



## THE FIRST KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION SETS THE ORGANIZATION'S DIRECTION

Perhaps nowhere else in the history of Kiwanis is there reflected more evidence of changing times and changing attitudes than in the story of the organization's International conventions. Early sessions reflected the understandable need to set up a better structure for the organization to ensure its success. But over the years, fellowship became more and more prominent, and elaborate programs of entertainment were eagerly anticipated by convention-goers.

Early in the organization's history, convention sites were rotated among established Kiwanis regions, but by the 1950s it became evident that only a limited number of cities could host a Kiwanis International convention. Now made four to five years in advance, the selection of a convention city focuses more on available facilities and the interest and extent of support to be found in local Kiwanis clubs, the city, and local convention officials.

### Historic Highlights

- 1916 -- The first convention, May 18-19, in Cleveland, Ohio, unified the founding clubs into "The National Kiwanis Club," and a Constitution was approved. George F. Hixson was elected to the first of his two terms as President of the National Kiwanis Club. Later that year, headlines would proclaim "Kiwaniis Becomes International," when the Kiwanis Club of Hamilton, Ontario, was organized on November 1.
- 1919 -- Kiwanis declared its independence in Birmingham, Alabama.

In a wave of check writing, attendees raised \$17,500 in one-half hour to buy Kiwanis from founder Allen Browne.

- 1922 -- The first convention staged outside the United States was in Toronto, Ontario.
- 1924 — Kiwanis' six permanent Objects were adopted during the convention in Denver, Colorado. During the same convention, the first song was written for Kiwanis. George Sanford Holmes, president of the Kiwanis Club of Denver, wrote the words to *Onward in Kiwanis* for the convention that year.

Music and other forms of entertainment always have been key elements of Kiwanis conventions. Past appearances have included Bob Hope, Bill Cosby, Debbie Reynolds, and Jay Leno.

By the 9th Annual International Convention, prominent speakers were invited to address the conventions on non-Kiwanis topics. Through Kiwanis' history, these speakers have included the Honorable Angus MacDonald, premier of Nova Scotia (1934); US Federal Bureau of Investigation Director, J. Edgar Hoover (1936); US Vice-President Richard Nixon; Christian evangelist Dr. Billy Graham; Roman Catholic Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen; TV personality Art Linkletter, and US President Ronald Reagan.

- 1927 -- Efforts to provide educational opportunities began with the convention in Memphis, Tennessee. Various forums, workshops, and other instructional sessions have been provided over the years.
- 1935 — The first nationwide broadcast of a Kiwanis convention was aired by the Columbia Network across the US by KTSA in San Antonio, Texas.
- 1943 – The only interruption in annual

conventions came when World War II made it necessary to substitute an International Council meeting for the convention. A small administrative convention was conducted in 1944 with limited attendance. In 1945, the International Council again conducted the necessary business, but in 1946, Kiwanis resumed its regular convention operation. With nearly 10,000 people present, the Atlantic City, New Jersey convention of that year broke all previous convention attendance records.

- 1961 – Delegates in Toronto, Ontario, Canada adopted one of the most important resolutions in the history of Kiwanis: “Resolved, we favor the establishment of Kiwanis clubs in other countries in addition to Canada and the United States.”
- 1983 – For the first time in its history, Kiwanis International stages its annual convention outside the US and Canada – in Vienna, Austria. The entertainment at the closing session included artists who performed in superb solos, duets, and group renditions. Kiwanis would return to Europe in 1993 with its 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in Nice, France.

- 1987 – The House of Delegates in Washington, DC, eliminated gender as a qualification for membership in all Kiwanis clubs.

Regardless of programs, speakers, and Kiwanis business, the most important concern is always the inspiring effect the convention has on those attending. Many Kiwanians have said that they never truly appreciated the vast scope of their organization until they attended their first International convention. Almost everyone – whether a Kiwanian, a spouse, guest, son, or daughter – experiences a great thrill of unity and accomplishment when, at the convention’s close, thousands join hands to sing *Auld Lang Syne*. Then, the President sounds the Kiwanis gong and proclaims, “This convention of Kiwanis International is adjourned.”

## KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

<u>Location</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Cleveland, Ohio	1916	Unavailable
Detroit, Michigan	1917	“ “
Providence, Rhode Island	1918	“ “
Birmingham, Alabama	1919	“ “
Portland, Oregon	1920	“ “
Cleveland, Ohio	1921	“ ”
Toronto, Ontario	1922	4,260
Atlanta, Georgia	1923	3,854
Denver, Colorado	1924	3,373
St. Paul, Minnesota	1925	4,459
Montreal, Quebec	1926	5,248
Memphis, Tennessee	1927	4,062
Seattle, Washington	1928	4,510
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1929	4,500
Atlantic City, New Jersey	1930	4,228
Miami, Florida	1931	3,511
Detroit, Michigan	1932	2,529
Los Angeles, California	1933	2,790
Toronto, Ontario	1934	2,582
San Antonio, Texas	1935	2,708
Washington, D.C.	1936	4,037
Indianapolis, Indiana	1937	4,009
San Francisco, California	1938	4,056
Boston, Massachusetts	1939	4,129
Minneapolis, Minnesota	1940	4,188
Atlanta, Georgia	1941	5,325
Cleveland, Ohio	1942	5,724
Wartime Conference, Chicago, Illinois	1943	Limited Attendance
Convention and Wartime Conference, Chicago, Illinois	1944	“ “
Wartime Council, Chicago, Illinois	1945	“ “
Atlantic City, New Jersey	1946	9,855
Chicago, Illinois	1947	9,800
Los Angeles, California	1948	12,544
Atlantic City, New Jersey	1949	8,856
Miami, Florida	1950	9,765
St. Louis, Missouri	1951	11,316
Seattle, Washington	1952	11,412
New York, New York	1953	12,644
Miami, Florida	1954	10,040
Cleveland, Ohio	1955	12,086
San Francisco, California	1956	13,452
Atlantic City, New Jersey	1957	13,354
Chicago, Illinois	1958	12,493
Dallas, Texas	1959	13,100
Miami Beach, Florida	1960	15,166
Toronto, Ontario	1961	18,313
Denver, Colorado	1962	16,855

(Continued)

<u>Location</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Atlantic City, New Jersey	1963	16,447
Los Angeles, California	1964	16,142
New York, New York	1965	18,396
Portland, Oregon	1966	14,371
Houston, Texas	1967	15,195
Toronto, Ontario	1968	17,830
Miami Beach, Florida	1969	19,106
Detroit, Michigan	1970	15,787
San Francisco, California	1971	16,413
Atlantic City, New Jersey	1972	15,750
Montreal, Quebec	1973	17,843
Denver, Colorado	1974	18,104
Atlanta, Georgia	1975	19,959
San Diego, California	1976	18,140
Dallas, Texas	1977	16,788
Miami Beach, Florida	1978	14,854
Toronto, Ontario	1979	18,101
Anaheim, California	1980	15,995
New Orleans, Louisiana	1981	16,538
Minneapolis, Minnesota	1982	15,424
Vienna, Austria	1983	10,000
Phoenix, Arizona	1984	11,403
Toronto, Ontario	1985	12,271
Houston, Texas	1986	9,593
Washington, DC	1987	12,164
Seattle, Washington	1988	11,746
Orlando, Florida	1989	12,486
St. Louis, Missouri	1990	11,788
Anaheim, California	1991	12,589
Indianapolis, Indiana	1992	10,864
Nice, France	1993	6,897
New Orleans, Louisiana	1994	12,699
Las Vegas, Nevada	1995	13,823
Salt Lake City, Utah	1996	10,562
Nashville, Tennessee	1997	13,603
Montreal, Quebec	1998	10,685
Denver, Colorado	1999	10,544
Miami Beach, Florida	2000	8,202
Taipei, Taiwan, ROC	2001	10,073
New Orleans, Louisiana	2002	9,474
Indianapolis, Indiana	2003	6,941
St. Louis, Missouri	2004	6,253
Honolulu, Hawaii	2005	
Rome, Italy	2006	
San Antonio, Texas	2007	
Orlando, Florida	2008	
Nashville, Tennessee	2009	
Las Vegas, Nevada	2010	

Source: *Dimensions of Service, The Kiwanis Story*  
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