

**REPORT TO THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF
OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
BY THE**

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

**March 4-5, 2011
St. Louis, Missouri**

SECTION I - REQUESTS FOR BOARD ACTION

A. ORATORICAL CONTEST STRUCTURE

Rationale: The revisions to the age eligibility criteria established by the 2009-2010 Committee have proven to be controversial and have caused tension among Clubs and Districts that regularly sponsor contests. The main concern has been if students under the age of 19 as of December 31 were allowed to compete, the competition would be unfair to middle school and junior high participants. The judging criteria would be biased to the older students due to their higher levels of education and maturity. The younger students would be discouraged and less likely to participate.

The Committee spoke with District Governors, Oratorical Chairs and other Members who contacted Optimist International with suggestions. In response to these Member recommendations and concerns, it is proposed that age categories be instituted to ensure fair competition. There would be two age categories for contestants— ages 10 to 14 and ages 15 to 18 who have not graduated high school or the equivalent. This would put the eligibility requirement in accordance with the revised Essay Contest for the 2011-2012 Optimist year.

Each Oratorical contest age group would have the opportunity to compete for a \$2500 scholarship. Due to the stipulation of only having 2 scholarships funded by the Optimist International Foundation available per District, the contests would need to be combined gender in every participating District. This would allow for one scholarship to be awarded to the first place winner in each age category, regardless of their gender.

Optimist International is the only service organization that runs separate gender scholarship contests. This is an antiquated practice that should be updated in order to keep Optimist sponsored contests competitive with scholarships offered by other organizations. These contests may be viewed as offering an unfair advantage to a particular gender, which would cast the Club or District and the International organization in an unfavorable light. While students may mature at different rates, the proposed age categories accommodate for any disparity.

Statistics were compiled on the District winners from the 2009-2010 Optimist year. There were 64 winners between the ages of 14 and 16 and 30 winners between the ages of 10 and 13. Even

though the current contest is only open to students up to the age of 16, the majority of winners are high school age students. Establishing age categories would allow the high school age students to compete for an award that will be beneficial to them in the near future, while also allowing younger students a fair opportunity to compete for scholarship funds.

Motion Requested:

That the Board of Directors approve the following revision to Policy I-66 to take effect in the 2011-2012 Optimist year:

International Programs

I-66

Oratorical Contest

Optimist International will promote an annual oratorical contest under guidelines approved by the Board of Directors. Optimist International will provide scholarships in an amount approved annually by the Board, contingent upon funding by the Optimist International Foundations. Scholarships paid by the Optimist International Foundation of Canada will be paid in Canadian funds for winners of contests held after October 1, 2001. **The age categories (10-14 and 15-18 who have not graduated from high school or the equivalent) will be run in combined gender Oratorical contests for all participating Districts.**

B. ESTABLISHING AN OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL FOCUS PROGRAM

Rationale: The future of the Optimist organization relies on the quality of its programs. The Committee proposes that the organization needs to focus on a single program with a recognizable goal in order to garner the most attention from potential new Members, endorsed partners and corporate sponsors. The intent is not to forego the other Optimist International programs and community activities, but to highlight one organizational focus.

Selecting a focus program for Optimist International would allow the organization to solidify its identity in the global marketplace. Other member service organizations are recognized internationally for their work dedicated to one specific cause, such as the Rotary with their commitment to eradicating polio. Optimist International could become synonymous with finding a cure for childhood cancer. Spotighting this effort would be impactful because from a volunteer and public relations perspective, a result can be seen after the campaign is completed.

The lives of most people have been touched by cancer, however indirectly and efforts to find a cure would be a recognizable cause viewed favorably within all areas of the community. The Childhood Cancer Campaign has a strong emotional appeal.

The focus on finding a cure would be heavily promoted at the International level. Clubs and Districts would continue to work within their own communities but would also be encouraged to participate in organization-wide events, such as the CCC Walk. This show of unified support will demonstrate the organization's dedication to this cause.

Funds raised by Clubs and submitted to Optimist International and monies obtained through

sponsorships would need to be put into a designated account. Committees for the United States and Canada, such as the CCC Advisory Panels would need to be responsible for the distribution of these funds to various organizations working on finding a cure for childhood cancer.

Motion Requested:

That the Board of Directors approve the Childhood Cancer Campaign as the Optimist International focus program.

Budget Impact: \$0

SECTION II - FOR BOARD INFORMATION

AA. AGE VERIFICATION DOCUMENTS FOR OPTIMIST SCHOLARSHIP CONTESTS

The Activities Committee reviewed the eligibility criteria for the Optimist International Essay and Oratorical contests in response to requests received from Members. The contests currently require participating students to submit a copy of their birth certificate to serve as age verification. Due to the increase in the number of identity theft crimes, there is a certain unease involved with providing this document to any organization. This may deter some contestants from participating in the Optimist contests.

Optimist International requires an official document to verify the student meets the age eligibility criteria to enter the competition. The information is also used to allow Optimist International to maintain an account of the student's award until they have reached the age of 25, at which time they must have redeemed their funds or their scholarship will expire.

Through discussions with the Members who voiced these concerns, it was determined that the students' families would willingly submit a copy of their passports to meet this requirement. The rules for the Essay and Oratorical contests will be revised to allow students to submit a copy of their birth certificate or passport in order to compete beginning in the 2011-2012 Optimist year.

BB. PARTNERSHIP WITH SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

The Activities Committee has tabled their efforts to establish a relationship with Southwest Airlines to provide free or discounted travel for the International Essay winner in exchange for promotion in Optimist materials, such as the magazine and convention program. It was agreed that a firm commitment from Optimist International on bringing the winner to convention would be needed before any avenues could be actively pursued.

CC. GOLF 2 KIDS FOUNDATION

This Foundation was originally brought to the attention of the Board of Directors because they were using the Optimist International logo and the names "Optimist Club" and "JOOI" without permission. Optimist Board of Directors Member, Dave Bruns contacted Ron Gill from the Golf 2 Kids Foundation to discuss the options of affiliating with Optimist International: charter an Optimist Club or become an Endorsed Organization. The Golf 2 Kids Foundation's Board of Directors is currently reviewing the options.

The Activities Committee reviewed the materials from the Foundation's website and found that there are a few concerns associated with establishing a partnership. The Foundation's program is very labor-intensive, which might be a deterrent to some Clubs. Districts and Clubs are already sponsoring their own golf events and there may be a minimal amount of interest in getting involved with a new program. The coaches of young golfers are often very selective with the programs they allow their athletes to become involved with in order to keep them from becoming distracted, so there may be a difficulty in finding participants. The Committee agreed that this

was being pursued in the correct manner and no action could be taken until further information has been submitted by the Golf 2 Kids Foundation.

DD. CHILDHOOD CANCER CAMPAIGN (CCC) WALK

Optimist International will be hosting an organization-wide walk to promote childhood cancer awareness and raise much needed funds. All Clubs are asked to sponsor a CCC Walk during June, Optimist International Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Clubs can tailor the event to fit their community, but the focus will be the same for all Optimists.

Participating Clubs can designate how they would like to utilize the funds they raise, whether it be sending them to the Optimist International Foundation, designated for research at Johns Hopkins, donating them to a hospital in the community or using them to conduct a CCC project for local children.

The theme of the walk will be “Have a Heart, Do Your Part.” A package program of materials for the event is available on the Optimist International website. The package includes a sample timeline, letters, press releases and more. The materials are for Clubs to use as a guide when organizing their walk and can be modified as needed.

EE. JOHNS HOPKINS AT THE BALTIMORE CONVENTION

Optimist International was contacted by Stephanie Davis, the Senior Associate Director of Development at Johns Hopkins Medicine – Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center, requesting information on how Johns Hopkins could be involved with the 2011 International Convention.

The Programs and Meetings departments composed a letter outlining three potential sponsorship opportunities, including hosting the International President’s Banquet/Ball, presenting a personal development/educational workshop or manning a display table in the main foyer of the convention. Various marketing benefits were offered for each opportunity. Optimist International staff will work with Johns Hopkins to determine how they would like to participate.

FF. CHILDHOOD CANCER CAMPAIGN DUCK RACE

The CCC will conduct the annual Duck Race at the International Convention to raise funds for childhood cancer research at Johns Hopkins and the Canadian Childhood Cancer Campaign. Members can purchase a ticket for a rubber duck to participate in the race for \$10 US/CN.

All Members are welcome and encouraged to participate, including those not attending the convention. A presale is currently being conducted and will continue through June 20. After that date, all ducks must be purchased at the House of Optimism during convention.

The Activities Committee is planning special incentives to encourage Members to participate in the duck race. Members who purchase 10 or more ducks during the month of February will receive a special gift.

In March, the Programs department will conduct the “Luck of the Ducks” contest. One lucky Member who purchased a duck during that month will be chosen at random to receive a duck-themed gift. Additional incentives will be offered leading up to convention.

GG. PROGRAMS TRAINING AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The Activities Committee will offer District Chair training at the Baltimore Convention. The training session will cover an overview of the International Programs, Community Project Awards, Fundraising and Resources with a time for questions & answers. For in depth “how to” training on programs and activities, Back-to-School workshops will be offered.

HH. INTERNET SAFETY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Internet Safety Committee asked the JOOI Board of Directors to develop short scripts on posting pictures or damaging information on social networking website, internet predators, identify theft and cyber-bullying. These scripts will be used as part of the teen component to demonstrate that these crimes can affect the lives of all young adults, regardless of where they live, what activities they are involved in, how popular they are or how careful they may be while online. The goal is to acknowledge that teens use the internet on a daily basis and to encourage diligence, awareness and safe practices.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Oliver, Chair
25676 Whispering Trees Way
Valencia, CA 91355
(661) 312-6700
jaoliver2@ca.rr.com

Members:
Andre Therrien Gatineau, QC
John Townsend Yuma, AZ