



STRUCTURE & SERVICES

Optimist International's Bylaws state that "Optimist International is an association of member Clubs."

Optimist Clubs comprise Optimist International's membership and guide its destiny through delegates to annual International Conventions.

Individuals are Members of Optimist Clubs.

Optimist International is not the International Board of Directors, the International Office in St. Louis, or a superimposed body.

PURPOSE

The fundamental purpose of Optimist International is to help Optimist Clubs increase the effectiveness of their community service activities. Each year, Optimist Clubs conduct thousands of community service projects through which the annual, aggregate accomplishment of Optimist International is attained. Throughout its history, Optimist International has refrained from conducting activities or encroaching upon the purpose of member Clubs.

STRUCTURE

Optimist International operates under a well-integrated structure. At District meetings, Club delegates elect District officers. However, District officers do not represent Clubs to Optimist International; they represent Optimist International to Clubs. The Governor, chief administrative officer of the District, appoints the Chairs required to make the programs and purposes of Optimist International effective in the District.

Prior to each International Convention, Club delegates elect eight Vice Presidents-Elect, two International Board members and a President-Elect. The International President appoints the International Committees necessary to accomplish the purposes of the organization.

PROGRAMS

Optimist International serves its member Clubs by determining the need for new service activities and helping Clubs broaden their vision and expand their community service. Optimist International publicizes and promotes certain programs. These are often referred to as "International Programs." Usually they are activities that are nourished from isolated, local inception to widespread participation. However, Optimist Clubs have the ability to provide the programs and services that it sees as a necessity in its own community.

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

The International Office, located in St. Louis, Missouri, serves as a clearinghouse of ideas for Club activities. A professional staff devotes full time to the organization's administration and service to Clubs. Aid and counsel on all phases of Club administration and community-serving activities are readily available. From the office, a planned flow of information provides member Clubs and District leaders with new ideas and techniques geared to help make each Club more effective. Similar services are available to Clubs in Canada through the Canadian Service Centre located in Montreal, Québec.

International Convention

Representation at the annual International Convention should be a must for every Club. The dividends of an International Convention are:

- The benefit of interacting and learning from qualified leaders
- The ability to learn the tools to be an effective Club
- Learning and sharing meaningful community service projects

Time after time, Clubs have gained new life and significance because their Presidents and other delegates have broadened their horizons and gained new ideas at an International Convention.

Because Optimist International is a association of member Clubs, it is essential that Clubs be represented in the business and decisions of an International Convention. Important decisions are reached through the vote of the delegates, who constitutionally control the affairs of the organization.

At Convention, Club delegates have the opportunity of meeting and exchanging ideas with other delegates, International officers, and staff. They also participate in leadership conferences for Club officers and Members. The Convention offers delegates the opportunity of visualizing, perhaps for the first time, the size, influence, and character of Optimist International.

Each Club should make some financial provision for the President-Elect to attend the International Convention. The Club should pay as much of the cost as possible. Transportation, registration, room and meals should be considered in that order. Some Clubs also assist with the expenses of the future Secretary-Treasurer.

The Region

A Region is one of eight contiguous groups of Districts that enhances the administration of Optimist International.

Regions do not have legislative powers or votes in International affairs.

Optimist International may provide a Regional meeting or conferences to provide effective District and Club administration. Optimist International frequently assigns Certified Trainers to these meetings so his/her knowledge of Optimist activities will be available. Some District meetings may be held prior to or immediately after a Regional meeting.

The Vice President

Each Vice President is assigned to one of eight Regions. Vice Presidents are to encourage and help District Governors and administration to increase its membership to ensure the continued success of the District so that more communities can benefit from the service Optimist Clubs can provide.

Your Vice President will visit one of your District meetings at least once during the year. If a Vice President can visit your Club, your Club should assume the role of host and invite the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Members and officers of surrounding Clubs.

The District

A District is an administrative division of Optimist International within geographical boundaries established by Optimist International.

All Clubs within its boundaries are members of that District.

Districts do not have legislative powers or votes in International affairs.

District meetings include conferences on effective Club administration. Optimist International frequently assigns an official International Representative to these meetings so his/her knowledge of Optimist activities will be available. Most District meetings and conferences are held on Saturdays (occasionally extending into Sunday) and usually include a luncheon or dinner.

District conventions feature the election of a Governor-Elect and a variety of training events. Clubs are represented by delegates (the number based on Club membership) who participate in the election and other District business. Every Club should provide an adequate delegation, equal to its voting strength, including President, President-Elect and Secretary-Treasurer. Conventions provide a high degree of fellowship for delegates. Many Districts also hold conferences for their Junior Optimist Clubs. During these meetings, workshops for Club officers and an election for Junior Optimist International District Governor take place.

The District Governor

The Governor is the Chief Administrative Officer of the District.

With the large number of Clubs in each District, it is not possible for a Governor to visit each one. If, however, he/she can visit yours, your Club should assume the role of host and invite Members and officers of surrounding Clubs.

- * When the Governor's visit is confirmed, promptly acknowledge the time and date.
- * Offer him/her the opportunity of being the speaker for the meeting.
- * Be sure to publicize the visit.
- * Urge attendance by Club Members.
- * Make a list of questions for the Governor to discuss with each officer.

The Governor's years of experience will be of great value. The President should arrange to spend as much time as possible with the Governor. The Governor gives time to perform a service to Clubs and Optimist International; make the visit as pleasant and profitable as possible.

Zone Meetings

A Zone is an optional geographical grouping of Clubs assigned to a Lieutenant Governor for the purpose of personal contact and service.

It is not a tier in Optimist International's structure. Zone meetings, conducted by the Lieutenant Governor, are devoted entirely to training, counseling and motivating Club leaders. Zone meetings are occasionally conducted in conjunction with a District meeting. In some Districts, Zone meetings may be held monthly or quarterly.

The Lieutenant Governor

The Lieutenant Governor is an optional District officer responsible for direct contact with member Clubs, who can advise on Club methods, administrative techniques, youth and community service activities. Call on the Lieutenant Governor whenever your Club needs his/her special ability and experience.

A Lieutenant Governor should meet at least twice with each Club in the Zone. Information on these meetings follows:

ANNUAL CLUB PLANNING CONFERENCE (ACPC)

This meeting can be conducted by the Lieutenant Governor at a regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Board of Directors. The purpose of this conference is leadership education for the Board and discussion of Club administration. Necessary information will be gathered during the meeting. Completion of the ACPC form is required by Optimist International on or before November 15.

Tips for a successful Annual Club Planning Conference:

- A. Arrange a date with the Lieutenant Governor when all Board members can attend.
- B. Inform Board members of the purpose and plan for the meeting.

If no other time is available, and as a last resort, the Planning Conference can be held at the time of a regular Club meeting. However, the format should not be that of a regular Club meeting, and guests should not be invited to attend. The purpose of the conference should be explained to Members in advance.

CLUB MEETING VISITATION

This visitation will be between April 1 and July 1 at a regular Club meeting. The Lieutenant Governor should be invited to be the speaker for the meeting. The following will help make the visit profitable for the Club and pleasant for the Lieutenant Governor:

1. Arrange a date with the Lieutenant Governor early enough to promote the visit.
2. Let the Lieutenant Governor know, well in advance, if a speech is expected.
3. Extend a warm greeting.
4. Reserve a place at the head table.
5. Introductions should be made with courtesy and dignity.
6. If the Lieutenant Governor is not to be the speaker, allow time for a few brief remarks.
7. The Lieutenant Governor should not have to pay for the meal.

OPTIMIST JARGON

These are some of the terms or phrases that are commonly used by Optimists at all levels:

A & A - Achievement and Awards: Used by many Districts in regard to an awards program that recognizes Members and Clubs for achieving certain goals in growth and youth service.

ACPC - Annual Club Planning Conference: Completed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Clubs in the Zone. The ACPC Report offers the Lieutenant Governor the opportunity to recognize and praise Clubs for their accomplishments and can help spot situations which may need assistance.

BOE - Builder of Excellence: A person who is a key builder of a new Club can be designated a "Builder of Excellence" and receive special recognition for his/her accomplishments.

Bylaws: Refers to the governing documents of Optimist International.

CCC – Childhood Cancer Campaign: A program of Optimist International that supports children and their families struggling with childhood cancer.

CCDHH – Communications Contest for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing: This contest offers the opportunity for students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to enter an oratorical contest using sign or oral presentations.

CPA – Community Projects Award: This is an awards program that recognizes outstanding Club service projects. Judging of entries is done at the International level.

CRA – Club Roster Adjustment: Whenever a Club wants to add or delete a member from its roster, or change the address of a member, it reports that information to Optimist International on the Club Roster Adjustment Report.

CQ – Candidate Qualifications: Refers to the committee (at both the District and International levels) that proposes candidates for office.

DFR/CFR – District Foundation Representative/Club Foundation Representative: These are terms associated with the Optimist International Foundation (in the U.S.) and the Canadian Children's Foundation (in Canada). DFRs and CFRs help promote the Foundations to Members, and assist in the collection of donations.

FOO – Friend of Optimists: A recruiting program for Clubs to allow Members to join Optimist International where there is no Optimist Club nearby or with financial support.

"Hotline": An online newsletter sent to all Club Presidents, Lieutenant Governors, and Governors containing information they need to know to do their jobs as leaders of their respective Clubs, Zones and Districts.

International President's Incentive Program: The annual incentive program developed by the International President to recognize Clubs and Districts that go the extra mile during his/her administration.

International Recognition Program: The Optimist International program used to recognize and honor Clubs, Zones, and Districts that meet certain standards of excellence and achievement.

Junior Optimist International: Commonly pronounced “JOY”, this is the organization of Optimist International for young people. Junior Optimist International holds an annual convention immediately before or after the Optimist International Convention each summer.

NCB – New Club Building: The process of organizing and starting a new Optimist Club.

NOW Program – New Optimists Wanted: This is a special membership recruitment program that Clubs can use to add multiple Members at one time.

OIJGC – Optimist International Junior Golf Championships: The culmination of District Junior Golf qualifying tournaments. The top junior golfers from around the world compete in this tournament held each July at the PGA Golf Resort in Florida.

PDC - Parallel District Conferences: Are used by the leadership to bring training and fellowship to several Districts or Region.

P.G.I. – Personal Growth and Involvement: This is a program that allows participating members the opportunity for personal growth at their own pace and be recognized for personal accomplishments. As members move from one level to another in the program, a different colored backing for their membership pin is awarded.

Club Pride Report: An annual report submitted at the end of each Club President’s administration detailing the service the Club provided to its Members and the community.

Region: A grouping of four or five Districts combined together overseen by an International Vice President.

The Torch – The official publication of JOOI, sent to all Youth Clubs for distribution to their Members.