

SWIS District Third District Conference Recap
May 3, 2008
Round Table Notes

Fellow Optimists – As promised, below are the compiled notes from the roundtable discussions at the SWIS Third Quarter Conference. There was a great deal of sharing of information between Optimists, and all who participated had a chance to meet many fellow Optimists as we changed members at each table with each question. So if you were there, *thank you* so much for your participation and sharing. If you were not there, below is a compilation of what you did miss!!

The results below are direct quotes from the sheets submitted by each table – there has been no editing of any kind! These are the thoughts and ideas from the Optimists who did participate.....and, there are many, many great ideas here – we can learn so much from each other! All we have to do is have a forum to do so, and our SWIS Conferences give us such a great opportunity to do just that! Come to the next SWIS Meeting, our Annual Convention in Racine in August.

Club Presidents, you may want to share these notes with your Board members/club members, and even consider having time allotted at a Board meeting or a special meeting to discuss these in greater depth. Many of these ideas may lead you to the conclusion that a "Community Needs Assessment" is in order. The SWIS District can help you plan such an assessment.

There are many great ideas and thoughts here! And, these are ideas that come directly from your fellow SWIS Optimists.....Let's learn from each other and make things happen that will enable us to better serve our kids and communities!

Jim Kondrasuk, Past Governor
Leadership Development Chair, 2007 - 2008
SWIS District

1. What do YOU EXPECT from your Lieutenant Governor & the SWIS District Team?

Visit once a year, or send a rep to visit each club

Co-operation/communication – listen to others

Bring clubs together to sponsor an event or speaker or fund raising project

Get firm commitments from people – don't be afraid to ask

Plan a social event, possible once a month, at the "wedge" (zone) level

Most members don't know what a Lt Governor is, what responsibilities they have

Communicate other club activities

Liaison between SWIS team (officers), OI, and the Clubs

Promoting recognition for the clubs for projects/activities

SWIS Team - listing and explanation of banner patches & what the clubs did to earn them

Improve communications between OI, District and the clubs. Get the message out.

Tell the clubs that don't come to the Conferences what happened at past conferences, SELL the fun etc to those clubs

Cheerlead – encourage members too visit other clubs – get involved

Need to have the ability to have a working team – very important now since he/she will be responsible for many more clubs

Communications – let the clubs know what is going on, what they need to be doing

Quarterly visits to each club – see home a club is doing and help with any issues (or a representative of the Lt Gov)

Go to club installations – explain the organization structure & what the District & International are all about

Communicate MISSION, initiative, these & national campaigns

Communicate kudos when clubs are doing something well or has had a successful function

Communicate about your wedge's success to other Lt Govs & Gov.

Challenge to other wedges.

Submit clubs news in your wedge to the District newsletter

Visit every club

To be available if there are problems

Install Officers

Communicate with clubs

Discuss with Clubs upcoming changes such as changing to wedges from zones. Clubs have questions that should be answered in advance – e.g., what will happen with the essay & oratorical

Communicate!Communicate!Communicate! Communicate!

Communication

Participation/support by phone, club building, visits

Information – both take and give to our clubs

Help build/facilitate resource of compiled information (who is doing what within our wedge)

Make sure newsletters from each club go to every club in the wedge, so clubs stay on top of new activities

HOW do you recruit new members into your club? WHAT do you tell them, and HOW do you SELL them on becoming a "Friend of Youth"

Just Ask!!!

Packet of material – brochure, club expenses, program, list of members (get the info out there)

Websites

Through publicity – community pages of newspapers

Communication

Speakers join

People we donate to join the club

Give out applications at activities

Look at past activities/successes

Convey the fun - people won't be motivated to join something dull and dreary no matter how great the cause.

Talk about the projects, talk to people at the projects

Ensure your projects are varied – some people will get involved because of your fishing program, other because of the bike race

Get the word out to the community via press releases etc about the club and what it does. Then let the club's activities sell themselves

Give your target group (for example, parents of young kids) what they want. Parents could be raising money that directly helps their kids if they join. They could be directly involved in their kid's schools by participating/creating a JOOI club.

Offer rewards for members who get new members, bigger rewards for signing up members from a "targeted group" i.e., teachers

Recruit from Senior Centers because retirees often are highly interested in donating their time

Invite program speakers to be members

Mass emails – to students followed by informational meetings

Oratorical contest – ask parents to join

Invite people with young children to join. Have evening meetings & offer to have child care provided.

NOW Meetings – Have Board pre-approve people – induct at the same time. State on the invitation "you have been pre-approved as a new member" - must still complete the application and pay dues

Start young clubs (JOOI) – move kids to regular clubs as they get older

JUST ASK -----

Remind members of how they got into the club

New People in town

Guest speaker application & Student of the Month (or any event like tri-star, wrestling, etc) parents

Contact new business members

People willing to talk about Optimism and what we do

One page sheet/flyer on what we do

Website availability, chamber of commerce

Change meeting time/offsite locations

Visit different locations as part of tour to ask different new members
Purchasing gift cards for basic necessities to provide percentage back that could be used for defraying costs
Publicity in general – papers, pictures, TV stations
Friends of Optimists Program
Target “groups/businesses” in your community; invite them in as a guest (new) speaker, and hopefully they join
Connect with college clubs in your area, meet with the grads who may be going back to their hometown, and then begin your recruiting at that point (when they come back home)
Continuity with communication between clubs: inform clubs when members move, etc
Culture of your club (couples vs. singles) may determine your recruitment activities
Work with the Chamber of Commerce to better connect with new people moving to your community (or if someone works at the local newspaper)
Social events vs. meetings – some clubs use the social events as a recruiting tool because some people are “turned off” by “meetings” – Social events as a NOW event!
Doing things with your friends This is the selling point. Making visitors/friends feel very welcome to the point where they’re asking you if they can join b e f o r e you ask them
Brochures at the Chamber of Commerce and at local businesses (Club members who are business owners – realtors too)
Brochures and other information available for the public at your local events and club activities
Friends and family members of current members (but this is limited too)
Retiree recognition events (teachers, etc) – Sauk Prairie Club coordinates an event for teachers & gets new members too)
Workwith other (service) clubs in community (e.g., Jaycees) to recruit new members
Just Ask – network
HAVE a membership committee – do a “recruiting meeting” – send out formal invitations at time of a regular meeting; invite past student to come in & TELL PROSPECTS & MEMBERS how Optimists have benefited them – show small video to highlight club events – ask questions – invite them to join – have members talk to new prospects – don’t just sit at the same old table – move around
Form a PR committee so your club activities with photos get into the paper
Get Superintendents and Principals in your club
Get Private schools involved – ask for involvement at the school level
LEADERSHIP in clubs is critical – key aspect of a successful club

HOW can the SWIS District HELP your club promote OI Programs like the Essay, Oratorical, CCDHH, Tri-Star, JOOI, Junior World Golf, and Childhood Cancer - remember, the Essay, Oratorical, & CCDHH are scholarship programs.

Communication from the top down to the clubs
Club sharing of projects – partnering with other clubs
Rewarding clubs for offering a traditional program
Cross Communication between clubs
Pair up an experienced project leader with a new or inexperienced person

Building a connection between the club & the local school system
Talk about OI: restructuring some of the events so flow is correct & less time spent on process
Communication from the District (Email weekly ideas – one page)
Multiple methods with links that work – links must be written out to allow links
Quick & Easy – Regular time of the week – calendar of events
Calendar & map of Club on web
Send info to school & work backwards to get clubs (Club members as teacher/administrator)
What are the programs? Which ones are we “expected” to do?
Make a program “fair” to explain the programs
Tri-Star Hockey – How do we get the word out.
Blog/Listserve from OI/SWIS Level
Make the printed material more streamlined
Make more user friendly – “short cheat sheet”
Put the speakers on the District Web site
A mentor from a club that has done this
Have a person to go to clubs and tell them how to do the program
Have a Gold Mine Round Table
Change in the format of this conference helps – the round table are really good
Promote JOOI Club – Participate with the clubs
Janesville Club struggle with oratorical – get teacher as member – must have contact
SWIS District too assist in communicating with the schools
Provide more information for those chairing the events – not just the internet
Support what we do as local clubs – come to the events – purchase tickets
Change “meeting” to Gala/Party – draw attention
Pay more attention to clubs that are in trouble – if membership drops – go to the meetings and re-boot the meetings
Assist without a lot of pressure
Be more communicative: get the information out to the clubs directly on specifics/details – more than just at District meetings
Layout projects in detail, in writing & get directly to the clubs
Share accomplishments of clubs with all clubs, i.e., childhood cancer
Not everyone has a computer
How do you get contestants? Need lists
Offer District Chairs to come in as speakers/workshops
Would like lists of good ways to perform, or pitfalls to avoid
Feedback sheets from OI & District
Take one conference per year to have workshops for the projects
Calendar of events/ timeline for planning for project chairs
Send email to new officers about Optimistmail.org so they have the link right away
District to do PSA’s on radio/tv to spread word about projects
Have information at SWIS District Conferences
Chairpersons of District should pass on info to club chairpersons
Promote website and make it easier to navigate – have things we can print out for a meeting
Improve Website
Links to event information

Clubs should appoint a web-person to check website once or twice a year. Check with them and make sure they are doing this.

**At District, have an OI website demo/tutorial so we can find use the info better
Give more awards or higher scholarships – up the amount of the award, or give multiple awards. The more kids get awards or recognition the more they will talk and advertise it to other kids**

Create more unity (that the club is part of the District, not just lone clubs out there – so that they will promote District events, not just their own

Wedges should send communications to the clubs in their wedge

Centralized District meeting like here, but promote what this meeting will teach them and how it will help their club.

**What is the BEST idea you have to share with your fellow Optimists
about what makes YOUR CLUB SPECIAL.**

People are the best part of our club

Try to get more people involved

Reward club members for work

Cheese curds – fundraiser

Auction

Keep meetings light and lively; start and end on time

Have more than one program chair

People

Younger members invigorate the club

We are welcoming – people feel the welcome spirit – Sauk City

Programs & projects: OI projects/Food Collection/Cooperative efforts with scouts

Janesville – Optimist Park

Participation in local festivals, parades, etc

Tri-Star Basketball Challenge – high % of running the event

Student of the Month – School District pays for membership for their members – some use JOOI group

Special Olympics

General participation with all projects

Chicken BBQ – Middleton Good Neighbor Festival

Baseball field redone by fund raising

Bringing up great rewards – students raise their grades – BUG Awards

Dance Chaperones for Middle Schools

Children's Christmas party – lunch/Santa (each gets a gift)/Wayne the Wizard

Children's Cancer Clinic meals – OUTBACK Steakhouse donates meals, charge what you wish, proceeds go to group

Cinco De Mayo

Camaraderie – networking

Noon Meetings

Having a purpose

Student of the Month

Members are assigned for special events/projects if they don't show up

Family Fun Day – i.e., water park trip

Get INVOLVED! Get COMMITTED!

Make sure that everyone takes a turn at the fundraising project

Focus on an activity each season, not just one a year

The People

Choose fundraising activities that are fun!

Schedule a "special program" for most of your meetings, to get a greater attendance

Give your speakers, presenters a little gift representing Optimist Clubs

Schedule fellowship with games like trivia, etc

Tell a joke at a meeting, or tell about a good experience

Talk about a portion of the Creed that is meaningful to each member

Meet at 6:30am (time)

Personalities – friendly, upbeat

Social club/Business done at the beginning of the year

Experienced/long time members mix with new members

Camaraderie/have fun

Diversity of membership across occupations

Speakers/programs important but if you don't have one, ask about projects, get to know a member, get to know the District

One big fundraiser so don't have to work hard on fundraisers all year

Membership strong in schools

Honoring students at meetings

What opportunities are available to you, *for personal growth*, from being associated with an Optimist Club/SWIS District?

Make new friends

Develop Leader within

Get over stage fright – interact or speak with/in front of others

Meet other people from different places – make connections – embrace diversity

Learn new skills by volunteering for different positions, especially to challenge yourself

Hang out with people not in your career field

Improve English skills by being Secretary – also improves communication skills

Sharing your abilities with others to help them improve or grow. Teach. Lead by teaching

Able to be in front of groups more/not afraid too call people and ask for something – can deal with a "no"

Opportunity to be a Chairperson helps grow one's leadership skills

Learn how to put out a newsletter

Creative ways to motivate people to give to a cause

How to delegate/get help/ask for help

Learned how to show people your appreciation even if just in a small way

Learned how not to badger people or make them feel bad about not helping

Community connections

Leadership opportunities

Opportunity to work with kids

Fellowship

Feeling good/knowledge/satisfaction in giving something back

Seeing the kid's reactions
Education about events in the Community & Schools
Connection to the community
Helping others
Learn about other people's jobs/accomplishments
Pass information on to new/newer members
Cross pollination between clubs – fundraisers, etc
Apply Optimist activities to our businesses and daily lives
More positive outlook on the needs of kids
Speaking & then asking to become an Optimist
Provide opportunity to become part of a community
Publicity can be used for growth
Work one-on-one with kids, not just give out checks
BUG Program – Bringing Up grades (Janesville)

What do you expect and need from an individual Club Website for clubs?

Search for clubs by area (for interested new members)
Who, What We Do, Contact info, Meeting times & Locations
Easy Links: symbol or word links/events/projects
Listing of number of meetings ongoing – like a virtual website
Links to clubs
Lost Control
Help from the District to put information on the website
Tech support
Low cost
What are the benefits/resources for the clubs?
Calendar of events for clubs, wedges and District
Contacts email, links, etc
Photos/articles
Sign-up for programs (District & club) – get parents/prospective members to the site
Person who is responsible for the website updates
Events for all clubs – calendar
Background info on OI & links too other OI information
Membership information
Links to other club websites
Identifying club locations
"Best Of" pages – fundraisers, events, recruiting ideas. Etc
Training for using the website – presentations at club meetings about the website and what's available
Links to newsletters
Cost is a factor
Sharing of Ideas
Calendar of all activities
Blogs
More of an informational version versus "sign-up for" event
Board Minutes/newsletters
Younger generation more in tune with this form of communicating