This year’s Governor’s Project, “Kiwanis and Kids Fit Together,” is being met with some exciting ideas and events to try to help combat the problem of childhood obesity. A recent Duke University study stated that obesity in children is an epidemic that threatens to wipe out other improvements made in the children health and safety areas over the last several years. The report claims that there has been a rise of over 16% in obesity cases in children in just the last few years. Many of these children have suffered the effects of drug use and have committed violent crimes. We as Kiwanians have the ability and dedication to make a difference in the way our children eat, play, and socialize.

Many of our clubs and divisions are doing their share to make that difference. Several clubs have purchased uniforms for local sports teams. These purchases give our local clubs a reason to be active and to look forward to being part of a team. Our members also lend their support and encouragement to these players during their games. The President’s Challenge for Physical Fitness was also a project both the Kiwanians and their children could do together. They recorded their activities and kept track of their progress. Better nutritional awareness is another step many of our clubs have taken. For example, a speaker goes into our local schools and talks about the benefits of good eating habits and increases awareness of the food groups that help fuel our bodies so we can be more active.

All of these events and ideas started at the local level from people like yourself. We all read and see on television the problems and effects that obesity causes. We need you to continue.

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Our District New Club Building team, including Mike and your regional New Club Builder, will also make themselves available for whatever assistance you may need.

Let’s work together now to begin building the greater New York District that will extend Kiwanis service to many communities where it is now unknown, as we expand our mission to serve the children of the world.

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Last call to register for our International Convention in St. Louis from June 25 to 29, 2004! If you have never been there, St. Louis is a fantastic city with many family-oriented tourist attractions and a wonderful night life. If you have never been at an International Convention at all, it’s a fantastic experience at which camaraderie is shared by thousands of Kiwanians and guests from all over the world.

In addition to electing our International officers, our delegates there (two from each club) will reach decisions that will affect Kiwanis for decades to come. For example, there will be proposed bylaw amendments this year that would switch our clubs to a staggered annual dues payment system; that would mandate that any motion requiring a 2/3’s vote be voted upon by paper ballot; and that would merge our constitution and bylaws. Your club should be there to be heard on all of these matters, and please note that your attendance is also part of your distinguished club criteria.

There will also be workshops and forums that will offer the best ideas from over the Kiwanis world on membership growth, fund raising and service projects, just to name a few topics. And the entertainment will be outstanding, with Willie Nelson and others performing at our Superstar Night. We are also going to have a lovely District Brunch on Sunday morning of the convention at the top of our hotel, the Sheraton City Center, a great looking hotel right in the heart of the city and within convenient distance of all destinations. The view from the ballroom is breathtaking; we will have live St. Louis jazz to entertain us; and the food will be delicious.

I hope that all of you will plan to meet us in St. Louis!