



Cori Lewin

NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S KIWANIS CLUB!

ASBURY PARK CHAPTER REVIVED BY A DIVERSE GROUP OF YOUNG ADULTS

ASBURY PARK — This is not your grandfather's Kiwanis Club!

There is still so much that is uniquely Asbury Park — hasn't that always been the case? And the revival in 2020 of the Asbury Park Kiwanis Club is no exception.

When we think of a Kiwanis Club, what comes to mind are those organizations like the Rotary Club that were the mainstay of mainstream white male America.

Not that these groups didn't do positive things. They're devoted to community and service. It's just that what comes to mind isn't the Asbury Kiwanis Club of today.

Asbury Kiwanis President Cori Lewin is typical of that. We never thought of a Kiwanis Club led by a thirty year old woman of color. Of course, the group welcomes all adults of all ages in the Kiwanis mission to serve the youth and children of a community.

But the revival of the Asbury Kiwanis has been driven by a group of diverse young people in their late twenties and thirties. It's pretty remarkable. They're a reflection of young people in the new Asbury Park in general — interested in the arts, culture, community service and activism.

Lewin has lived in Asbury Park since 2018. She grew up in Princeton Junction out in Mercer County and is a Penn State graduate. She manages corporate fundraising for an education non-profit. Before that, she

worked in software sales for a company in Eatontown.

And Lewin is proud of the diversity and membership of the Asbury Kiwanis

"A lot of people have a certain idea in their head of what a Kiwanis Club looks like, but we have members from all walks of life," Lewin said. "We have representatives of different age groups, races, religions. We have members of the LGBTQ community."

"We really strive to make it a place where if you have the time and the energy to devote to make our community a better place for children, then we have a spot in our club for you," she said.

And, tell you what, unrelated to the Kiwanis Club or this article, Cori Lewin is potentially a future leader in Asbury Park. She's exactly the type of young person this newspaper wants to see in elected office. Lewin would be a natural. Already, she's demonstrating her commitment to community over self with her work in the Asbury Park Kiwanis Club. Keep an eye on her!

Kiwanis clubs started in 1915. Asbury Park's was founded in 1921. Back then, the city was the center of everything in Monmouth County which was mostly farms and undeveloped land. In line with its mission to serve youth, the Asbury Kiwanis started the Boys and Girls Club in 1938.

It's unclear how long the Asbury group was dormant before the charter was reactivated in 2020. TriCity does not recall an active Asbury Kiwanis

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when this newspaper started in 1999. Our guess is that the original Asbury Kiwanis gave up the ghost around that time and closed down.

How cool that a group of young people who represent today's diversified up-and-coming adults in Asbury reactivated such a retro organization! They have a ton of energy. It's great.

Lewin says the membership was 36 at last count, of which about 18 are particularly active. Members range from those in their 20s to their 60s, with the bulk in the late twenties to late thirties group. Of course, we again stress everyone is welcomed and encouraged to join. TriCity keeps focusing on the youthfulness of this organization because it's remarkable that young people would decide to bring back a Kiwanis Club.

The Asbury Park Kiwanis Club meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month at the public library at 500 First Avenue. Membership fees are \$175 for the year.

The group's focus is not on fundraising, but rather on action, Lewin said.

"We are not the kind of people just writing a check and dropping it off at an organization. Given the demographics of our club, that's just not something that we all have the means to do," said Lewin. "So fundraising is not a huge aspect of what we do. We like to focus on getting our members mobilized to work."

So you'll see Asbury Kiwanis members doing street cleanups. Or participating in the annual food drive which took place this past March where 450 boxes of food were given out in Springwood Park. In June, they had a fundraiser with Project Real, which supports LGBT youth in need in Asbury Park, with all proceeds going to that organization. The Asbury Kiwanis also had a family fun day in September.

And Lewin was excited about the group's first Book Ark, which they unveiled

at Bradley Elementary School. The Book Ark is filled up with books for children to take and read for free.

"We had an event where pretty much the whole school came out," Lewin said. "The kids were so excited about reading. To see kids so excited about reading a book was so great to see."

Visit asburyparkkiwanis.org for more information.

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