

Founding the Kiwanis Club of the Horse Heaven Hills

by Doug Brown

The Kiwanis Club of the Horse Heaven Hills was organized by individuals from the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick. During the latter part of our organizational phase, the Kennewick Club agreed to be our sponsoring club, but our initial structure, priorities and schedule were set by our new club committee. They worked independently of the Kennewick Club's Board of Directors or committees. In the conventional method of club formation, a team from the sponsoring club organizes the new club, recruits new members, assists them during their first year, and then returns the sponsoring club. Our beginnings followed a very different path.

Catalyst Issue: Crowding

At the November 2nd, 2006 Board meeting of the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick, the newly formed "Executive Committee," i.e., the club officers¹, recommended moving club meetings from Leo's Restaurant to the Clover Island Inn in Kennewick. Their recommendation was based on crowding at club meetings. The growing club had about 110 members and the Kennewick Fire Department's allowed maximum for Leo's was 91. The crowding was uncomfortable and threatened future growth. Following the Executive Committee's recommendation, the Board voted to move the club meetings effective January 2, 2007, but several attendees at the meeting strongly objected. These concerns were echoed during the next club meeting by members who felt strongly about maintaining the tradition of meeting at Leo's. Many of those voicing opposition to the change had been in the club for decades. The Board held a special meeting a few days later to further consider the issue. At that meeting, the Board decided not to execute the move they had approved on November 2nd because of the intense interest in the issue. Instead, the Board commissioned a study group to systematically document the reasons to support or oppose a move. Once the study group had compiled and reported its findings, a vote of the entire membership would decide the matter. Club bylaws did not provide for this decision process, but the Board concluded that such a vote was necessitated by the intensity of feelings.

Study & Vote

The study group was chaired by Doug Brown and included Don Anderson, Jim French, Marilyn Hyde and Cory Manly. This team provided every member an opportunity to voice their concerns, documented the various positions, and presented its report² to the January 4, 2007 Board meeting. The Board asked Doug to present the report to the entire membership at the January 9th club meeting. The Board also voted that the club would not move unless a 2/3 majority approved moving.

To ensure an objective count, a voting mechanism developed for the Historic Downtown Kennewick Partnership was used. A ballot and study group report were mailed to each club member on January 10th, 2007. For a ballot to be counted, it had to be returned by mail, postmarked by 5:00 PM on January 19th, 2007. The return envelopes were numbered,

¹ Officers of the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick in November 2006: President Larry Hansmeier, President-Elect Jo Harrington, Vice President Andy Perdue, Secretary Kathy Kilgore, Treasurer Stan Case, Immediate Past President Laurie Tufford. The "Executive Committee" was formed in October 2006.

² *Report of the Special Study Group of the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick Regarding a Proposed Move of Club Meetings from Leo's Restaurant to the Clover Island Inn - January 4th, 2007*

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stamped, addressed to a special post office box. Two respected Kennewick citizens independent of Kiwanis, Ken Silliman and Tim Dalton, and one club member, Jerry Buell, opened the envelopes and counted the ballots.

Ken Silliman reported the following vote count at the club meeting on January 30, 2007.

Ballots Mailed:	107	(one to each member)
Votes Cast:	93	
Votes Needed to Pass:	62	(2/3 of the votes cast)
Supporting Move:	43	
Opposing Move:	45	
Improperly Cast Votes:	5	(not returned by mail or not readable)

Not only had the proposed move not achieved the 2/3 majority the Board had required for approval, but a majority of properly cast votes opposed the move. Kennewick Kiwanis was staying put.

New Club Committee

Within two weeks of the vote, Kathye Kilgore organized a committee to explore forming a new Kiwanis club. Their motivation was to seek relief from the crowding at Leo's and to better position Kiwanis for growth in the Tri-Cities. At that point, leaving behind acrimony that had developed over the proposed move was also a factor. The members of new club committee were Kathye Kilgore, Andy Perdue, Larry Hansmeier, Jo Harrington, Ketra Stumpf, and Doug Brown. They held their first meeting on Wednesday, February 7, 2007 and met almost weekly during February and March at Kathye's office. This group was called a "TAG Team" (for *Together Achieving Growth*) by Kiwanis International, but we referred to ourselves as the "new club committee."

Early Decisions

Chair. After quickly establishing a consensus to develop a new club, one of the committee's first decisions was to elect Andy Perdue as chairperson.

Name. As the committee discussed possible names for the new club, *Kiwanis Club of the Three Rivers* was considered. However, that name had been used years earlier for a dinner club in the Tri-Cities that had not continued, so it was considered "tainted." The committee sought a fresh name that reflected something unique about our area. We settled on the *Kiwanis Club of the Horse Heaven Hills*, which later led to *Hoof Beats* for our newsletter and *Wrangler* for our birthdays-and-brags money collector during meetings.

Officers. We needed to formulate the slate of initial club officers. Since Larry, Jo and Andy were, respectively, president, president-elect and vice president of the Kennewick club, this was initially expected to be the case in the new club. Kathye agreed to serve as secretary and Ketra volunteered to become the club's first treasurer. However, Andy anticipated an intense year of personal obligations and suggested delaying his vice-presidential term for a year. Doug agreed to serve as the first vice president, with the understanding that Andy would be nominated to succeed him. Initially, it was the committee's intention that this slate of officers would serve until 9/30/2007. However, to stabilize the initial leadership team we decided it would be preferable if they hold their offices until 9/30/2008.

Board. We decided that our Board should be comprised of the club officers and five additional members. This meant that our initial Board would have 10 members, but subsequent Boards would have 11 after we filled our "Immediate Past President" position.

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Recruiting Requirement. Kiwanis International requires that 25 new Kiwanians are needed to charter a new club; members transferring from existing Kiwanis clubs do not count. The committee deferred scheduling the official launch of the club until we met that requirement.

Meetings. The committee only seriously considered one site, the Clover Island Inn, for club meetings and one time for our meetings: mid-day. After examining the schedule of lunch meetings of Tri-City Kiwanis clubs, Monday was selected as our meeting day to avoid conflicts with those clubs. Board meetings were scheduled to be held on the second Thursday of each month, also at the Clover Island Inn.

Mission Statement. We selected a simple, clear mission statement:

Serving the Mid-Columbia region of Washington State, with special emphasis on youth service.

Lieutenant Governor. Although the committee had yet to make its deliberations public, it decided to share its planning efforts with the Division 54 Lieutenant Governor. This was a courtesy to the Lieutenant Governor but quickly resulted in the committee being made known to all within the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick.

Recruiting

Recruiting 25 local citizens to join Kiwanis was the committee's most imposing task. Committee members solicited interest among friends and acquaintances and offered the opportunity to join a new service club, focused on youth, as "charter members." This was attractive, and within six weeks, the 25 required applications and checks were in hand.

In addition to the new recruits to Kiwanis, the committee members discussed the new club with some members of the Kennewick club, particularly those who had voiced their concern about the crowding. 24 members of the Kennewick club decided to transfer to the future club.

Sponsorship

The Kiwanis Club of Kennewick decided to be our official sponsors at their March 1, 2007 Board meeting. Their Board also approved donating \$1,000 to our club's administrative account to help us get started. These generous measures were passed unanimously. Later, Kennewick members Laurie Tufford and Rick Kilgore volunteered to serve as the official "seed members" and liaisons with the new club effort.

Launch in Sight

By early March, 2007 it was clear that we had our recruiting requirement met and we submitted our request for charter to Kiwanis International. Our initial roster listed 48 charter members, including 25 new to Kiwanis. One transfer member was omitted by clerical error, later corrected, so we actually started with 49 Charter Members.

We scheduled several formal events that Kiwanis International suggested for new club formation. Our official "organizational meeting" was set for the evening of April 9th, which Lt. Gov. Bob Woehler agreed to chair. Our first club meeting was scheduled for May 21st, and our "charter presentation" was scheduled for June 4th. In addition, a dinner meeting was planned for April 25th to get acquainted and conduct an auction to raise money for the new administrative account. Enthusiasm ran high!

Taking Flight

Kiwanis International delighted us by processing our petition for charter quickly.

Organizational Meeting

The Kiwanis Club of the Horse Heaven Hills was officially founded on April 9, 2007 at our organization meeting. This is also the date of our club charter. Lt. Gov. Woehler chaired the meeting and Ben Kocourek represented Kiwanis International. Each officer and board member introduced themselves and said a few words about their role. In addition to the club officers, our first Board included Marilyn Hyde, Teri Moore, Andy Perdue, Donna Underwood, and Karla Whiteside. We formally approved the schedules for club and board meetings, elected our secretary, and approved the depository for club funds, e.g., where to bank.

First Social & Fund Raiser

The April 25th dinner social and auction at Camp Kiwanis were a great success. Almost all of the members attended, the mood was exuberant, and the auction earned several hundred dollars for our administrative account.

First Club Meeting

Our first meeting on May 21st was a festive affair, complete with birthday cake and numerous distinguished guests. We were honored by the presence of Pacific Northwest Governor Lori Bryant, Governor-Elect Rich Jensen, Division 54 Lt. Gov. Bob Woehler and Richland Mayor Rob Welch. We were further honored by InterClub delegations from the Kiwanis Clubs of Kennewick, Atomic City Club, Pasco, Richland and Tri-Cities Industry. Governor Bryant and Governor-Elect Jensen congratulated the Kiwanis Club of Kennewick for their sponsorship of the new club and recognized the members of the newly formed Kiwanis Club of the Horse Heaven Hills Club. It was a gratifying first meeting.

Early Service

Within our six months we undertook a remarkable series of community service projects.

- Landscaping: helped beautify the City of Kennewick Frost Building.
- Second Harvest Tri-Cities: collected community donations for the Letter Carrier's Food Drive and sorted food at their warehouse
- Children's Development Center: painted three rooms
- Tri-City Herald Kid's Day: raised money for Catholic Family Services
- Park Middle School: spoke to students on Career Day on how to find a job
- Benton-Franklin Fair: ushered at the rodeo arena to raise community service funds
- K-Kids: started service clubs at Virgie Robinson and Eastgate Elementary Schools
- Dinner Dance: started an annual fall fund raising event for youth services
- Krispy Kreme: raised money for community service
- J&S Dreamland Express: assumed ownership and operation of the beloved kids train
- Demonstration Garden: helped with landscaping

Our fledging club was off to an inspiring start, with satisfying camaraderie and immediate demonstrations of our commitment to service.