

Jack's Jottings



Can you feel the excitement in the air? It's 2012 and a new year brings new opportunities and new possibilities. It's a time to recommit to goals, including those of growth for your Club and the Optimist organization. Let's resolve to give "100% and then some" in everything we do this year!

When people think of February, they think of love and passion. There is one thing that all Optimists have in common – their passion for helping children. While each of us may have a different program or activity that we hold close to our hearts, the common thread is the emphasis on bringing out the best in kids.

The Childhood Cancer Campaign is a very special program to me and First Lady Sue. Imagine a world where fear is replaced by hope for parents and children when the doctor delivers a diagnosis of cancer. Optimists can play a role in providing that hope through the new Cure Childhood Cancer Campaign commitment with Johns Hopkins. Imagine being able to say "I'm an Optimist Member, a part of the organization that funded research for a cure to childhood cancer."

You don't have to imagine. Optimists are a part of this special endeavor and I urge you to get involved. Let's do our part to make hope a reality for these children and their families.

Think about asking a neighbor in your community if they wanted to join the organization that helped fund the research for a cure for childhood cancer. Who could say no?

Resolve to share your passion for Optimism with others. It's contagious. That dedication, enthusiasm and joy you get from being an Optimist Member needs to be shared. Remember how you became a Member? Aren't you thankful that someone in your life shared Optimism with you? Return the favor and invite someone in your office, school or community to a Club meeting or service project. There are potential new Members all around you...you just have to share your passion!

Let's make 2012 a great year for Optimism. Set big goals for your Club in regards to growth and reach for the stars. Remember... 100% and then some!



J. Creswell
Optimist International President

February 2012

Love Favors the Brave

by Kai Gansner, Director of Member Services

Renowned philosophers and authors impart wisdom – the kind that comes from experience, observation and openness. "Love is the beauty of the soul," said St. Augustine. "Be kind. Everyone is fighting a tough battle," said Philo Judeas. Zora Neale Hurston said, "Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place."

As Optimists, we strive for success in bettering people's lives, specifically the lives of children from the inside by helping them see what's already there. We start with love. We start with soul. We help them by allowing them to be comfortable in their own skin. We "talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person we meet." We "make all our friends feel that there is something in them," and we "are just as enthusiastic about the success of others as we are about our own."

Roman poet Ovid says that "love and fortune favor the brave." We should share our love for others, embody the Creed, and live like an Optimist. Share that Optimism with others by asking them to be your Friend (<http://www.optimist.org/friend>) or to accompany you to a service activity. After all, that's what we're all about. Love and fortune favor the brave. Be brave.

Inside this issue:

4 - New Approach to Fighting
Cancer

6 - Add Spice to
your Club

Deadlines Approach

for Bylaws Amendments and Convention Resolutions

The time to speak up is now. Please take time to re-evaluate the Optimist International Bylaws and make sure they continue to effectively serve the organization. By doing this, you and your Club can help shape and improve all of Optimist International.

If your Club wants to recommend a revision, it must submit a proposed amendment citing the article and section, and exact proposed wording change to all articles and sections cited, along with a written rationale (in 200 words or less) for the change. The Club must submit the proposal on Club letterhead signed by the Club President. The proposal may be e-mailed or faxed to the International Office, but the original Club letter must be received in the International Office in order for the proposal to be considered. The rationale as submitted will be printed in the May issue of the Hotline. All submitted changes will be brought before the 2012 Convention delegates for vote and possible endorsement.

All proposed change submissions for the Bylaws must be received at the International Office by 5 p.m. (CST) April 13, 2012. Items postmarked on or before but received after April 13 will not be accepted. Please mail them to: Dana Thomas, Executive Assistant, Optimist International, 4494 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108.

Resolutions for All Other Subjects

The Convention Resolutions Process can be used for any aspect of the organization not covered in the Bylaws. Clubs must submit resolutions by May 13, 2012, to the Resolutions Committee. The committee will choose the strongest resolutions and report them to Convention delegates on Saturday, July 10, for debate and vote. Please note that resolutions endorsed by Convention delegates are non-binding and are sent to the International Board of Directors for further consideration and study.

Please type resolutions on Club stationery and include your Club name, Club number and Club President's signature. All resolutions should be written in standard resolution format: "Whereas ... , Whereas ... , Whereas ... , Be it resolved that the Board of Directors of Optimist International is asked to consider... ." Please mail your resolutions to:

Resolutions Committee, Optimist International, 4494 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108.

Become a Certified Trainer at Convention

There will be a Club Trainer class offered in Milwaukee on Wednesday, July 11 beginning at 9:00 am. Please contact the Leadership Development department at leadership@optimist.org if you would like to sign up for this class.



Circle the Date-
**Club Essay
Winners Due**

The deadline for Clubs to submit their winning entry is **February 28**. Clubs should submit the District Entry Form, winner's birth certificate or passport and the winning essay to their District Chair. If you do not know who the Chair is in your District, please contact the Programs Department at programs@optimist.org.

Essay Contest Structure Change

During their December meeting, the Optimist International Board of Directors voted to discontinue the International level of the Essay contest beginning in the 2011-2012 year. The scholarships at the International level were previously discontinued and this change was made to ensure that all Optimist contests are equitable.

Updated planning guides for the Club and District level and student applications can be found on the Optimist website. One winner from each participating District will be awarded a \$2500 scholarship funded by the Optimist International Foundations.



Optimists Can Make a Difference in Fight Against Childhood Cancer



The only lasting effect from Joey's cancer is his eyesight, but he does well with his glasses.

By Barb Scirto-Sullivan, Chair of the International Activities Committee

Did you know that each year in North America alone more than 12,000 children and teenagers will be diagnosed with cancer? And that one in every 330 Americans develops cancer before the age of 20? Cancer is the number 1 disease killing children today. It kills more children than asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis and AIDS...combined.

The statistics are pretty depressing, but the good news is that the cancer death rate has dropped more dramatically for children than for any other group. More than 400,000 patient-years of life are being saved each year using newly developed treatments for children with cancer. Up to 75% of childhood cancer can now be cured.

Do you need close-to-home proof? My sweet grandson (pictured) was born with neuroblastoma. He went through chemotherapy at 6 months old and because of the advances in combinations of drugs, he and his twin sister celebrated their third birthdays at preschool together.

In 2001, the Optimist International Childhood Cancer Campaign was established, with a 10 year program commitment, and a mission statement that "Optimist International shall be the leading force to rid the world of childhood cancer."

We met our \$1 million commitment to fund an Endowed Research Fellowship at Johns Hopkins in 2009, which helped make breakthrough discoveries in the fight against childhood cancer.

In 2012, Clubs are still donating funds to research to help find a cure, and now those funds will have a specific focus in the continuation of our Childhood Cancer Campaign.

The Board of Directors voted at their December meeting to once again partner with Johns Hopkins Pediatric Oncology. The \$500,000 commitment, over a 5 year period, will help Johns Hopkins significantly expand their clinical and research programs in childhood leukemia, pediatric brain tumors, sarcomas and other solid tumors, and bone marrow transplantation.

"For the first time in the history of medicine, scientists are uncovering how specific alterations in DNA cause cancer. Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center scientists are leading this exploration and have deciphered the genetic blueprints of more cancers, including the first pediatric cancer, than any other research team," said Stephanie Davis, the Senior Director of Development in the Division of Pediatric Oncology, SKCCC. "Through multi center collaborations and clinical trials, this research is being translated into new therapies that will benefit patients throughout the United States and around the world."

As Optimists, we have the awesome opportunity and responsibility to affect the direction of our future by touching our children. The Childhood Cancer Campaign is an opportunity to do just that. By providing hope and positive vision...and then some... we can rid the world of this disease!

Optimist Fellow Has a *Natural Approach* to Fighting Cancer

Article contributed by Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center

Cancer is, in essence, normal cells that have gone awry. Through complex alterations to cell DNA and the chemicals surrounding the DNA, they acquire the ability to evade death and to divide and grow uncontrollably. Since cancer cells derive from normal cells, the immune system does not recognize them as dangerous cells and attack them as it would viruses, bacteria and other unwanted invaders.

Brian Ladle, M.D., Ph.D., a pediatric cancer clinician, immune therapy researcher and 2012 Optimist Fellow at Johns Hopkins is working to change that. As immune cells can travel anywhere throughout the body—inside bones and to organs and tissues—he is excited about the potential of immune therapies as a less toxic approach to destroying cancers.

His quest to find answers in the laboratory is fueled by what he sees at the bedside. “It’s a privilege to be able to cure kids of cancer, but right now, what we have to put them through to get them there is unacceptable,” says Ladle. “We have to do better for them.” Ladle is referring to patients like 14-year-old Brooke Shockley who has spent most of the last nine months in the hospital undergoing multiple surgeries and receiving chemotherapy for bone cancer (osteosarcoma) and still has more surgery and treatment ahead. The vibrant young teen, whose infectious smile and unwavering determination are inspiring, went from playing soccer to now having to learn to walk again after losing half of her hip to the insidious cancer.

Ladle believes that his research will result in ways to launch an immune response targeted specifically to cancer cells. While he doesn’t think immune therapy will completely replace the need for surgery and chemotherapy, he thinks it has great potential to reduce the amount and duration of treatment. More importantly, these ramped up immune cells could travel throughout the body to seek out and destroy lingering cancer cells that often result in the recurrence and spread of cancers. In Brooke’s case, cells from the original tumor in her hip broke away and allowed the cancer to spread to her lungs and shoulder. In Ladle’s approach, immune cells would be on constant watch for these rogue cells, getting rid of them before they spread the cancer and making sure it does not return.

His research—and its promise—are an example of what the Optimist fellowship can help accomplish. Working under the guidance of leading cancer vaccine researcher Elizabeth Jaffee and fellow pediatric oncologist Christopher Gamper, Ladle has embarked on brand new, among the first of its kind research. He is deciphering links between T cell behavior, the main cells activated in an immune response, and the epigenetic or chemical environment of T cell DNA. Ladle says that the DNA code of a T cell that has never been activated is identical to that of T cells engaged in an immune attack. Therefore, he suspects there are changes that occur in the chemicals that surround the DNA that help signal it to remain dormant or go into action.



Brian Ladle, M.D., Ph.D., 2012 Optimist Fellow



Research in immune therapies will lead to better treatment for kids and teens like Brooke Shockley.

In this work, Ladle has a wealth of information from which to pull. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center have pioneered cancer vaccines for pancreas and breast cancers and developed some of the first epigenetic-targeted therapies, leading to the first FDA-approved drug for this type of therapy. “While there is an exhaustive amount of work in both disciplines—immune therapy and epigenetics—Optimist funding has made it possible for Ladle to become one of the first to bridge both fields and decipher how they are related.”

His research has uncovered key findings that show the immune system doesn't just ignore cancer cells but it actually protects them. He believes that these chemical changes known as epigenetics may play a key role in the process. As a result, he is deciphering the normal epigenetic activity of immune T cells and exploring whether existing epigenetic targeted treatments might be able to augment immune responses to cancer.

While there has been some success in cancer immune therapies in adults, little work has been done in pediatric cancers. “This is the main reason I wanted to work in pediatric oncology,” says Ladle. “There is so much promise. We know that children's immune systems are much more responsive than adult's.” What Ladle envisions are treatments that harness and deploy the body's own natural ability to fight cancer and will decrease the need for invasive surgeries and toxic, cell-poisoning drugs.

He says there is a lot to figure out, and he is grateful to Optimist for making it possible. “Research funding is very tight now, and there are not many scientists exploring the connection between epigenetics and immune therapies,” says Ladle. In addition to the Optimist Fellowship Program, the new Optimist International Innovative Research Fund at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center will support the groundbreaking research of other pediatric cancer scientists. “Through research, we can develop better and less toxic treatments, we can decrease the amount of time kids are sick and in the hospital and the long-term side effects caused by toxic treatments,” says Ladle. “We can get children back to their lives—to just being a kid again.”

“While there is an exhaustive amount of work in both disciplines—immune therapy and epigenetics—Optimist funding has made it possible for Ladle to become one of the first to bridge both fields and decipher how they are related.”

Be a part of the Optimist effort to cure childhood cancer

Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children living with this illness. Help spread some hope today and donate funds to research at Johns Hopkins.

Please send contributions to:

Optimist International Foundation, Attn: Childhood Cancer Campaign,
4494 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108

Checks should be made out to OIF-CCC. Make sure to write “Johns Hopkins” on the memo line of the check or include a letter that says the funds should be directed to Johns Hopkins research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Programs Department at (800) 500-8130 or via e-mail at communications@optimist.org.



Variety is the Spice of Club Life

Remember what you wanted to be “when you grew up”? A cowboy? A fireman? A banker? A train engineer? An airline pilot? Children today are no different... they have lots of dreams. To effectively interact with them and the communities we serve, we must have a Club membership comprised of people from a variety of walks of life!

During the months of February and March, Optimist International’s Membership Committee is asking each Club to look at themselves and determine the “variety” that exists within their Club. Using a chart or list, take an inventory of the various professions of your current membership. Brainstorm with your Members about the careers and job categories that are missing from your Club. Identify individuals in your community who are involved in those careers, make a list, and develop a recruiting program to bring them into your Club. This approach is an excellent way to develop a list for your upcoming NOW program or team recruiting program. It will even work for individual recruiting.

So come on! Add a little spice to your Club’s life!

For more information, visit www.optimist.org/NOW.



Optimist Golf's **NEW SPRING SERIES** to Begin in April

Optimist Golf is excited to announce the new Optimist Junior Golf Spring Series! The 36-hole tournaments, featuring 75-90 junior golfers, will take place during the months of February, March, April and May each year. The full series will begin in 2013, however Optimist Golf will kick off the new series with a single event in the Spring of 2012.

The Lonnie Poole Golf Course at North Carolina State will host the inaugural Optimist Junior Golf Spring Series event on April 28-29, 2012. Lonnie Poole Golf Course is located on the campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina. The course is home to the NC State Wolfpack men's and women's golf teams and also houses the facilities for the University's PGA Golf Management program.

This event will be an open-registration tournament featuring three age divisions: Boys 16-18, Boys 14-15 and Girls 14-18. Online registration will open in mid-February and the registration deadline is April 13. The goal of the event is to increase the promotion and exposure of the Optimist Golf program regionally, nationally and internationally. Participants of the Spring Series will be included in Optimist Golf's national and international promotional efforts and will be strongly encouraged to participate in the Optimist District qualifying process.

For more information on the first Spring Series event, [click here](#).



A Conversation Can Make a Difference

"John, I'm glad you could meet with me to talk. This place brews the best coffee."

"Well, Jane I'm always glad to grab a cup of coffee and get in out of the cold weather. Plus, I really enjoy hearing about the projects you've been doing with the kids in the community."

"And I love talking about it! It has brought a lot of enjoyment to my life and I feel that it could do that same for you."

"I would love to give something back. How do we start making this happen?"

"You'll want to talk to a few people in town and find out if they'd be willing to join you. Anyone who wants to serve the needs of kids will have something to contribute to the group. Your programs are all your own. I'm sure you can put together some really unique fundraisers and activities."

"That sounds great! I have a few people in mind already and a lot of ideas I'm excited about sharing. I really want to make this a better place for children to grow up."



Dates Set for 2012 Optimist International Junior Golf Championships

Mark your calendar for the dates of "The Optimist" at PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. The Boys 10-11, 12-13 & 14-15 divisions and the Girls 10-12 & 13-14 divisions are scheduled for July 19-24. The older age groups (Boys 16-18 & Girls 15-18) will compete from July 24-29.

In addition to the international championships, Optimist Golf also offers two single-day events held during "The Optimist." On July 19, two-player teams featuring one junior golfer and one parent, step-parent, grandparent or aunt/uncle will compete in the second annual Optimist Golf Parent-Child Classic. Demonstrating the international scope of "The Optimist," junior golfers from more than 20 different countries will team up to play in the Optimist Golf World Cup on July 24.

For details about everything that will be happening at the 2012 Optimist International Junior Golf Championships, in addition to information on how golfers can qualify through one of 50-plus Optimist District qualifying tournaments, [click here](#).



Reading Program Helps Deployed Troops

Stay in Touch



Story by Spc. William Begley

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan—A soldier turns on the video camera to record the book, “How the Grinch stole Christmas.”

As he reads, memories of sharing the story with his 9-year-old son come flooding back. He pauses just a few moments after reading. He doesn’t want his son to see him cry.

In Afghanistan, the time difference is over 12 hours from where his son lives. Sometimes, he thinks it’s easier to just stay busy and forget his emotions. It’s a coping mechanism that has kept him sane through all his deployments.

After regaining his composure, he continues reading into the camera lens. After just a few sentences, he realizes the camera has become his son.

Sponsored and run by the United Services Organization, the United Through Reading program, on Bagram Air Field and at USO Centers around the globe, offers deployed service members an opportunity to keep in touch with their children through the use of books and DVDs.

“I absolutely love this program. It provides an important connection point between parents and kids,” said Cathe Ganley, the duty manager of the BAF USO.

Service members taking part in the program first sign up for a time slot. The USO has books available or they may bring one with them. While the service member reads, the camera instantly records onto a DVD. Once finished, the book and the DVD are mailed at no cost to their children back home.

U.S. Army Sgt. Madelyn Gonzalez, of Aguada, Puerto Rico, a paralegal for Task Force 44th Medical, has used the program three times and believes it helps bridge the gap with her 3-year-old son while she is deployed.

“When I was reading, the book was basically saying that no matter what he did or how many stunts he pulled as a kid, I would love him no matter what,” said Gonzalez. “Knowing that even though I can’t be there with him, he can take a little piece of me when he goes to bed brings tears to my eyes.”

Air Force Lt. Col. Tom Posch, of Alexandria, Va., the Staff Judge Advocate for the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, has used the United Through Reading (UTR) program to stay in touch with his four children, ranging from age 1 to 7 years old. He said his kids love to see him on the TV or computer screen.

“It seemed like an incredible way to stay connected with the kids,” he said. “They really miss having that regular contact when I’m deployed.” *Continued on next page.*



U.S. Army Sgt. Madelyn Gonzalez reads a book to her 3-year-old son at Bagram Air Field with the help of the United Through Reading program.

When the soldier reaches the part of the story where the Grinch's heart grows three sizes while listening to the Whos singing down in Whoville, he pauses the camera. Once again trying to stop the tears, he calls upon Ganley's advice on what to do if it gets too hard to read.

"Sometimes service members will just read about half way through and have the kids finish the rest on their own," said Ganley.

Everyone is given privacy since it can be a very emotional experience, said Ganley. The UTR program provides an excellent opportunity for parents to escape from their deployment lives and speak with their children one on one.

"It's their private time and opportunity for them to talk with their kids," she said. "We give them the time and the space to do what they need to do."

Ganley said that the program has no limits. She has had service members come in and read for their unborn children, just to start the bonding process. The program isn't just limited to service members with children; some service members have nieces and nephews.

The soldier finishes the DVD by telling his son something that he tells him every time they talk; the most important thing in the world is that his father loves him. He tells him to finish the book on his own and later when daddy gets home; he can tell him how it ended.



Recognizing District Chairs who go the **Extra Mile**

In an effort to acknowledge and encourage District Activities Chairs in promoting the programs that attract new Members and encourage participation in new activities, an exciting new incentive has been introduced.

District Activities Chairs will get their name and picture in *The Optimist* magazine and announced on the website, if:

- 50% of Clubs in the District support CCC through education or financial support
- 50% of Clubs in the District conduct a scholarship contest
- 75% of Clubs in the District submit a President's Pride Report by May 15, 2012
- 50% of Clubs in the District participate in the Internet Safety Program

A verification form will be sent to Governors upon request. District Chairs will be required to submit the verification form to Optimist International by June 15, 2012 to qualify for the incentive.

For more information or to request a verification form, contact programs@optimist.org