



ADRIAN KIWANIS “AVENUE OF THE FLAGS” HISTORY

Ray Maxe was our Kiwanis program back in August of 2012. He told us about a Flag Project his son works on for a service club in Des Moines Iowa. Ray thought the project would work in Adrian, but when he presented it to his club, Adrian Rotary, they declined to be involved. He suggested the project would be a good fit for our Kiwanis Club. A few weeks after that program, nothing else was heard about a flag project. David Siler approached his friend Larry Stephan and suggested those two would be a good team to try out the flag project.

The project was of a patriotic nature, would help beautify the city, and could be a good fundraiser for the club. It sounded good from all points of view.

David and Larry introduced the concept of the project at the next Kiwanis Board meeting. The Board asked that a pro forma be assembled and brought back to the board for further consideration. Dave and Larry first approached the City of Adrian and the Road Commission and secured their approval for allowing flags in the street rights-of-way. David prepared a pro forma that indicated the project could be a huge success. There are approximately 4000 households in Adrian. With saturation of 20% of that market, a good deal of money could be made and it did not look that impossible. The Board of Directors gave their approval for the project. During that winter, Dave and Larry worked out the details for the project that they called “The Avenue of the Flags” and it was started in 2012.

The original concept was to put up the flags the morning of the holiday and retrieve them at dusk. It was later found to be more practical to put the flags up a day or two early and leave them up a few days after the holiday. This made a nicer display but more important gave our manpower more time to get the job done.

The project started with Dave and Larry walking up and down Scott and McKenzie Streets knocking on doors and selling subscriptions. They were happy with the response. It soon spread to College Avenue and Michigan Avenue, and the project was off to a great start.

Meanwhile the details on how to build and install the flags were worked out. Ten-foot sections of electrical conduit were used as a mast and the flags were bought from Lowes at a discount. Different anchor types were tried, and it was found a size larger conduit worked perfectly for the base. A work bee was called to order at Adrian Mechanical to assemble the first 50 flags and anchors. Mike Buku graciously donated the 10’ conduits at his expense for several years. Holes were drilled by Adrian Mechanical.

The method of assembly and installing the anchors took some trial and error. Drilling a hole in the ground to set the anchors was tried first. This was a lot of work and the results were not good since there was too much play in the assembly. It was soon found that driving the anchor

into the ground using a fence post driver worked best. It was the original goal to set the 10' conduit entirely above the ground using a piece of pipe inside the anchor and mast conduits.

But this did not work well, driving a 1-1/2" steel rod driven directly into the ground with a post driver to create the hole first was found to work best. The anchor could then be pounded directly into the hole. The aluminum inserts were not an advantage, so the 1" mast shaft was placed directly into the 1-1/2" anchor thus creating a 9' high mast. A yellow plastic cap was set on top of the flagpole and it was moved to cover the top of the ground anchor pipe when the pole was removed. The receptacle sleeves are placed flush at the ground so not to impede walking or lawn maintenance. Careful record keeping of the insert locations was found to be very helpful in finding the insert when it would be overgrown with grass. A white spray paint mark on the pavement identifies the location. The flag location was generally in front of the door to the residence.

The name "Avenue of Flags" was appropriate since they looked so good lining the streets. Charging \$50 a year for the subscription was considered, but it was decided to lower the price to \$40. For three or more flags at one address location we charge \$35. We also sell an eternal flag to those outside our servicing area, a one-time charge of \$100 they maintain it.

Flags are put up 6 times a year: Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, 9-11 and Veteran's Day. The idea became accepted by the residents and sales increased annually.

In the beginning Larry and Dave installed all of the anchors. Larry did the post driving and Dave assisted with locations and by holding the plumb bob to be sure the masts were perfectly vertical. Larry managed the booking and record keeping and Dave worked on the details, manpower and getting the flags up and down around the holidays.

At about 125 subscribers, Larry had problems pounding anchor rods into the ground. Howard Pennington joined the team and did the pounding. Dave rode with Howard locating the new subscribers and the doing record keeping. Dave and Howard spent several years of summer afternoons driving all over the Adrian area installing anchors at new sites that were subscribed. Often they would sell a flag to a neighbor who saw them doing an installation next door.

During the early time of the project, Larry and David assembled the flag and masts in Larry's garage. Later, work-bees were scheduled to help with the assemblies. The flags were stored in the upstairs area of the KRT Annex garage at the KRT hi-rise.

The flags were divided into several routes, with Kiwanis captains taking individual routes. The club membership stepped up to the task and was doing the installations. Sponsorship for flags around the Court House, the Fire Hall and other county/city buildings were received. It was a surprise how many commercial businesses subscribed.

The number of flags subscribed grew rapidly each year. When the sales passed 900, Dave and Larry turned the project committee and management to Julie Field, Lynne Punnett and Stephanie Dinius Lundy. Beginning in 2015 Julie took over the bookkeeping and management

work that Larry was doing, and in 2016 Lynne began recording and assigning routes that Dave was doing. Al Brittain joined Howard installing anchors. Sales soared and new teams were assigned. Bob Behnke installed flags for a while, soon Nate Hamblin and Chris Howard took over the anchor installations.

The new committee instituted a number of innovations to facilitate operations and to increase subscriptions. New sales techniques proved successful and the volume of subscribers continued to grow.

The number of flags eventually exceeded the number that could be installed reasonably by the club membership. In 2017, we formed a partnership with The Sheriff's Hard Labor Work Crew and they were assigned flags on commercial routes and covered the commercial areas placing 200 flags. In 2018 we formed a partnership with the Boy Scout Troupe #632 and paid a stipend to service 200 flags in the North East area of Adrian. Kiwanians go with both groups and take ownership of our project.

The original annual projection in David Siler's pro forma was achieved each year and the 10-year goal of 1660 flags by 2021 is certainly within reach. Currently Kiwanis is servicing 1420 flags on an annual basis.

Each year, the profit to the Kiwanis Club grew. The proceeds have been as follows:

2012	\$ 3,720
2013	\$ 6,220
2014	\$ 20,000
2015	\$ 12,000
2016	\$ 30,000
2017	\$ 45,000
2018	\$ 35,000
2019	\$ 35,000 to date

The total proceeds since the inception of the project is \$186,940!

It was realized that the expenses for the flags had grown since the subscription rate of \$40 was established. After careful analysis, the committee recommended to the club that the subscription rate be raised to \$45. The recommendation was approved.

Under the capable leadership of the current Flag Committee, the project should continue to grow and profit. It appears the project will only be limited to the number of flags the club can comfortably install on each holiday.

The project is certainly achieving the goals for receipts each year and it meets our original goal of being a flag awareness and patriotic display as well as a handsome fundraiser for the club.