

Meetup Groups

Provide Opportunity for Optimists to Reach Out

By Aaron Kaskowitz, Director of New Clubs and Member Services

A new Optimist Club, chartered in Scottsdale, Arizona in January, utilized online social networks to connect with people from groups that would be likely to join in doing service for children in their community. Choosing from many possibilities on the website, www.Meetup.com, key builder Cathie Smith-LoCicero signed up to meet with groups that seemed to have potential. Looking online for leads helped speed up the process, but she did not just post on the Meetup sites and wait for people to find her. While some people may gravitate to the Optimist mission, it is necessary to take an active approach to find community-minded individuals. Cathie made an effort to connect face-to-face at the events and create a relationship with people.

She introduced the broad overview of Optimist service and made many good contacts wherever possible. Cathie had a system when meeting new people. "I went around the room, introduced myself and chatted a few minutes one on one, gave them my material and always asked for their cards or wrote down their contact info," said Cathie. "I'd make notes on each person right away and then I'd send them an email telling them it was great to meet them."

Her approach, though it relied on newly developed online tools, also stayed true to proven methods of tracking contacts and following up with those individuals. Part of her follow up was to invite contacts to meet for coffee or to attend an informational meeting to find a place for them in the Optimist Club.



Finding a group online may help you find a place to start, but building upon this first step is necessary. Connections are only valuable when you give them attention. As you develop a friendship and stay in touch about service opportunities, your connections will become your Optimist Club. About two-thirds of the Scottsdale Club's 17 Members were originally found by using online social networks like Meetup.com. Cathie's next step will be to set up a Club Facebook page, so they can continue to promote their service projects online and gather new supporters.

With over 800 million active users,

Facebook is a great social space for Clubs to connect with other Members, promote local events and find new supporters. Find Optimist International at www.facebook.com/optimist.international

The Optimist website has social media training guides to help you get started. Go to www.optimist.org/socialmedia for a step-by-step guide to setting up a Club Facebook Page.