

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

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

**December 10-11, 2010
St. Louis, Missouri**

SECTION I - REQUESTS FOR BOARD ACTION

A. INTERNATIONAL LEVEL OF THE OPTIMIST ESSAY CONTEST

Rationale: The International level of the Essay contest serves a variety of purposes for Optimist International, its Members and their communities. First and foremost, the contest provides recognition to very deserving students and encourages them to persevere in their goals for higher education. The contestants, their parents, educators and other community members are introduced to Optimism and the organization in a favorable light.

The contest lends a sense of unity to the organization as it is currently the only program with an International level component. The participating Clubs look forward to the announcement of the International winner and are very proud if the winner was sponsored by their District.

Convention attendees enjoy seeing the International winner present during a Business Session and take pride in knowing their organization has truly made an impact on that student's life. Watching the winner read their first place entry reaffirms their purpose of as a Member of both their local Club and the International organization. Funding for an all expenses-paid trip to convention for the winner and their parents or guardians will be provided by Optimist International in partnership with the first place winner's sponsoring District.

Motion Requested:

That the Board of Directors approve the continuation of the International level of the Essay Contest with the first place winner being awarded an all expense-paid trip to convention for themselves and their parents or guardians and a plaque.

Budget: \$ 3,000 (Fiscal Year: 2010-2011)

B. ESSAY CONTEST AGE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

Rationale: Youth are commonly recognized as adults once they have turned 18. Optimist International is focused on "bringing out the best in kids." Youth should not be asked to compete against adults, who may already have begun their college careers. The majority of youth graduate high school at age 18, so the age eligibility for the Optimist Essay contest should be set

accordingly.

Motion Requested: That the Board of Directors approve the age eligibility for the Optimist Essay Contest be revised to “youth under the age of 18 as of December 31 of the current school year.”

Budget Impact: \$0

C. ORATORICAL CONTEST STRUCTURE

Rationale: The change to the age eligibility criteria suggested by the 2009-2010 Committee has been met with resistance by a number of Members and Clubs. 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.

Survey calls were made to District Governors, Oratorical Chairs and other Members that contacted Optimist International with suggestions. In accordance with the results of the survey, separate gender contests should be discontinued and age categories should be instituted to ensure fair competition. There will be two age categories for students to enter– ages 10 to 14 and 15 to 18. Each age group will have the opportunity to compete for a \$2500 scholarship. As current Optimist policy states, once a student has won a District level scholarship, they will be unable to compete again at any level of the contest. If a student competes in the younger age group and does not win a District-level award, they will be encouraged to enter the 15 to 18 competition once they are eligible.

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 winners from the 2009-2010 Optimist year. There were 64 District 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 allows 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 establishment of age categories (10-14 and 15-18) to be run in combined gender Oratorical contests for all participating Districts.

Budget: \$0

D. SCHOLARSHIP TOPICS FOR THE 2011-2012 ESSAY, ORATORICAL AND CCDHH CONTESTS

Rationale: Topics for these contests should be thought provoking and challenging, making contestants think outside their comfort zone. The JOOI Board of Directors' input was sought and the topics chosen were a result of combined efforts.

**Motion Requested: That the Board of Directors approve “How My Positive Outlook Benefits My Community”/ De quelle façon ma collectivité tire-t-elle avantage de mon attitude positive? as the Essay topic and “How my Optimism Helps me Overcome Obstacles”/ “De quelle façon mon optimisme m'aide-t-il à surmonter les obstacles?” as the Oratorical and CCDHH topic for the 2011-2012 year.
Budget: \$0**

E. INTERNET SAFETY TRAINING

Rationale: In today's society, the safety of youth while online is a growing concern. According to statistics provided by the IKeepSafe Coalition, 99% of children have access to a computer and the internet. The increased number of children using the internet increases the necessity of programs to educate children and adults on potential dangers and how to safeguard against them.

The Optimist International Internet Safety program allows Optimist Members to interact with youth and adult community groups, while educating them on this important topic. Currently, Optimist International staff receives an Internet Safety packet request, ships the packet and provides no further training on how to utilize the materials.

The components of the program are very detailed in order to provide the most information possible and may be daunting to a new or small Club. The technical aspects of the program may be a deterrent to Clubs with older Members, who are not familiar with computers or the internet.

Training is the responsibility of the District Internet Safety Chairs, which are not appointed in all Optimist Districts. Clubs that do not receive training on how to utilize the program materials are less likely to take the initiative to organize an Internet Safety presentation to a group in their community.

The Canadian Service Center staff and a few dedicated volunteers have developed a six-hour training session for Clubs and Districts in Canada. There has been a great response from the Canadian Clubs and many requests for the training. The training is geared toward Members of all internet skill levels, including those who do not own a computer. The materials are already available in English and French. Efforts should be made to offer the same training to the United States and Caribbean Clubs to fully prepare them to be Internet Safety program presenters.

Motion Requested:

That the Board of Directors approve the development of an intensive Internet Safety training session that will be presented by Optimist International staff or designated trainers at District or Regional meetings in the United States and the Caribbean by request.

Budget: \$5,000 (funds allocated from Internet Safety account for the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year)

F. JUNE AS CCC MONTH

Rationale: June has been designated as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month for the past seven years and many Clubs and Districts participate in large CCC activities during the month. Since Optimist International remains committed to “providing the care and finding the cure” and both the US and Canadian CCC Advisory Panels will be awarding matching grants to Clubs and Districts participating in CCC-related activities, the Committee recommends that June be designated as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month for the 2010-2011 year.

Motion Requested:

That the Board of Directors endorses June as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Budget: \$0

G. ENDORSED ORGANIZATIONS

Rationale: The following currently endorsed organizations have fulfilled the requirements and request renewal of their endorsed status for the 2010-2011 Optimist year.

Motion Requested:

That the Optimist International Board of Directors renews endorsed status at the Bronze level for the following organizations: Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA), Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Budget: \$0

SECTION II - FOR BOARD INFORMATION

AA. INTERNATIONAL COMPONENT FOR THE OPTIMIST ORATORICAL CONTEST

As an International organization, all Optimist sponsored programs should offer an International component. This can be done at no cost to Optimist International by asking Districts to submit video clips of their District Oratorical winners. The clips would be posted on the Optimist International website. Members could view the clips for their enjoyment and to maintain a sense of pride in the work they do as Optimists. This provides encouragement for Members to visit the official website and also reinforces their sense of belonging to the International organization.

The clips can also be used as marketing tools to show visitors what Optimists do and the impact they have on the lives of youth. While words may draw interest, the video clip of a child being awarded a scholarship for his or her hard work would grab visitors' attention and have an emotional impact. The clips may also be viewed by potential corporate sponsors to give them a clear indication of how their contributed funds would be utilized by Optimist Clubs and the International organization.

BB. PARTNERSHIP WITH SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

The Activities Committee is researching the feasibility of establishing 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.

CC. JOOI MEMBERSHIP FOR DISTRICT SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Quality programs are essential to bringing in new Members and the scholarship contests are a great example. A Club may sponsor a contest that involves 15 students and invites their parents, friends and teachers to the competition. The adult Club may already be encouraged to invite the parents and teachers to become Club Members. However, it seems some Clubs are missing out on a great opportunity to invite those 15 contestants to join their already existing JOOI Club or to help in starting one in the community.

The Activities Committee met with the JOOI Board and Committee to discuss strategies to encourage Clubs to promote JOOI and Optimism to their scholarship contestants. It was determined that Districts should be offered the opportunity to award each of their winners one free year of JOOI membership with their scholarship award. This would encourage the students to stay involved in Optimism and help the sponsoring Club by growing their JOOI membership numbers. This could also help their adult Club because it might elevate their standing in the eyes of the winners' family and friends, resulting in new Members for them.

This would be an optional program for Districts. Participating Districts would need to register the new Members with the Youth Club department as they would any new Member, but add a note that they have been awarded the free year of membership. The costs of the memberships will be minimal and absorbed by the International organization.

DD. DIGITAL CPA PILOT PROGRAM

A pilot program will be run during the 2010-2011 year for a digital CPA category. A minimum of 4 Districts will participate. Clubs will be able to submit a 10-minute video clip answering the questions from the Project Story and showcasing some of their event. The Committee hopes this type of submission will appeal to younger Members and get them more involved with Club activities. It will also streamline the submission process and encourage more Clubs to participate in the CPA program.

The rules and judging criteria will be the same as the current CPA program. During the pilot program, all digital entries will be evaluated together, regardless of whether the project is a fundraiser or community service activity.

The feedback provided by the participating Districts will be reviewed by the 2011-2012 Committee to be considered for incorporation into the official CPA program.

EE. INTERNET SAFETY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Activities Committee met with the JOOI Board and Committee to discuss the Internet Safety program and it was agreed that there was a need for a teen component. Past International President Mark Shriver and Optimist International staff have assembled an Internet Safety Committee to spearhead work on this new module. The Committee will consist of Past President Mark Shriver, Claire Labreche, Nick Prillaman and 2 JOOI Board Members, Samhita Ilango and Peter Choi. Meetings will be conducted via conference call and through e-mail discussion.

The new component will focus on social networks, the dangers to teens and how they can safeguard themselves. The format will be an interactive discussion in order to engage the attendees and encourage them to relate the materials to their own lives.

After the component is developed, Adult and JOOI Clubs will be encouraged to attend a seminar on how to properly present the teen program. Upon completion of the training, Members would receive a certificate and be designated as a formal trainer. Training ensures continuity with how the information is presented and a partnership is built with the JOOI Club and their sponsoring Club. The teenage program will be supported by the Adult Clubs and will give JOOI a year-long focus project.

Optimist International is also working with I Keep Safe Coalition to provide the Faux Paw program in Spanish to Clubs by request.

FF. R.E.A.C.H. A CHILD PROGRAM

The Activities Committee was asked to review the "R.E.A.C.H. a Child" program for potential Optimist International program status. After thorough discussion, it was agreed that while the program is worthwhile, it does not meet the requirements to become an International program.

The program is owned by the R.E.A.C.H. a Child non-profit organization, so it does not have the potential to be branded by Optimist International. The program is currently only being conducted in Wisconsin and Illinois, so it does not provide opportunities for all Optimist Clubs to participate.

The R.E.A.C.H. a Child organization will be invited to compose an e-mail about the program that Optimist International will forward to Club e-mail boxes. If a Club is interested in participating or starting the program in their area, Members will be advised to contact the R.E.A.C.H. a Child organization for further details.

GG. GOOD SAMARITAN AWARD

The Committee was asked to review a request for the establishment of the “Good Samaritan Award” to recognize individuals who go the extra mile to assist others. This award falls outside the scope of the International President’s awards program and the Committee thought it was outside of their mandate to approve additional awards.

The suggested award offered no established criteria and it has not been determined who would be responsible for deciding the recipients of the award. The initial cost of the awards has not been budgeted.

The Committee also recognized that this opens the door to other Clubs and Districts who would like the organization to adopt their awards at the International level. It was agreed that Optimist International should focus on the President’s awards program and honoring Members who participate in Optimist-sponsored programs and activities.

HH. FUTURE FISHERMAN FOUNDATION PILOT PROGRAM

The Future Fisherman Foundation applied for Endorsed Organization status during the 2009-2010 year. The Board approved the organization at the Gold level, which has a fee of \$2500. The Director of Education contacted Optimist International to discuss waiving the fee because the Foundation would not be utilizing the benefits offered. The organization was informed that the fee structure had been approved by the International Board of Directors and exceptions could not be made without prior approval by the Board or the International President.

The Foundation submitted a proposal for a pilot program, “Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs” that could be introduced to a select group of interested Optimist Clubs. Participating Clubs would be supplied with materials to run the program and given the opportunity to purchase equipment at a discounted rate.

Optimist International was asked to provide promotion of the pilot program through the Club e-mail boxes, a complimentary room with AV equipment and complimentary or discounted exhibit space for a workshop at the Baltimore convention. These costs have not been budgeted.

The Committee recognized the value in the program and acknowledged that some Clubs may be interested in participating. However, the Future Fisherman Foundation does not currently offer

any opportunities in Canada or the Caribbean. The program materials are not available in French. The program is copyrighted by the Future Fisherman Foundation, so there is no opportunity for development into a future Optimist International program.

A letter will be sent to the Director of Education explaining why their proposal for a pilot program has been declined and inviting the Foundation again to reapply for Endorsed status. The program information will be kept on file and shared with Clubs requesting information on fishing activities.

II. CHILDHOOD CANCER CAMPAIGN (CCC) MATCHING GRANTS PROGRAM

The 2009-2010 Canadian CCC Advisory Panel awarded a total of \$27,800 in matching grants.

In its first year of operation, the United States CCC Advisory Panel awarded 7 grants for a total of \$14,500.

Both panels hope that further promotion of the program will encourage more Clubs to take advantage of this opportunity. There will be an article in an upcoming edition of *The Optimist* magazine about a Club that was awarded a matching grant for their project and successfully met their objectives.

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