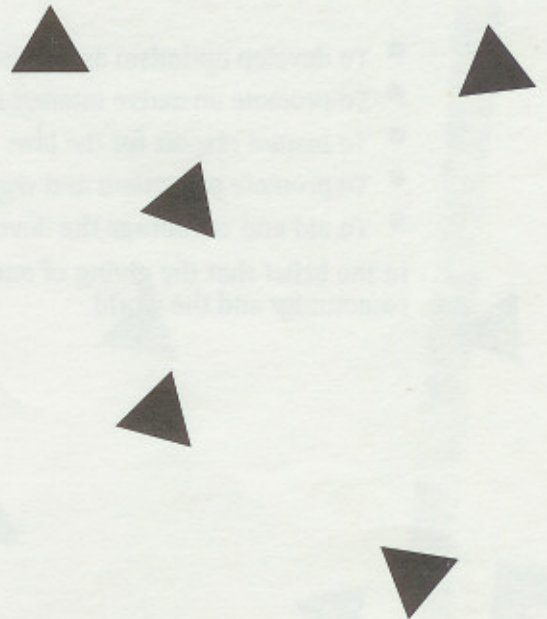


Optimist Club

Member's **G**uide



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We're Glad You're a Member

Congratulations on your decision to join one of the world's largest and most active service organizations, Optimist International.

You are important to your club and to Optimist International. Without volunteers like you, Optimist Clubs would be unable to carry out their many and diverse projects for youth and community.

We hope your Optimist Club membership is enjoyable and rewarding. By giving something to your community through an Optimist Club, you will receive great rewards in return.

Use this booklet as a guide to getting the most from your Optimist Club membership.

Purposes of the Optimist Club

- To develop optimism as a philosophy of life;
- To promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs;
- To inspire respect for the law;
- To promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people;
- To aid and encourage the development of youth;

In the belief that the giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of man, his community and the world.

How to Be an Effective Member

Joining your Optimist Club is just the first step. Now, it's up to you and your club to make the membership a satisfying experience.

Here are some suggestions on how to become an effective member:

Attend meetings. The best way to know what is happening in your club is to attend meetings. This is where announcements are made about upcoming projects, board decisions, etc.

Volunteer for projects. When your club needs help with a youth activity, fund-raising booth, etc., sign up. Experiencing a youth-service project is how you really get to know Optimism.

Join a committee. Get involved with a project from start to finish.

Wear your pin. The Optimist lapel pin shows your pride in being a member.

Read *The Optimist Magazine*. Sent to every Optimist member, the magazine tells you what other clubs are doing. It gives valuable advice on fund raising, membership, etc.

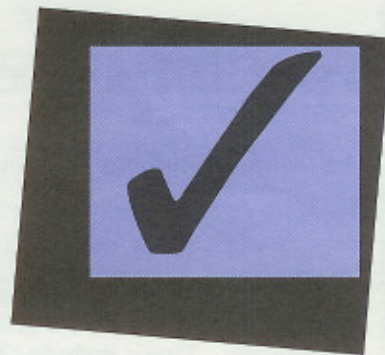
Pay your dues on time. Your club depends on member dues to operate.

Ask questions. Don't be shy. You just might stimulate discussion that will produce some fresh ideas.

Tell others. Let friends, family, etc. know what you are doing in your club. Invite them to club projects and special events.

A New Member's Checklist

- Do you have a schedule of upcoming club activities?
- Have you begun to receive *The Optimist Magazine*?
- Do you have a list of the names and telephone numbers of your club's officers and committee chairmen?
- Have you volunteered for a committee?
- Do you know when your club board of directors meets?
- Do you know when and where your district will meet next?
- Do you know the background of Optimist International?



How an Optimist Club Works

Each Optimist Club operates autonomously. They choose their own activities, elect their own officers and raise their own funds.

Decisions are made by the club **board of directors**. The board includes the president, secretary-treasurer, vice presidents, past president and elected directors. The president, vice presidents and directors are elected; the secretary-treasurer is appointed by the president.

The club **president** is the key officer of the club. An effective president runs good club meetings, directs and organizes the club to meet its goals, and brings together all members as a contributing team.

The **secretary-treasurer** handles finances and maintains club records.

Specific areas of club work are carried out by club committees. Typical committees include:

Community Service - Organizes community-service projects.

Fellowship - Stimulates attendance and fellowship at meetings, and plans social functions.

Finance - Oversees club budget and develops fund-raising projects.

Membership - Works to attract new members and orient them to the club.

New Club Building - Starts a new Optimist Club in a nearby community.

Program - Arranges programs for club meetings.

Public Information - Publicizes the club and publishes the club bulletin.

Youth Activities - Conducts youth-service programs.

The club is chartered as a member of Optimist International, giving it the right to use the Optimist name, and providing access to the programs and services of Optimist International.

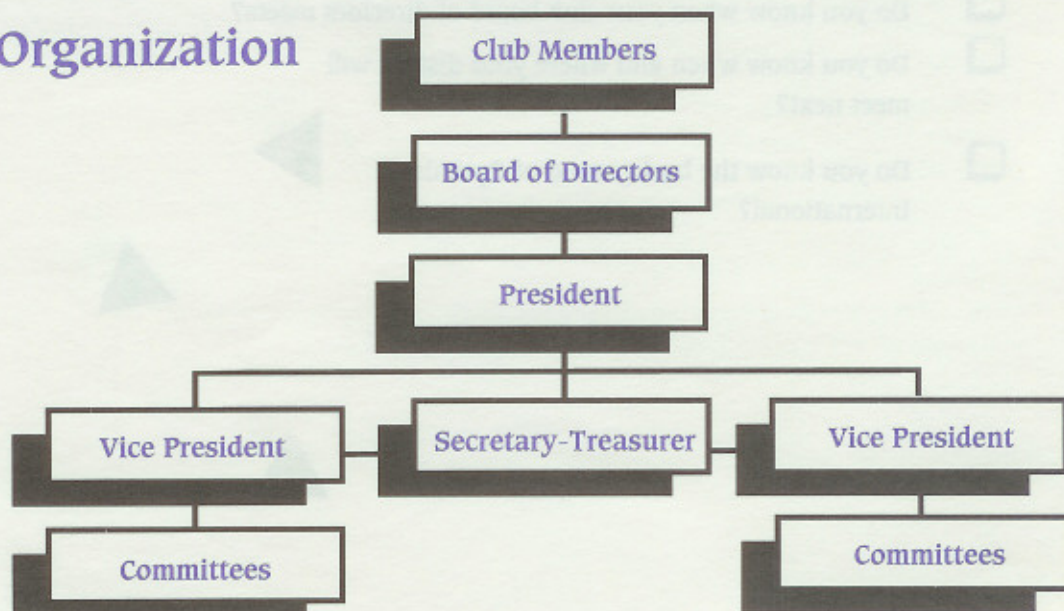
How Clubs are Funded

An Optimist Club has two sources of money: member dues and income from fund-raising projects.

Member dues typically cover administrative costs and a portion of the cost of youth and community service work. Administrative costs include postage, printing, supplies and dues to Optimist International.

Most of the money to run service projects is generated from fund-raising events held in your community. These include Christmas tree lots, sales of fund-raising products, and benefit events such as dances and shows. All income from fund raisers is returned to the community in the form of service projects.

Optimist Club Organization



Your District - A Valuable Resource

The Optimist Clubs in your surrounding area make up a district. District meetings are held quarterly at rotating locations.

District meetings include workshops for club presidents and secretary-treasurers, along with general sessions on Optimist activities in the district. The district meeting is an excellent time to network with other neighboring Optimist Clubs, and gain beneficial ideas to take back to your club.

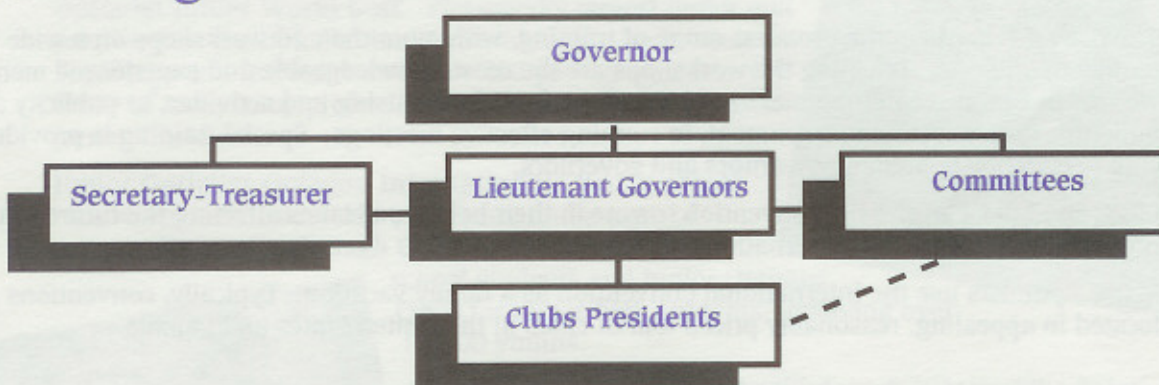
At the third quarter meeting in April or May, the district Oratorical Contest final is held, giving members the chance to hear the best young speakers in the district.

District Leaders

District officials can assist your club during the year. You will meet the **lieutenant governor** who oversees your club and about five other neighboring clubs. The **governor** presides at district meetings and may visit your club during the year.

District chairmen can provide assistance to clubs in their area of responsibility, such as activities, club services or membership.

District Organization



Leadership Opportunities

Your Optimist Club and district offer many opportunities for you to gain leadership experience.

In your club, you can start by chairing a project. Often this project may be outside your regular area of business experience, thus broadening your horizons. As you become more familiar with the club you can assume added responsibilities as a vice president and, eventually, club president. Once a successful president, you can advance to lieutenant governor, where you would oversee several clubs, and eventually governor.

To assist members, Optimist International provides a wide range of workshops and handbooks. Training workshops in all facets of club operation are conducted by experienced leaders at district meetings and at the International Convention. Handbooks and materials for each committee are sent to incoming club presidents each year. District chairmen can provide personal assistance to clubs.

What Does Optimist International Do?

Your Optimist Club is teamed with over 4,000 other Optimist Clubs to form Optimist International, one of the world's great service organizations.

Your club receives important service and support from being part of a large association. These include:

- international activity programs
- training of club and district leaders
- handbooks, ideas and materials aiding clubs in service projects, membership, publicity, fund raising and all other areas of club activity
- incentive awards for successful clubs
- special assistance to clubs.

International Convention

The International Convention provides members with the opportunity to meet fellow Optimists from other regions and cultures.

The convention offers the broadest range of training, with more than 70 workshops on a wide variety of subjects. Teaching the workshops are the most knowledgeable and experienced men and women in Optimist International. Subjects range from fund raising and activities, to publicity and bulletins, to membership recruitment, to running effective meetings. Special training is provided for club presidents, lieutenant governors and governors.

Clubs send delegates to the convention to vote in their behalf on issues affecting the future of the organization, and to elect international officers.

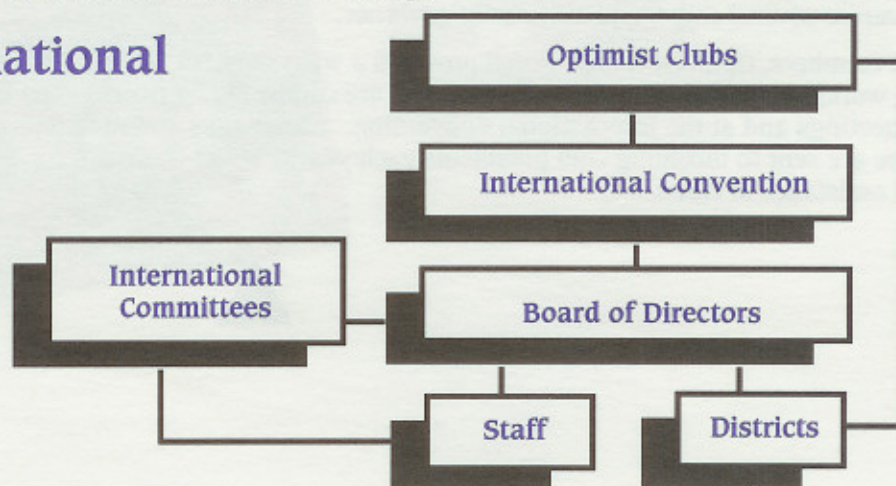
Many Optimists use the International Convention as a family vacation. Typically, conventions are located in appealing, reasonably priced tourist cities in the United States and Canada.

How Optimist International is Governed

Representatives of Optimist Clubs at the International Convention elect members of the **Board of Directors**. The Board includes the president, president-elect, two most recent past presidents, and 10 vice presidents. The Board makes policy decisions for the organization. The president appoints members to various **international committees** which study issues and make recommendations to the Board.

The international president and vice presidents visit Optimist district meetings throughout the year, to maintain close contact with the membership.

Optimist International Organization



Optimist International Activities Programs

Optimist International has a series of 11 activities programs for use by Optimist Clubs. Your Optimist Club can use any of these programs, along with projects you create on your own.

Substance Abuse Prevention. Optimist Clubs help children learn to say "no" to drugs and alcohol through "Just Say No" and other programs. Clubs typically work through schools, where they give educational presentations and develop peer support activities.

Oratorical Contest. Since 1928, Optimists have conducted this speech contest for youth. Club contest winners advance to zone and district competition. Scholarships totaling over \$150,000 are awarded to district winners.

Communication Contest for the Hearing Impaired (CCHI). Similar to the Oratorical Contest, CCHI allows hearing-impaired youth to compete in speech or sign language. Scholarships are given to district winners.

Essay Contest. High school students write short essays on an assigned topic regarding freedom. Club, district and international winners are chosen.

Optimist Junior World Golf. The world's largest junior golf tournament, the Optimist Junior World is held each July in San Diego and features more than 700 youths ages 5 to 17. Many of today's top professional golfers are former Optimist Junior World stars.

Junior Optimist-Octagon International. Young people receive valuable leadership experience and a taste of community service through Octagon Clubs for high school students and Junior Optimist Clubs for junior high students, involving over 15,000 youths.

Bike Safety Week. Held the third week in May, Bike Safety Week teaches young people safe cycling. Optimist Clubs hold bicycle rodeos, bicycle inspections and safety clinics.

Respect for Law Week. The importance of law enforcement and citizen support are highlighted by special events May 1-7 each year.

Youth Appreciation Week. Optimist Clubs hold events the second week of November to celebrate the positive contributions of young people.

▶ **Help Them Hear.** Clubs donate special equipment for the hearing impaired.

▶ **Tri-Star Sports.** A skills competition for young people in five sports.



The Optimist Magazine

All Optimist members receive *The Optimist Magazine*. Published eight issues yearly, the magazine provides news and features helpful to your Optimist activity.

Magazine articles cover many examples of outstanding Optimist service projects, and provide tips on subjects ranging from fund raising to publicity. The magazine also carries news about Optimist International programs.

Awards for Your Club

Your club likely will be striving to achieve one or more of these Optimist International awards, which promote excellence by Optimist Clubs.

Honor Club. Recognizes overall club accomplishment in community service, membership growth, district participation and club administration.

Distinguished Club. For a higher level of overall achievement, which can include building a new Optimist Club in a neighboring community.

Community Projects Award. Presented for the year's most outstanding Optimist service projects, in 11 categories. Winning clubs are introduced at the International Convention.

International President's Awards. Special awards created each year to recognize certain accomplishments by clubs and members.

Activities Awards. Presented for achieving required levels of youth and community service.

Most Optimist Clubs have an awards banner which displays the various awards won in previous years.

Optimist Merchandise

You can show your Optimist pride with clothing and jewelry featuring the Optimist logo. Items you can purchase include sport shirts, dress shirts and blouses, sweaters, jackets and caps, all produced by quality manufacturers. Other items such as pen-pencil sets and briefcases also are sold, along with a variety of plaques and decorations including some featuring The Optimist Creed.

For more information about supplies, watch for ads in *The Optimist Magazine* or call Optimist Supply at the number below. You may also ask your club president for a copy of the Optimist Supply Catalog.



You can order supplies by calling toll-free:
U.S. 1-800-841-1777
Canada 1-800-363-7151.

Major credit cards are accepted.

History of Optimist International

Optimist International traces its roots to 1911 when a group of Buffalo, New York businessmen began meeting for lunch on a regular basis. They organized their group as "The Optimist Club of Buffalo."

The club proved successful, and similar groups soon began in Syracuse and Rochester, New York. In 1916, an Optimist Club was started in Indianapolis, independently of the New York groups. Soon, clubs were founded in St. Louis, Denver, Louisville, Los Angeles and other cities.

Optimist International was formed on June 19, 1919 when representatives of 11 Optimist Clubs met in Louisville, Kentucky.

Almost from the beginning, youth work has been a major focus of the organization. Early Optimist Clubs started day camps and homes for delinquent youth, organized father-son weeks and sponsored Junior Optimist Clubs for young people.

In 1928, the first Optimist International Oratorical Contest was held. Bike Safety Week became an international program in the 1950s.

Youth Appreciation Week was started in 1955 by North Carolina Optimist Earl Yarborough, who wanted to celebrate the positive contributions of youth.

In the 1980s, substance abuse prevention has received the most attention from Optimist Clubs.

Optimist International has increased its membership in almost every year of history. In the 1980s, membership grew by nearly 40,000. Women joined the ranks of Optimists in 1987. In the 1990s, the organization has begun expansion outside North America.



Optimist International Foundations

Optimist International has special foundations which provide funding for certain international youth-service programs.

The foundations are supported by tax-deductible contributions from Optimist members and the public. The U.S. Optimist International Foundation was started in 1971. The Optimist International Foundation of Canada began in 1988.

Foundation contributions provide more than \$150,000 each year for scholarships to district winners of the Oratorical Contest. Other programs which are major beneficiaries of the Foundations are the Essay Contest, the Communications Contest for the Hearing Impaired, and Junior Optimist-Octagon International.

Your tax-deductible contributions to the foundations enable them to support an ever-increasing sphere of worthy projects.

Answers to a Few Questions

How much time does being an Optimist require?

From as little as an hour every few weeks to attend a club meeting or help with a project, to as much as 10 hours or more a week if you're holding an office or running a project. You can gear your time commitment to your individual needs.

How much does it cost?

Little beyond your member dues and the cost of meals at meetings. You probably will want to buy any fund-raising items your club is selling.

What do I do as a member?

An Optimist member attends club meetings and volunteers for service projects. The projects are carried out away from meeting times.

Is attendance at meetings required?

No, but it is encouraged. It is the best way to stay abreast of what is happening in the club.

Am I expected to recruit members?

Not required but encouraged, to keep a continued flow of new ideas into the organization. Hopefully, others will become interested in joining as you share with them your positive experiences in the club.

What if I move?

Even if you move out of your community, you can join an Optimist Club at your new home. For a list of Optimist Clubs in the area you are moving to, contact the International Office.

What leadership opportunities are available?

In your club, you can organize a club project, or hold a club office such as president. After you've served as a club president, you can take on district offices such as lieutenant governor. One can serve as the highest district officer, governor, and move to international offices such as vice president or committee member.

Do you have to be an officer to attend district meetings or the International Convention?

No, any member may attend these meetings.



The Optimist Creed

Promise Yourself -

- To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.
- To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.
- To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.
- To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.
- To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best.
- To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.
- To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.
- To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.
- To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.
- To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

Many have found inspiration in The Optimist Creed. In hospitals, the creed has been used to help patients recover from illness. In locker rooms, coaches have used it to motivate their players.

Optimist International adopted this creed in 1922. It was originally published in 1912 in a book entitled "Your Forces and How to Use Them." The author was Christian D. Larson, a prolific writer and lecturer who believed that people have tremendous latent powers, which can be harnessed for success with the proper attitude.



Your comments and suggestions regarding Optimist International are welcomed. They may be addressed to
Executive Director,
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St. Louis, MO 63108 USA.



OPTIMIST
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Friend of Youth

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