

How does this relate to Optimist Clubs?

The idea for an Optimist Club usually comes when Members identify a community that can benefit from the services provided by a new Club. A traditional Optimist Club meets on a regular basis at a specific location and conducts a number of activities focused on youth annually. This is a formula that works, but over the years has become less effective.

Today there are more demands on people than ever before. Many people dedicate their time to coaching because it allows them to interact directly with children, get exercise and share their love of sports. A Sports Club is built with the primary goal to serve youth through athletics, whether it is baseball, football, golf, tennis, basketball, soccer or hockey. Optimists can approach youth sports leagues and encourage them to become a Sports Optimist Club. The coaches, parents of players and anyone associated with the team could be asked to become a Member. One selling point is our insurance program. If the group became an Optimist Club, they would be provided with low-cost insurance that permits them to function all year long.

A Non-Traditional Club is built around a single focus or a single event during the year. This Club has officers and they meet via electronic newsletters and e-mails. Members may not be located in the same community. These Clubs can be built around a previously formed group or organization that promotes youth programs.

The single focus for a Non-Traditional Club can be whatever the group shares an interest in or has in common. Consider a hobby group (knitting, scrapbooking, building models), high school or college alumni, church groups, a Club centered on a social cause (environmental, health, wildlife, education) or an interest group (photography, travel, wine).

What benefits are there for Optimist Clubs to build a Sports or Non-Traditional Club?

While Clubs receive recognition for building a new Club, this also presents an opportunity to expose members of the community to the benefits of being an Optimist Member. More Optimists in the community working towards "bringing out the best in kids," makes the job of providing service easier. This is a chance to spread Optimism, help more children, bring community members together and grow the Optimist organization. Optimists also benefit from the New Club process, which sharpens leadership skills, increases fellowship and strengthens personal development.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1 Make a list of youth-oriented organizations in the community that would benefit from being associated with a larger organization, such as Optimist International. A good idea would be to target a group your Club has worked with in the past because a relationship has already been established.

2 Next, send a letter of introduction identifying yourselves and requesting a meeting to see if you can be of assistance to the work they do in the community. Two Members should attend the meeting and take an informal approach. Describe how the Optimist Club serves the community and does much the same work as their group. Make sure to emphasize you are not trying to take over their group, but with just a few changes, they can be covered under Optimist insurance and have the value of a network of other Optimist Clubs. Also mention that our organization has the support of the Optimist International Foundation and the Canadian Children's Foundation, which fund many of our youth programs. Offer to make a presentation to their whole group. Then follow up after a few days to see if you can answer any questions or address concerns.

3 Rely on the Members in your District that have experience building new Clubs. Discuss your ideas and progress with your District New Club Building Chair. Staff in the New Club Building and Growth department at Optimist International can also serve as a valuable resource. If you have questions or concerns, please contact 800-500-8130 or newclub@optimist.org.

Remember there is more than one way to build a new Club. You may know or develop a method that best fits your needs. Think outside the box and do not be afraid to try new techniques. The building of a new Optimist Club is perhaps the greatest service project possible!

Sam Biddle, "Whoops! The Ten Greatest (Accidental) Inventions of all Time," *Gizmodo*, <http://gizmodo.com/5620910/whoops-the-10-greatest-accidental-inventions-of-all-time>

