

YOUNGEST ARIZONA DISTRICT CLUB President in History

Article provided by Jim Smith, Arizona District Bulletin Editor.

For many Arizona Optimists, especially in Tucson, the name Kristopher "KJ" Adams generates images of a young boy growing up in an Optimist family. Joining the Pueblo Optimist Club was a priority when he became 18.

KJ turned 20 last September and 18 days later became President of the Pueblo Club and the youngest president of any Club in Arizona District history.

Surprised when asked to be president, KJ emphatically stated that he "wants to be a good president" and says the entire Pueblo Optimist Club has indicated they want to work with him to assure a successful year. KJ adds that he was "stunned for a few seconds" when asked to be president but then responded "sure."

KJ immersed himself to prepare for his year by attending the Optimist International Convention in Las Vegas last summer and the Arizona District Convention this fall. He



[KJ Adams adds another generation to the Adams family's commitment to serve by joining his father, Willard Adams, as a president of the Pueblo-Tucson, Arizona Club.]

observed that the training sessions for Presidents-Elect gave him "good insight and opened his eyes to the importance and impact of Optimist Clubs" in communities and the world. Among KJ's personal and Club goals for the year is to organize a new Optimist Club of his peers, primarily those 30 and younger. Optimism has been part of KJ's life for many years. His dad, Willard, is a longtime active Member of the Pueblo Club and has served as Club President and Lieutenant Governor. His mom, Debbie, is also a Member of the Club. KJ remembers being at Optimist meetings or projects when he was seven or eight years old. He says he knew what they were doing but didn't fully understand the concept.

KJ and several youthful presidents were recognized by International President Ken Garner during the International Convention as evidence that young people are willing to step forward as Members and leaders to enable Optimism to continue to Bring Out the Best in Kids.

The Future Is NOW!

KJ Adams and Jessica Von Fange, 20, who became President of the Optimist Club of Wayne, Nebraska after serving as the JOOI Governor in Nebraska. They were two of the "youthful" Club

officers at the Optimist International Convention in Las Vegas this past summer recognized by International President Ken Garner who joined his first Club at the age of 25.

KidZ Partnering: A NON-TRADITIONAL, MULTI-AGE JOOI CLUB



[By Deborah Harney, Academy Optimist Club of Colorado Springs, Colorado]



[KIDZ PARTNERING INSTALLATION Joann Carol Booth, Academy Optimist Club, stands behind podium at the JOOI Club's charter meeting. PHOTO BY Sr. Jeannette Kneifel, OSF.]

KidZ Partnering is a non-traditional JOOI Club with a multi-age composition much like that of the early one-room schoolhouse: The older children are role models for the younger ones by looking after their development and growth. The Club came about as the brainchild of Joann Carol Booth of the Academy Optimist Club of Colorado Springs, Colorado. What is most significant about establishing this Club with an at-risk group of children is that the likelihood for success and for continuity of membership is often low. Nevertheless, the Club began with about a dozen children and has grown to 30 Members!

The mothers of the children of KidZ Partnering belong to a network of women called Women Partnering, a ministry sponsored and supported by the Sisters of St. Francis of Colorado Springs along with other ecumenical and secular groups whose goal is to help financially vulnerable women and children move toward economic sustainability by responding to their unmet needs. As a Member of the network, each woman works her own holistic Individual Development Plan for the benefit of herself and her children.

As a Board Member of both the Academy Optimist Club and Women Partnering, co-chair of AOC JOOI Clubs, and with her experience working with elementary JOOI Clubs, Carol saw the need for children to have their own group and saw a good fit to satisfy that need by establishing the KidZ Partnering JOOI Club. Despite performing well in school, the circumstances of these children are such that they would be highly unlikely to join groups at their schools and benefit from that type of growth, development, and confidence.

Booth had the vision to see the benefits of a JOOI Club for the growth and development of these children, was not deterred by the complexity and unusual structure of forming such a non-traditional, multi-age JOOI Club, and exhibited the requisite resilience and persistence to adhere to her goal. She first spearheaded a partnership between the Academy Optimist Club and Women Partnering on behalf of the children,

a common focus between the two groups. After obtaining approvals from three organizations -- the Academy Optimist Club, the Women Partnering mothers, and Sr. Jeannette Kneifel, OSF, Women Partnering President/CEO -- Carol began the approval process with Optimist International.

Since the KidZ Partnering JOOI Club charter was received in May 2013, Carol has conducted numerous monthly meetings with children regarding Optimist JOOI Club essentials: How organizations are formed and meetings conducted; writing Club bylaws, nominating officers, the roles of various officers, conducting elections, brainstorming to devise service projects, coming together to carry them out, and realizing what they can do for themselves and others. She affirms, "These children are now learning great knowledge and skills which will empower them to achieve their future dreams."

Carol solicited and also provided personal funding so the children of KidZ Partnering would have their own Club t-shirts and could proudly wear them to their meetings, and especially to their installation ceremony.

Along with a photo of the installation of children into the KidZ Partnering JOOI Club wearing their bright blue t-shirts, the Spring 2014 Women Partnering Newsletter provides insight into how momentous this Club has been for these children and their mothers:

The impressive ceremony brought joy and tears to the children and their mothers and to the staff and volunteers of Women Partnering. This was followed by the installation of the officers for the children's Club... The spirit of the event can be summarized by a statement made by one of the boys, 'I am so happy. I now belong to something.'