

CIRCLE K: THE BEGINNING

In 1936 Jay N. Emerson, a member of the Pullman Washington Kiwanis Club, presented a plan to his club proposing that the Pullman Kiwanis Club purchase a house that could be rented to young men in need of assistance to attend the local college. The plan became a reality as the Kiwanians established the "Circle K House" at Washington State College. For ten years the "Circle K House" became affiliated with a Greek letter organization, although it continued to be sponsored by the Pullman Kiwanis Club.

Eleven years later in 1947, Donald T. Forsythe, Trustee of Kiwanis International, aided in transitioning Circle K from a fraternity to a service-oriented organization. That year, during September, the first Circle K club similar to our present day organization, was chartered at Carthage College in Carthage, Illinois. (The college moved to its present-day location of Kenosha, Wisconsin in 1962.)

As Circle K's structure adapted from being a fraternity, its purpose also changed. The organization established the following objectives:

To provide an opportunity for capable, ambitious, and worthy young men to acquire a college education by assisting them, where necessary, with their financial problems; by means of a scholarship fund, if available, or securing part-time employment.

To afford members a useful training in the social graces and the development of a well-rounded personality.

To promote good fellowship and high scholarship within the group.

To develop in the members a thinking and aggressive citizenship and the Kiwanis spirit of service for the improvement of all human relationships on the campus, in the community, state, and nation.

To aid the growth and development of other Circle K Clubs.

Circle K began as one man's dream to enable the success of local collegians and continued to grow as others began to believe in the concepts of Circle K and in the men who belonged to Circle K. Though Jay N. Emerson died June 12, 1947, before he could his dream become a reality, his vision of a collegiate-level, international youth organization will live on forever.

CIRCLE K: TRANSITIONING FROM A FRATERNITY

For two years, the Carthage College Circle K Club existed alone. But on March 26, 1949, the University of Western Ontario became the second Circle K Club to charter. Carthage College and the University of Western Ontario were soon joined by the Louisiana Polytechnic Institute on May 13, 1949. Circle K gained momentum

and grew rapidly throughout the United States; sixteen more clubs chartered in 1950.

With the formation of Circle K clubs, Kiwanis International established a Special Committee on Circle K Clubs in 1952. Andy Hodges of Carthage, Illinois, was appointed chairman of the committee. The committee brought about following changes in the objectives of Circle K:

To emphasize the advantages of the American way of life.

To provide educational opportunities for worthy young men.

To encourage participation in group activities.

To promote good fellowship and high scholarship.

To develop aggressive citizenship and the spirit of service for the improvement of all human relationships.

To afford useful training in the social graces and personality development.

To encourage and promote the following ideals:

To give primacy to the human and spiritual rather than to the material values of life.

To encourage the daily living of the Golden Rule in all human relationships.

To promote the adoption and the application of higher social, business, and professional standards.

To develop, by precept and example, a more intelligent, aggressive and serviceable citizenship.

To provide through Circle K Clubs, a practical means to form enduring friendships, to render altruistic service, and to build better communities.

To cooperate in creating and maintaining that sound public opinion and high idealism which make possible the increase of righteousness, justice, and patriotism and good will.

The motto of the organization became the same as that of Kiwanis International:

"We Build."

By 1953, Circle K clubs were located at 57 different (upper level) institutions with a total membership of 1,425. During this time, discussion over the possible formation of an International Circle K organization began to increase. Chairman Hodges was able to arrange a meeting at the 1953 Kiwanis International Convention to discuss the formation of an International organization and to elect temporary officers for Circle K International.

Twenty-five Circle K members, representing fifteen clubs, along with several Kiwanis International Board members met June 22-24, 1953. At the end of the meeting, Kenneth B. Creasy from Ohio Wesleyan University emerged as the first President of Circle K. A full board, consisting of a Vice President, Executive Secretary/Treasurer, and eleven Trustees, was also elected to serve as the temporary officers of Circle K.

Although Circle K was moving closer to attaining International status, Circle K primarily remained a local Kiwanis activity at the urging of J. Frank McCabe, the Director of Key Club International. McCabe also handled the Circle K procedures at the Chicago General Office of Kiwanis International. His conservative stance allowed Circle K to develop a definite sense of direction and contributed greatly to a strong base of support from Kiwanis before becoming an International organization.

At the Kiwanis International Convention, held during May of 1954, an attempt was made by the Kiwanis Special Committee on Circle K Clubs to help Circle K gain recognition as an International organization. The attempt failed. However, a temporary Circle K organization was established as Circle K members prepared themselves for their first annual convention which was held October 17-19, 1954, at Carthage College.

One-hundred and fourteen members, representing 35 Circle K Clubs, attended the convention. After the elections, Eugene C. Alford, Jr., from Georgia Institute of Technology, was elected the second President of Circle K.

Under President Alford, Circle K had the first meeting of an International Board. In addition, Circle K experienced unbelievable growth under Alford's leadership. Three days after his election, President Alford sent the following resolution to the Kiwanis International Board as he attempted to establish Circle K International:

"The Board of Trustees of Kiwanis International recognizes the fact that a group of Circle K men met together at the Kiwanis International Convention in New York in June, 1953 and under the guidance of the Special International Committee on Circle K Clubs drew up a Constitution and Bylaws and set up an International organization. We further acknowledge that this organization is still working under the supervision of the Special International Committee on Circle K Clubs toward the goal of setting up a

permanent organization in conjunction with the headquarters of Kiwanis and Key Club. It is the expectation of the Board that at such time as Circle K International becomes financially independent through the organization of more clubs and the strengthening of the present clubs that they will be granted official recognition by the Board of Trustees of Kiwanis International."

Kiwanis was still concerned that the organization could not stand on its own and desired a better definition of Circle K - Kiwanis relations. For these reasons, President Alford's resolution failed.

About this time, Kiwanis Trustee Richard B. Forde began to play an important role in Circle K's eventual International standing. In February of 1955, with Trustee Forde's assistance, Circle K President Alford met with the President of Kiwanis International, Donald E. Engdahl. The result of this meeting became public March 9, 1955.

"At a recent meeting of the International Board of Trustees, held in Washington, D.C., on February 18th and 19th, the following recommendation of the Board Committee on Kiwanis Youth Organizations was unanimously accepted:

Voted: That the present organization of Circle K Clubs receive International recognition and a charter from Kiwanis International at the Cleveland Convention, June of 1955, provided the International dues be \$4.00 per member per year, and that a Constitution and Bylaws which have the approval of Kiwanis International be adopted."

Soon after the second annual Circle K Convention, held at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, ballots were sent to the 140 Circle K Clubs of the United States and Canada. The ballots were to be used by the clubs in making a decision as to whether to accept or reject the proposed Constitution, Bylaws, and a membership dues to be paid to the International organization. The result of the ballots were as follows: 52 voted "yes", 27 voted "no", and 61 clubs abstained. With these results, the Board of Trustees of Kiwanis International voted to grant official international recognition to Circle K, October 23, 1955. The dream -- Circle K International -- had finally come true.

At the end of the Kiwanis International administrative year in 1955, there were 156 Circle K clubs, with a membership of about 3,000. The first club to officially affiliate with Circle K International was Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 14, 1955. By May 31, 1956, Circle K International consisted of 77 clubs throughout the United States and Canada. In addition to forming new clubs, Circle K International began publishing the official magazine of the organization...THE BULLETIN. To ensure a smooth-running organization, Kiwanis International appointed Fay H. McDonald to be the Director of Circle K International.

CIRCLE K: GROWING INTO THE LARGEST COLLEGIATE SERVICE ORGANIZATION

As Circle K International began to award charters to individual clubs, plans to form Circle K Districts began. By the summer of 1956 there were four unofficial Circle K Districts: California-Nevada-Hawaii, Michigan, Texas-Oklahoma, and Missouri-Arkansas. With the development of the unofficial Circle K Districts, the International Board was faced with another challenge which would eventually cause the International Board of Officers to clearly define their responsibilities as International Officers, since the Districts began to initiate their own programs for service, thus reducing the amount of direct contact between individual clubs and the International Board.

The Kiwanis International Board of Trustees accepted a proposal to allow the establishment of Circle K Districts on February 22, 1957. The very first Circle K District to be officially recognized was the Texas-Oklahoma District. The second Circle K District was Kentucky-Tennessee which was closely followed by Michigan. Four more Districts were added in the 1957-58 administrative year: Missouri-Arkansas, California-Nevada-Hawaii, Ohio, and Alabama.

By February, 1959, Circle K International had a total of 217 clubs with a combined membership of 4,413. Growth was also reflected in the addition of the New England District of Circle K International and the Ontario-Quebec-Maritime Circle K District which eventually became known as the Eastern Canada and the Caribbean District. One year later, the Circle K Districts of Georgia, Florida, Illinois-Eastern Iowa, and West Virginia were established. By 1960, Circle K International had grown to 264 clubs with a total membership of 5,316.

Growth continued at a slow, steady pace until 1961, at which time there was a "New Club Rush" and 75 clubs were issued new charters. The Districts of New York, Capital, Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee, Utah-Idaho, Minnesota-Dakotas, and Indiana were petitioned and approved during the 1960-61 administration. The rapid rate of expansion continued through the 1962 administrative year as 88 new clubs were built and the Districts of Carolinas, Nebraska-Iowa, Southwest, Rocky Mountain, Pennsylvania, and Pacific Northwest became part of Circle K International. By May of 1962, Circle K had a membership of 7,700 and 402 clubs throughout the United States and Canada.

Circle K International continued to change and mature with the increasing membership. Once again, to adapt to these changes the objectives of Circle K International were revised to read:

To emphasize the advantages of the American-Canadian way of life;

To provide an opportunity for leadership training in service;

To serve on the campus and in the community;

To cooperate with the administrative officers of the educational institutions of which the clubs are a part;

To encourage participation in group activities;

To promote good fellowship and high scholarship;

To develop aggressive citizenship and the spirit of service for improvement of all human relationships;

To afford useful training in the social graces and personality development.

Circle K International also continued to promote the original ideals of the organization as listed previously.

By 1964, Circle K had become the largest collegiate service organization on American and Canadian college campuses. Membership had topped the 10,000 member mark. Another milestone in Circle K history was also reached as Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, became home to the 500th Circle K Club to be chartered by Circle K International. In addition to being the largest collegiate service organization, Circle K became the fastest growing collegiate service organization on the North American continent with a membership of over 12,000 in 600 clubs during the 1964-65 administrative year.

The Wisconsin-Upper Michigan District was officially established during the 1963 administrative year and was followed in 1964 by the New Jersey District. Montana became an official Circle K District in 1965. By 1965, the tremendous growth that Circle K had experienced during the first ten years began to slow. The 60's on American college campuses were symbolic of unrest. Despite the campus unrest, 30 Circle K Districts were established and still exist today. Unfortunately, by the end of December, 1965, 178 charters of the 954 charters issued had been revoked over the years and many more would soon meet the same fate.

CIRCLE K: MILESTONES OF PROGRESS

In 1971 the first steps for making dramatic changes in the membership composition of Circle K International began. It was at the 1971 International Convention that the Circle K House of Delegates voted overwhelmingly to change Article III, Section 6 of the Circle K International Constitution to read as follows, thus allowing women to join Circle K:

"Membership shall be open to students of all creeds and races. Scholastic requirements shall be determined by the individual Circle K Club and the admission of female students to membership in a particular Circle K Club shall be determined by that Circle K Club with the approval of their sponsoring Kiwanis Club."

Before the amendment could be considered an official part of the Constitution it had to be approved by the Kiwanis International Board of Trustees. After long and careful consideration, nearly two years later, the Kiwanis International Board of Trustees approved the resolution for the acceptance of female members into Circle K on a local option basis effective February 6, 1973. Article III, Section 6 of the Circle K International Constitution was amended by the Kiwanis International Board to read:

"Any student of good character and of satisfactory scholastic standing, who is officially enrolled as a student in the institution in which said club exists, may be elected to active membership in said club. The male and/or female membership composition of any Circle K Club shall be a matter of mutual agreement between the sponsoring Kiwanis Club and the Circle K Club."

While the Kiwanis International Board of Trustees was considering the amendment to allow females to join Circle K, the 1972 Convention saw the restructuring of the International Board. The original Board structure consisted of a president, two vice presidents, a secretary and twelve trustees. This structure was replaced by a Board of Officers consisting of a president and six vice presidents. In addition, the annual dues were replaced with an annual sponsorship fee of \$100.00, to be paid by the sponsoring Kiwanis Club.

With a new International Board structure, Circle K International experienced several milestones. The first event of great significance since the admission of female members was the 1973 election of the first female Governor, Dorothy Mihalick of the Pennsylvania District. Soon after, Judith A. O'Mary from Samford University of Alabama became the first female International Vice President. In 1984, Susan E. McClernon of the College of St. Scholastica in Minnesota was elected the first female president of Circle K International. In 1975, Gregory Faulkner of the New York District was elected to the position of International President. To date, Faulkner was the first and only African-American International President. Faulkner's election and the admission of female members was symbolic of the new level of maturity and responsibility Circle K International had assumed over 20 years of service, growth and development.

During 1982-83 Circle K International's membership grew to over 14,500 members. To strengthen Circle K's financial standing, the 1982-83 International Board reinstated a \$5 International dues to be paid on a yearly basis by every member of CKI.

Once again the topic of organizational structure arose in 1986, when the House of

delegates voted in favor of changing the names of International Vice Presidents to International Trustees. Also, a dues increase was approved raising dues from \$5 to \$8.

As a method of long range planning in 1987 the organization moved its Vision -- a statement of direction and purpose -- into the Constitution and Bylaws.

The Vision of Circle K International was as follows:

Circle K is the organization that holds the promise of today's college student becoming tomorrow's leader. It exists to meet the personal needs of the individual collegian through the qualities of leadership, the rewards of service, and the unique spirit of friendship. Circle K's potential lies in its ability to positively influence those in our society who are facing ultimate personal decisions, and those who will one day create the vision of mankind for generations to come. Circle K is the embodiment of those qualities necessary to share the future, realized in the colleges and universities of today.

The Vision of Circle K International is dedicated to the realization of mankind's potential.

Not only did the delegates of the 1987 convention approve the Vision for Circle K International, the delegates also decided it was time for an image change and approved an amendment that allowed the organization to use its initials -- CKI -- as an official name for the organization.

As a means of increasing support of Circle K in the districts, in 1987-88 Kiwanis International approved procedures for the creation of district alumni associations. The first recognized district alumni associations were in the Louisiana- Mississippi-West Tennessee and Ohio Districts in 1989.

During 1989-90 the Circle K International Board completed a complete Circle K International Policy Code and Board Procedures as a set of operating guidelines to which the organization and International Board was Bound. 1990 marked the year that another dues increase was approved, thus bringing the organization even closer to being financially self-supported.

With continued questions about Circle K's level of success and size, the 1992-93 Circle K International Board completely revamped the way it would operate. It embarked on a long range planning process. As its foundation and tool to measure its success, the board established the following mission statement.

The Mission of Circle K International...

is to involve college and university students in campus and community service while developing quality leaders and citizens. Circle K inspires people to better our world.

In support of this we are committed to:

collaborating with all members of the K-family to achieve our common objectives;

continuing student management of the organization at all levels;

developing positive role models;

enhancing inter-cultural understanding and cooperation;

increasing our service potential;

providing opportunities for fellowship, personal growth, and professional development;

working toward greater public recognition of the organization

It was agreed that everything the organization did should in some way contribute to achieving the organization's mission. The International Board then identified the most critical issues facing the organization and developed its committee structure based on these issues. The following is a sampling of the types of issues recent international boards have researched. What organizational structure will best allow us to fulfill our mission? Are we properly supporting our clubs outside the United States? What should the relationship be between a Circle K club and its sponsoring Kiwanis club? Why do some clubs have difficulty attaining and maintaining charter strength while others do not? How can we make clubs outside the United States feel a stronger connection with the organization? How can we increase the effectiveness of K-family programs at the club and district levels? How can we better provide service to the members? How can we strengthen the impact of the K-family? How can we increase our attention to internationalism and multiculturalism?

Recognition of outstanding leadership and service is a cornerstone of Circle K International operation. 1988-89 introduced the first Circle K International "honor society," the Society of Distinguished Collegians. The Society of Distinguished Collegians was established to recognize no more than 2% of each district's membership who qualify for the Society of Distinguished Collegians based on their academic achievements and contributions as a members of Circle K. Recognizing that oftentimes the contributions individuals make on behalf of their Circle K club go unrecognized, in 1992, the Service Recognition Award was instituted to recognize those Circle K members who have made significant contributions to their campuses and communities.

The 1994 House of Delegates will be most remembered by the "Harvard Issue." For nearly two years prior to the 1994 House of Delegates, interested students at Harvard University worked to establish a Circle K club. Unfortunately, the

university prohibits the establishment of organizations affiliated with a national or local program. The House of Delegates voted overwhelmingly to add a clause to the Constitution that would allow students who attend an educational institution that prohibits the chartering of a Circle K club to be elected to active membership in another local Circle K club as long as this is permitted by the institution in which the Circle K club exists.

As the organization relaxes some of the established structures that pose obstacles to membership, the organization continues to ask the question: "How can Circle K best structure itself to achieve its mission?"

CIRCLE K: SERVICE

The debate has continued over the years of whether Circle K is a service organization or leadership development organization. Clearly the answer is --it is both a community service and leadership development organization.

Through the years, Circle K International has recognized the significance of emphasizing certain programs toward which club-level community service efforts could be targeted. These programs, known as Theme and Emphasis programs, have also changed through the years. In Circle K's early years, the Theme and Emphasis program changed annually. In 1982-83, the Circle K International Board developed a new approach to the Theme and Emphasis Program. To maximize resources and impact, the Board decided to change the International Theme and Emphasis Program every other year, rather than every year. Ten years later, the Circle K International Board changed the name of the organization's service focus from Theme and Emphasis Program to Service Initiative to more accurately reflect the intent of the program -- community service. At the 1993 International Convention, the International Board unveiled the first service program in the organization's history that would increase a club's visibility on campus and within the community, impact children worldwide, and promote collaboration with other campus organizations. The 1993-95 Service Initiative, *Focusing on the Future: Children*, fostered significant interest by the membership. One year later, the 1993-94 Circle K International Board decided to make *Focusing on the Future: Children* the organization's Service Initiative for an indefinite period of time.

Focusing on the Future: Children asks Circle K members to become involved with projects to benefit children ages 6-13. In addition, the program enables Circle K International to collaborate with its K-family counterparts in the largest fund-raising campaign in the history of Kiwanis International -- the Kiwanis International Worldwide Service Project. The Kiwanis International Worldwide Service Project joins the K-family with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in a program to virtually eliminate Iodine Deficiency Disorders throughout the world by the year 2000. Iodine Deficiency Disorders are the most important cause of preventable mental deficiency in the world and affect nearly 1.5 billion people -- one-fifth of the world's population. Never before has the K-family joined together for such a worldwide concern. At the time of the printing of this

book, Circle K International has raised just over \$50,000 to benefit one million people in the prevention of Iodine Deficiency Disorders.

CIRCLE K: A LOOK AT INTERNATIONALIZATION

The first Circle K Club outside of the North American continent was organized in January of 1970 at the American College of Switzerland in Leysin, Switzerland. The sponsoring Kiwanis Club was the Alcoa, Tennessee Kiwanis Club. A club was established in Monterrey, Mexico, during 1971. Unfortunately, neither of these clubs received official charters, nor were they incorporated into an existing District of Circle K International.

The first club to be officially chartered outside of the United States and Canada was the College of the Bahamas on April 25, 1977. A fourth nation joined Circle K International on October 27, 1977, when Mico College of Jamaica was chartered. Circle K International extended into a fifth nation with the chartering of a Circle K Club at the University of Suriname, South America, which became part of the Eastern Canada and the Caribbean District of Circle K International. Mexico became the sixth nation in Circle K International when the Circle K Club of Jose Maria Morelos y Pavon in Tijuana was chartered May 2, 1980. The Tijuana Club was assigned to the California-Nevada-Hawaii District. With the addition of several nations and continued growth by existing clubs, Circle K's membership grew to 13,000 by the end of 1980.

In 1985 Barbados became the 7th nation of Circle K International as the University of West Indies, Barbados, was chartered. Affiliate clubs were chartered in Ghana and the Philippines during the 1984-85 administrative year.

The affiliate status program was implemented in 1987. This program was designed to allow collegians outside the original 30 districts the opportunity to build Circle K clubs. These clubs were not given the same privileges of membership, such as voting rights, as regular status Circle K clubs, nor did they pay individual member dues; they paid an annual affiliate status fee. Affiliate status clubs were able to use the Circle K name and they did receive general mailings from Circle K International, and a few issues of each edition of Circle K Magazine. The first affiliate status club was the Circle K Club of Del Caribe in Columbia on April 5, 1989. In Columbia, three other affiliate status clubs were chartered in 1989 and 1990. In 1990, Costa Rica became the second affiliate status nation, followed by Korea, Panama, and Venezuela in 1993; and the Philippines and Mexico in 1994.

In 1995, the Circle K International Board and Kiwanis International Board approved a targeted international expansion plan for Circle K. This plan was developed to enable Circle K International to strategically target its expansion efforts based on Kiwanis support, match of the educational system to Circle K International structure, translation needs, cost feasibility of expansion, and expressed interest in the Circle K program in each nation. Targeted expansion will enable the organization to utilize its resources wisely and adequately prepare to

successfully expand into a nation. With the implementation of this plan, the affiliate status program was eliminated. Now clubs formed outside the original thirty districts will be formed as "non-districted" clubs. They will receive all of the same rights and privileges of membership as districted Circle K clubs. In 1995 expansion efforts are targeted for the Philippines. In 1997, expansion efforts will be targeted in the Andean and Central America District of Kiwanis International, and in 1999, expansion will be targeted in Korea.

CONCLUSION

Circle K International has grown tremendously over the past 40 years, sometimes in spirit, sometimes in members, and still other times in service to the community. Circle K International is continuing to move toward ever-increasing service and leadership development as well as providing fellowship and personal growth to the members. Though history provides a good foundation from which to view achievements and obstacles, Circle K International must connect the organization's mission with tomorrow's college students and tomorrow's student organizations to envision the possibilities for the organization and realize its dream of creating a better world in which to live.