

A CHAMPIONSHIP EFFORT FOR OPTIMISM

PRESIDENT KEN GARNER



As a young boy in New Mexico, Ken Garner had a goal – he wanted to be a Carlsbad Caveman football player. In seventh grade, he committed himself to helping the team win a state championship for the city. That might seem like a big dream with unlikely odds, but Ken was determined to meet his goal. On a Friday evening in October 1986, Ken stood in a huddle with his team, watching the clock run down to the end of the game, which they would win to guarantee the city's first state playoff spot in his lifetime.

"At that moment, every weight lifted, every drop of blood spilt, every broken bone, torn ligament and injury was worth it!" Ken recalls. "A multiple year goal was coming to

fruition for all of us and I played my part. The entire town celebrated!"

While Ken has come a long way from that young football player in Carlsbad, one thing has certainly stayed the same. He believes in setting goals and making a team effort to reach them. His goal of winning a state championship with his team is similar to the challenge he takes on as he moves into the office of 2014-2015 Optimist International President. The organization is facing numerous challenges unlike those it has dealt with in the past and is in need of a strong team to turn around membership losses and deletions.

Now Ken's team consists of his International, District and Zone officers, as well as every Optimist Member in the organization. Again, this may seem like a big goal with unlikely odds and that is why the commitment of every Member of the team is a necessity. President Ken understands how big this goal is and his response is, **"We can do it. I Am An Optimist! We are the Optimists!"**

Early Years to Today

Ken was born and raised in Carlsbad and instilled with a strong work ethic from an early age. His family raised horses, sheep, dogs and earthworms on three acres of pecan trees. During the summer and on most holidays, he worked on the assembly line manufacturing concrete blocks at his dad's company, Carlsbad Block and Supply. He was taught that if it was worth doing, it was worth doing the best you could. That simple lesson carried over into his life including sports, school and volunteering and has stayed with him to this day.

In 1991, Ken received a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Lubbock Christian University (LCU) and received a Masters degree in Taxation from Baylor University the following year. "The great thing about going to LCU was that it allowed me to be active in chorus and drama, as well as the typical intramural sports and the collegiate soccer team. The drama, choral and chapel experience was priceless in giving me an opportunity to address people," Ken says.