, Builders Clubs in Middle Schools, Key Clubs in High Schools, CKI Clubs at College level, and Aktion Clubs for the developmentally disadvantaged. These sponsored youth are our future leaders and are very influential in their respective schools.

The Kiwanis Clubs of the United States were open to men only as members until changed in 1986, which granted membership to both men and women. Those projects that have been included are but a small portion of the many functions of the Kiwanis Club and its many local businesses and professional leaders and members. In addition to the operation and management of the downtown Club, the members have spread this Kiwanis movement to other sections of Bay County by establishing other clubs in different areas of the community. These include the St Andrews Club, East Bay Club, Northside Club, Calhoun Liberty County Club, and the Panama City Beach Club. Although not all of these clubs continue to exist, they were a vital part of those communities that they served.

The highlights of the Kiwanis Club of Panama City can be best summarized in chronological order as listed below. The list will grow as we meet the needs of our community and continue to “Serve the Children of the World”.

- 1915 Kiwanis began in Detroit, Michigan, organized by Allen Simpson Browne.
- 1916 The first National Convention was held in Cleveland, Ohio, with eleven clubs organized.
- 1917 Kiwanis became International with a club in Ontario, Canada being chartered. The six objects of Kiwanis were established at the second national convention.
- 1918 Kiwanis was formally approved as an International organization, dividing the clubs into districts, headed by a Governor. 93 clubs were in existence.
- 1919 At the International Convention, in Birmingham, AL, Allen Browne, founder and owner of Kiwanis, was bought out by the members to form a more altruistic service emphasis.
- 1924 A separate Florida District was formed and a group of 26 businessmen determined a need for a civic club in Panama City. On Sept. 1, 1924, the charter application was mailed.
- 1926 Due to organizational changes, the Kiwanis Club of Panama City was formally installed at a dinner meeting at the Pelican Café on Friday, April 16, 1926. The charter club president was Rev. J.C. Leckenby.
The first projects of the Panama City Kiwanis Club were:
 - 1). A resolution advocating forest fire protection and reforestation,
 - 2). A farmers market to be located at Harrison Ave & 3rd St.,
 - 3). Support for Panama City’s first Class D professional baseball team, the “Pelicans”.
- 1927 Fire destroyed the Pelican Café and the club moved its weekly meetings to the ballroom of the newly constructed Dixie Sherman Hotel and changed the meeting day from Thursday to Wednesday, at noon.
- 1932 Club action was taken in support of the completion of Hwy 98 to Pensacola and Appalachicola. Irling Riis of International Paper joined the club and announced the signing of a contract to construct a Southern Kraft Mill, in Millville. Officers of the USS Coastguard Cutter “Gresham” and soldiers from Fort Benning were entertained at separate functions of the club.

- 1930's Kiwanis provided lunches for needy students when the program began in local schools.
- 1937 The club endorsed the city manager form of government and called a meeting of other clubs in Bay County to secure the first Health Unit. Also underwrote the salary of a nurse.
- 1939 Kiwanis backed the establishment of a public library at Jenks & Oak Ave.
- 1940's The Kiwanis Camp program began with a week at Camp Timpochee for members of the Bay County 4-H Clubs. Later this was changed to meet the needs of the developmentally disadvantaged students and moved to Billy Joe Rish State Park.
- 1943 The club sponsored Farmers Day at Youngstown and a lifeguard program on the beaches with Red Cross trained persons. A series of softball games were begun with Kiwanis Clubs from Pensacola, Warrington, Port St Joe, and Fort Walton Beach.
- 1947 An Easter Egg Roll was held for several hundred underprivileged children.
- 1947 A resolution was adopted asking other clubs to join Kiwanis in seeking the establishment of St Andrews Bay State Park with a connecting road. Because of Kiwanis, and others, the U.S. Government was persuaded to donate the land to the State of Florida instead of selling it to private investors. The State was then persuaded to construct and pave an access road.
Radio and school speakers on youth delinquency were provided.
The Panama City club sponsored the St Andrew Kiwanis Club.
- 1950 Establishment of the "Pancake Days" breakfast as a fund-raiser.
- 1955 When Gulf Coast Community College opened, the Kiwanis Club was the first to establish a scholarship loan fund for students needing financial assistance.
- 1957 A fleet of sailboats was purchased for the junior members of the St Andrews Bay Yacht Club.
The Key Club was established at Bay High School.
- 1958 A Circle K Club was formed at Gulf Coast College.
- 1979 The Kiwanis Club began serving as ushers for the annual Baccalaureate services for the high school graduates of local schools.
Established Key Club at Mosley High School.
- 1981 The Panama City and St Andrews Clubs began providing the funds for the rental of facilities for the annual county-wide baccalaureate services.
- 1986 At the Kiwanis International Convention, the delegates voted to extend membership in Kiwanis to women.
- 1987 The Panama City Kiwanis Club inducted the first 5 women into the club in September.
The Panama City club sponsored the Northside Kiwanis club.
- 1989 The scholarship loan program at Gulf Coast Community College was replaced with a \$10,000 investment to the college foundation's "Wall of Honor" perpetual scholarship endowment.
- 1992 Sponsored another Circle K Club at Gulf Coast College.

- 1993 Changed meeting place to Best Western Bayside Inn after Four Winds Restaurant closed, with no advanced notice.
Stacey Turner (Daughter of member Joel Turner) was elected as Governor of the Florida District of Key Club.
- 1994 Needing more space, the club meeting place was moved to the St Andrew Bay Yacht Club.
- 1996 Served the 1 Millionth Pancake!
Joined the Kiwanis International's campaign to eliminate IDD from the world by raising 75 million dollars to build iodized salt plants. Club pledged \$50,000.
- 1997 Carole Lapensohn was elected as the first women President of the club.
- 1998 Established "Treasurer Emeritus" for Howard Wiggin for his 28 years of service as club Treasurer.
- 2001 Celebrated Club's 75th Anniversary.
Sponsored Key Club at Arnold High School, which was later relinquished to the newly formed Panama City Beach Kiwanis Club.
- 2003 Sponsored formation of the new Kiwanis Club of Panama City Beach.
Began K-Kids club at Tommy Smith Elementary School and a Builders Club at Merritt Brown Middle School.
- 2004 Sponsored Key Club at Deanne Bozeman Learning Center.
Established "Board Member Emeritus" for Curtis Allan, titled Mr. Kiwanis.
- 2005 Established "Secretary Emeritus" for Tommy Smith for his 50 years of service to Kiwanis.
- 2007 Club adopted Chapman Park as a project to help the disadvantaged baseball league.
- 2010 Established the "Dr. John J. Benton" Award to honor a Kiwanian that has lived a life of service to children. Dr. Benton honored as first recipient.
Sponsored K-Kids Club at Northside Elementary School.
- 2011 Began actively campaigning for the second worldwide service project from Kiwanis International called "Eliminate". Maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination.
- 2012 Celebrated 25th year of Women in Kiwanis and honored President Kay Cherry with first Kiwanis International Walter Zeller Fellowship.
Created the "Pioneer Business Leader" Award for those who have been a major influence in the community. First year given posthumously to Earl Durden.
Club received the 5th year award as 100% sustaining membership in the Florida Kiwanis Foundation.
- 2013 Due to the closure of the Panama City Beach Club, resumed sponsorship of 4 additional SLP Clubs: Arnold Key Club, Surfside Builders Club, and Hutchison Beach & Patronis K-Kids Clubs.
- 2015 Celebrated the long anticipated ground breaking of the After School Assistance Program. Club has pledged \$10,00 to this project with a matching grant from the FL Kiwanis Foundation for the same amount.

- Club received the 8th year award as 100% sustaining membership in the Florida Kiwanis Foundation. Contributed over \$5,000 to the “Eliminate” Campaign. 100th year of Kiwanis!
 Longtime members Dee Dogali and Doug Merkle were designated as Honorary Members.
- 2016 The St. Andrew Kiwanis Club disbanded and contributed \$2,000 to keep the BUG Program in place at St. Andrews Elementary School.
 Also, took over the N. Bay Haven Key Club and Chataugua Aktion Club from the St. Andrews Club.
 Club received the 9th year award as 100% sustaining membership in the Florida Kiwanis Foundation.
- 2017 Club Satellite was formed to entice Service Leadership Program Advisors to join.
 Established “Reading Oasis” in 6 Elementary Schools.
 Began a new fundraiser at Haunted Hayride event.
 Club received 10th year award as 100% sustaining membership in the Florida Kiwanis Foundation and received a matching \$5,000 grant.
 Chartered new K-Kids Club at Bay Haven Charter School.
 Club contributed \$1,250 to the Eliminate Project for another Walter Zeller Award.
 Donated another \$1250 to KIF for a Water Zeller for Eric Krebs (diamond level).
- 2018 Partnered with Elevate Bay Mentoring Program.
 Began new fundraiser & Fun Day called “Mardi Golf”.
 Club received the 11th year award as 100% sustaining membership in the Florida Kiwanis Foundation.
 Chartered new Builders Club at Jinks Middle School.

These events are just a partial sampling of the many projects in which the Kiwanis Club of Panama City is involved. Joining Kiwanis International in providing 1.5 million dollars and 6.2 million service hours, worldwide, annually, to help better our communities.

PAST PRESIDENTS

- *1926 – Rev. C.M. Keckenby
Ira Hutchison
- *1927 – J.M. Sapp
- *1928 – L.J. Cotton
- *1929 – Joe T. Bennett
- *1930 – Sam T. Browne
- *1931 – E.N. Pagelson
- *1932 – R.R. Whittington
- *1933 – M.J. Daffin
- *1934 – Phillip Roll
- *1935 – Dr. W.C. Roberts
- *1936 – Sam Morgan
- *1937 – James Elliot
- *1938 – Dr. D.M. Adams
- *1939 – Forace Holland
- *1940 – Dr. Grant Newberry
- *1941 – W.S. Weaver
- *1942 – M.B. Miller
- *1943 – H.P. Sapp
- *1944 – Merritt Brown
- *1945 – Frank Nelson
- *1946 – Abbot Browne
- *1947 – Thomas E. Smith
- *1948 – Ralph J. Bennett
- *1949 – Dr. Reeves Wells
- *1950 – John T. Heidema
- *1951 – T. Woodrow Smith
- *1952 – W.C. Starling
- *1953 – Sam C. Fleming
- *1954 – Wm. Russell Kersey
- *1955 – Ellis E. Fowhand
- *1956 – Ray S. Bassett
- *1957 – Quinton D. Bruner
- *1958 – Pat Culp
- *1959 – J. Earnest Collins
- *1960 J. Wesley Powell
- *1961 – Jack A. Blackwell
- *1962 – Lawrence B. Watson
- *1963 – Arthur D. Callaway
- 1964 – Girard L. Clemmons, Jr.
- *1965 – Gilbert D. Wilson
- *1966 – George B. Austin
- *1967 – Buford Ennis
- *1968 – Horace Carr
- *1969 – Andrew J. Rogers
- *1970 – Darrell Barron
- *1971 – Hy Wakstein
- *1972 – Gerald McAlister
- *1973 – Ralph Burgess
- *1974 – Hercules Pettis, Sr.
- *1975 – Rex Rowell
- *1976 – John May
- *1977 – Stan Worsham
- *1978 – Don Mullholland
- *1979 – Harol Lubnow
- *1980 – Dr. Daniel M. Rosof
- 1981 – Emil “Dee” Dogali
- 1982 – Daniel Gall
- *1983 – Si Mathison
- *1984 – Curtis Allan
- *1985 – Lynn W. Owen, Jr.
- 1986 - James P. Conway
- *1987 – Patrick J. Fauchaux
- 1988 – James H. Huffaker
- 1989 – Edward F. Sanders
- 1990 - Douglas Williams
- *991 – John J. Benton, Jr.
- *1992 – Lynn W. Owen, III
- 1993 – D. Keith Forehand, II
- 1994 - Charlie Davie
- 1995 - Wm. G. “Bill” Hudson
- 1996 - Joel H. Turner
- 1997 - Henry Hazard
- 1998 - Carole Lapensohn
- 1999 - Robert Pearce
- *1999 - Howard Wiggin (Honorary)
- 2000 - Linda Prejant
- 2001 - Kenneth Christian
- 2002 - David Steere
- 2003 - Normandy Cooper
- 2004 - Thomas Sontag
- * 2005 - Douglas Merkle
- *2006 - Wm. “Mac” Shepard
- 2007 - Wm. “Russ” Mathis
- 2008 - M. Kay Schneider
- 2009 - Stanley Peacock
- 2010 - Brian Hinton
- 2011 - Hercules Pettis, Jr.

PAST PRESIDENTS (Cont.)

2012 - Kay J. Cherry
2013 - Jerry Sowell, III
2014 - Arthur Hooks
2015 - Todd Brister
2016 – Mike Dickey
2017 – Eric Krebs
2018 – Ron Boyce

PAST PRESIDENTS

Other Clubs

1979 - H. Fred Scott (Breakfast Club
Panama City)
2004 - Douglas Huntsucker
(Cloudcraft New Mexico)

1992 - Daphne Clark (Orlando)

PAST LT. GOVERNORS

*1934 - M.J. Daffin
*1938 - Sam Morgan
*1941 - Forace Holland
*1946 - Merritt Brown
*1950 - Thomas E. Smith
*1952 - T. Woodrow Smith
*1953 - W.C. Starling
*1960 - J.P. Culp
*1961 - J. Earnest Collins
*1963 - Ira L. Hill, Sr.
*1968 - Sam Morgan
*1969 - Horace Carr
*1972 - George B. Austin
*1977 - Ralph Burgess
*1983 - Dr. Daniel M. Rosof
1984 - Emil “Dee” Dogali
*1987 - Curtis Allan
1992 - Edward F. Sanders
*1994 - Hy Wakstein
*1997 - Lynn Owen, Jr.
2001 - H. Fred Scott
2003 - D. Keith Forehand
2004 - Douglas Williams
*2005 - John J. Benton, Jr.
2010 - Wm. “Russ” Mathis
2012 - W. “Bill” Hudson
2013 - Stanley Peacock
2014 – Kay Cherry
2015 - Douglas Huntsucker
2016 - Todd Brister
2017 – Dan Gall
2018 – David Steere

CLUB AWARDS

Kiwanian of the Year

*Curtis Allan
Keith Forehand
Gary Seymour
*Howard Wiggin
John Schroeder
Linda Prejant
Bill Bean
*Hy Wakstein
Henry Hazard
*Thomas E. Smith
Joel Turner
Normandy Cooper
*Douglas Merkle
Becky Palmer
Kay Schneider
*Patrick Faucheux
Dale Cronwell
Brian Hinton
Dan Chagnon
*Jim Thomason
Douglas Huntsucker
Jerry Sowell, III
Arthur Hooks
Todd Brister
Doug Smith
Eric Krebs
Chris Mills
Eric Krebs

Dr. John Benton Award

*Dr. John J. Benton - 2010
*Douglas Merkle - 2012

Pioneer Business Leader Award

*Earl Durden - 2012

FL Kiwanis Foundation Awards

Fellows

*Robert Fackleman
*M.B. Miller
*William Starling
*Ralph Burgess
*Thomas E. Smith
*Hy Wakstein
*Dr. John Benton
*Gilbert Wilson
Keith Forehand
John Schroeder
*William Byers
Linda Prejant
*Harold Lubnow
*Howard Wiggin
*Dr. Daniel Rosof
Emil "Dee" Dogali
*Lynn Owen, Jr.
Edward Sanders
*Curtis Allan
*Hercules Pettis, Sr.
*Keith Jordan
Joel Turner
*Ernest Collins
H. Fred Scott
*Wesley Powell

Ralph Davis Fellowships

Keith Forehand (Diamond Level)
Martha Forehand
*Mac Shepard
Russ Mathis

Robert Thal Awards

Brian Hinton
David Steere
Keith Forehand

Tom Deen Award

Keith Forehand

AWARDS (Cont.)

Kiwanis International Awards

Fellows

*Curtis Allan
*Lynn Owen, Jr.
*Hy Wakstein
*Thomas E. Smith
Keith Forehand

Tablet of Honor

*Curtis Allan

Life Members

*Curtis Allan
Keith Forehand

George F. Hixson Fellows (IDD)

*Curtis Allan
*Howard Wiggin
William G. Hudson
*Hy Wakstein
*H.B. James
John Schroeder
Robert Pearce
Emil Dogali
*Charles Jones
*Fred Lewis
Gary Seymour
Henry Hazard
Keith Forehand
*Tommy Smith
Joel Turner
*Lynn Owen, Jr.
*Si Mathison
*Dr. John Benton
Fred Scott
David Steere
Linda Prejant
Julia Phillips
*Josephine Wiggins
Carole Lapensohn
Normandy Cooper
Arthur Hooks

Walter Zeller Fellows (Eliminate)

Kay Cherry
Eric Krebs (Diamond Level)
Doug Huntsucker
Jim Huffaker (Centennial Award)

*Deceased