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ORATORICAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS GO ONLINE

Optimist International has reimagined our signature youth program as an entirely digital competition in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of the thousands of contestants at the local level, about 50 students from around the globe will advance to Optimist International's 2020 Oratorical Regionals and World Championship, with the chance to win up to \$22,500 in scholarships.

Optimist International views this as a unique opportunity to reimagine our mission of Optimism during a difficult time and to continue to serve youth. The online competition will take place July 16 and 17, with competitors participating via Zoom as well as live-streaming for an international audience.

"The Oratorical program is a remarkable event to experience in person," said Optimist International President Adrian Elcock of Bridgetown, Barbados. "We will greatly miss attending the championship in person this year, however, we are grateful to be able to continue our tradition of awarding scholarships to these amazing young people."

The Oratorical program asks competitors to develop and deliver a speech on this year's topic, "Just iMagine a World without Boundaries." Competition begins with local contests sponsored by Optimist Clubs. Winners at the Club level advance to the District level, judged on poise, speech content, delivery and presentation, and overall effectiveness. District winners receive \$2,500 scholarships.

Regional competition will take place on July 16, with competition for each of the seven regions. Each Regional competition will feature seven to eight competitors, with the winner of each Region receiving a \$5,000 scholarship and advancing to compete in the World Championships on July 17. The World Champion will receive an additional \$15,000 scholarship. There will be no additional scholarships given for second- and third-place World finishers this year.

Optimist International, founded in 1919, is a service organization with more than 2,500 Clubs in 24 countries. Optimists perform a wide variety of volunteering and service projects in their communities, with a focus on making the world better for children. Around the world, 6 million children participate each year in Optimist programs. OI is based in St. Louis, Missouri.