

By Jill Rodgers, Member of the Breakfast  
Optimist Club of East Fort Worth, Texas

# Little Red Wagons

## TO THE RESCUE

Many Optimists likely have fond memories of riding in a little red wagon during their childhood. The Breakfast Optimist Club of East Fort Worth, Texas discovered that kids still enjoy this pastime, especially those in the hospital. While conducting a service project at Cook Children's Medical Center, Members noticed red wagons around the hospital.

While young patients are receiving care for serious illnesses, they are often too weak to safely walk on their own. Wheelchairs are not a good solution because are too big, and can sometimes be scary. The hospital staff said children tend to be calmer and even have fun while riding in a red wagon like the one they may have at home. The wagons get lots of use taking kids to receive treatment, outside to get fresh air, to visit the playroom, and finally to the car to go home.

Members identified a need due to some parents sneaking the wagons into their cars to take home. When the Club learned that the medical center was opening a hospital unit for palliative care, a new project was created. The Club would provide red wagons for kids in the hospital.

The Club was excited and started finding ways to raise money. While general donations were collected from Members, it was decided that the \$40 received from Optimist International for sponsoring a Friend of Optimists would be a good addition to the fund. An Optimist Foundation print was raffled and the Club took donations in memory of long-time Member, Joyce Waller and in honor of the past Optimist International First Ladies. In a short time, the

Club had raised enough to purchase the first group of wagons.

The original goal was to buy medical grade red wagons with built-in IV poles that could be used for children of any age. While Members were raising money, the only company in the country that made these wagons went out of business. After conferring with the hospital, the Club chose a replacement wagon, that even though it was not a medical grade, would work great. Instead of being able to purchase three, the Club had enough funds for a dozen!

An Optimist Wagon Assembly party, complete with ice cream, was scheduled and Members put the wagons together, loaded them up and personally delivered them to the hospital. They were immediately put to good use and now the Club is gearing up to do it all over again.

**If your Club wants to put a big smile on the faces of kids stuck in a hospital, consider buying wagons for them. If you would like information on how you can sponsor a similar project, contact [jillrodgers@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jillrodgers@sbcglobal.net).**

