

**SWIS District Second District Conference Recap
Feb 9, 2008
Round Table Notes**

Fellow Optimists – As promised, below are the compiled notes from the roundtable discussions at the SWIS Second 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!! So, plan on coming to the next Conference in May in Wisconsin Dells – it will be exciting, informative, and well worth your time.

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.

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. How do you promote attendance at your club's meetings? Why do your members WANT to be there, or do they! How do you involve new members?

- Email goes out to members before each meeting
- Once a month newsletter
- Fellowship – create atmosphere
- Good speaker program
- Once a month have "fellowship" instead of speaker; with games, announcements, fun activities
- Have a purpose for being there – stress the need to help the youth
- Celebrate Holidays at the meetings
- If members have not been there for a few meetings – contact them to invite them

- Learn to delegate
- Partner experienced member with a new member for projects/committees
- Involve youth at the meetings – invite parents, teachers to attend – Honor a youth
- Speakers at each meeting
- Invite a non-member – treat to lunch/meal
- Newsletters to inform members of activities/events
- New members identify interests & talents – chairs recruit members
- Personal contact
- Structure events & assign new members with an experienced member as a mentor to assist in coordinating
- Have fun meetings that include good fellowship
- Promote good programs
- Have a good meal
- Have a private place conducive to a good meeting, free of distractions
- Involve new members and use their strengths
- Promote your club to others with brochures and other media – newspapers, radio, DVD or tape, newsletter
- Mentor new members
- Make fun, not a business meeting; everyone put a quarter in kitty jar & # drawn (everyone has a number) – if person not at meeting, money gets rolled over
- Promote programs
- Call reminders/promote speakers well in advance
- Newsletter
- One meeting a month – Business meeting – One meeting a month – speakers
- Find out what interests new members have – make new members feels welcome
- Hispanic Club
- Newsletter monthly hat lists speakers at meetings
- If club meets weekly – a weekly newsletter is sent
- In newsletter, report what guest speaker spoke about so members not there know what they missed
- New members have “speaking opportunity” to get top know who you are
- Sponsor introduces new member – try not to overwhelm new member
- Program chairperson – each member take 1 month and shares “experience” of getting programs
- Involve them – give them a “job” – something to make them participate
- Speakers – Presentations
- Programs/Events of Interest/That we initiate & participate in
- Encourage new members to serve on committee
- have food, advertisement – new ideas, weekly newsletter, speakers, invite friends, relatives
- Representative from schools
- Camaraderie or friendship, do things for kids that are promoted
- First meeting of the month, draw a name to come to the next meeting for free meal
- Communication back to guests
- Quarterly evening meeting, social event
- Keep meetings timely, start & end on time
- Socialize for only 45 minute meeting, with no speaker
- Survey
- Put on Board or involve right away

2. What makes for a "good," "timely" and "effective" service project/fund raiser?

- Involve whole club and whole community
- Silent auction involved – advertise
- Radio advertising, paper articles
- Work together & be responsible
- Define parameters on what planning on doing
- Sell ads to businesses for placemats
- Cooperate with other fund raisers
- Set the schedule, time elements
- Effective partnership with another club
- Coupons from vendor, sell for more, keep the profit
- Outback for lunch – lunch not normally open
- CCC buckets for fundraisers
- SWISDistrict.org for info & adv
- Passionate Leader
- Partner with another club
- Choose a project that fits in the community
- Good communication
- Publicity – using the media
- Committee to head the project
- Involve new members on committees
- ASK new members for ideas for projects
- Check with community & school calendars for dates (no competing events)
- Project funds raisers: sand box filling, workshop for youth on money/banking issues, Fisheree, car wash – free after sponsors are serviced, BMX/skateboard competition, Canapés, champagne & chocolate social/silent auction
- A project that actually gets kids involved
- Advanced planning, notification, information out to members/public
- Have a connection with schools/school district
- Something fun; have a social aspect
- Not too work intensive – make the work fun
- Information to media on results of project
- Be ready to accommodate changes
- Know the community calendar
- Don't take a long time planning an event; it doesn't take forever to plan an event
- Timely planning is essential
- Delegating is very important
- Maintain control of project
- Don't give up after an unsuccessful project
- Research
- Sell cheese curds@county fair & 4 H Fair & Thresherie & chicken nuggets
- Nuts at Christmas – Business will give as gifts – offer award to highest seller (Toby-West Bend)
- Stand at Badger Games – West Madison
- Brat stand near the stadium on game days – East Madison
- Bucky Books

- Brat stand at a local grocery store (only group that offers sauerkraut)
- Poinsettia sale
- Flower sale – target graduating seniors – present banquets at rehearsal. Pair with an annual event, i.e. election day, graduation
- Community Fairs – foods sales such as cheese curds; tie into an existing community event (4 H Fair, Family Feast, Synette Mai)
- Bingo at community festival
- Involving youth in working at the fundraiser (pay youth for their desired activity)
- Golf Tournaments
- Advertising – high school message board, churches, community papers, restaurants
- Sponsor after school middle school dance/open gym
- Involves kids
- Well planned/well thought out
- Weekly goals
- Established/expected after time (good reputation)/ consistency –done year after year/longevity
- Involve a lot of club members\
- Shared leadership & delegation
- “Mentoring” young/ new members on established events/projects/fundraisers
- Involve non-members for large events (such as boy scouts, high school students, etc)
- Popular venues/well known locations

<p>3. WHY do we need to recruit new members, or do we? And what is the best way? Do you use programs like NOW, or do your own thing.</p>

- Have tried NOW meetings with not much success. Follow-up with phone calls to invite people. Entice people to come, use postcards.
- Need to recruit to keep programs going
- Make personal contacts to invite people
- Have the creed when you are out, it encourages people to join
- At NOW meeting let a club member get up and talk about the history of the club
- ASK people to join
- Go around to businesses & hand out information
- Gives good networking skills, easy to meet new group of people
- New people recruit new people
- For communities with Hispanic or other cultures, talk with Priest to maybe start a club
- Give brochure to speakers – have them available at programs, fund raisers
- Talk to parents of kids involved in JOOI & Octagon Clubs
- Have family involvement – set example for out own kids to volunteer
- Schedule NOW meetings quarterly
- Ask each member to bring someone
- Bring business people, teachers, police dept (bike rodeo), social service agencies, YMCA, firemen
- Ned new members to grow & divide up the tasks
- “Just Ask” & not feel like imposing on them

- Pick-up for, lunch when ask
- Get name out in public
- Cross-pollination between clubs
- Friend of Optimism program
- Mix-up locations for getting to know one another
- New people needed – Optimists are getting older and we need to get new bodies to “replace” and have “young blood”
- NOW used here and there – it is a lot of work, but there is a payoff
- Speaker invited in – gain new members that way
- Established clubs can review roster and give personal contact, invite individuals back, send newsletters, etc
- Good promotion opportunity: have OI/local newsletter & pamphlets at events, check presentations, local events/parades, etc
- Attrition – fresh ideas, enthusiasm
- NOW meetings at night as a potluck
- Approach friends/family to recruit members
- Free meal card to prospective new members (1 side creed/ flip side coupon)
- Promote activities to help kids; get our name out there – name recognition
- Networking events
- Brochure at events such as Tri-Star Basketball
- Wear “Just Ask” buttons
- Involve parents of kids we are helping
- Get youth involved
- Survival – need new ideas, fresh eyes to maintain club
- Activities – recruit through activities
- County Fair – Poster Board; silent auction; annual events – PR
- 30 second elevator speech; website access to information about Optimists
- NOW meeting – guest at a meal presentation & recruitment event
- Newcomer – “Welcome Wagon” exposure
- Offer childcare – for younger (potential) members for recruitment
- 5th week of the month – evening meeting
- Invite people “new prospects” to your meeting because you are having a good program
- Start JOOI/Octagon clubs
- WHY? Some of us are getting old – need to replenish leaders
- NOW did not work for one club; other club NOW did work – forum for new mayor & all candidates were there; other club expected 50 got 300
- NOW works better as a side event, not a main event; Optimist club should sponsor/assist with other community event – childhood cancer, candidate forum, wine & cheese tasting
- Follow-up on new members & get them involved
- NOW – we take care of all children; Spanish language support; link civic situation to help children; find ways to affect children & families of other cultures
- Bring Governor to club to raise enthusiasm
- Invite kids, invite parents (Student of the Month); start in 4th grade; students get “BUG” awards for raising grades; “Bug Ball” activity & food between end of school & event
- Love the roundtable concept – learning more from communication with others!

- Why? Deaths; only 5 – 6 people that take leadership roles so need younger/new members
- New members bring new ideas & different aspects of the community
- Wear "Just Ask" button and bring/carry brochures
- Invite friends or co-workers to a project/social event
- Give guest speakers a brochure & ask/invite them to join
- Put out brochures/info at all events
- Get activities/projects in the newspaper
- Set up a business club membership fee (1/2 the cost)
- Partner with a bank in town for promotion, visibility
- Recruit parents of Octagon members
- Sponsor a band, team, etc as a club
- Charter a new club with the spouses of the parent club
- Retention: get them involved, personal contact: phone & email
- Get Them Involved
- Have brochures available at the restaurant where you hold meetings

4. Over the years many clubs have been successful: served kids and their community; provided for friendship and personal growth; and participated with the District. What are the common bonds for these clubs? What makes a successful club?

- Successful clubs make for good recruiters
- Successful "delegator"
- Student of the Month – interested in joining parents
- Administration within school to get an inside track
- Police departments, in-roads to other
- Speakers in an area to follow-up for more members
- Spread out work load for successful club
- Contributions to different pockets of people
- Same interest in youth, care about youth
- Get people involved
- Visible in the community – publicity – put info in papers
- Good funds raisers – money
- Participate in District meetings with several members
- Good variety of service projects
- Friendly
- Active in community
- Centered on helping kids
- Live by the Optimist Creed
- Grow membership
- The size of the community- doing concessions
- Solid core group/community leaders
- Have new members – keep members active – develop friendships
- Social connection – remembering Birthdays & other occasions; recognize members; game night; spaghetti-on-a-board
- Good leadership
- No pessimists allowed! By converting them - Have Fun!
- Doing events/fundraisers/Corp Sponsors

- Member passion for specific projects
- Diversity, good leadership, core group for programs & must include new members
- Signature project with club I.D.
- Public presence, including youth groups in fund raisers
- Keep in contact with retired and past members
- Have a history to present to the club of what has been done in the past (why/what projects work or did not work)
- Communication to members – regular contact & follow-up when someone stops coming to meetings
- Inter-club visit & pick each other for ideas
- Active participation and attendance
- Common bond: serving kids & community
- Re-connecting to mission statement & children
- Honoring/recognizing students & kids
- Successful programming & events
- The members!! (Quality people with upstanding character ☺)
- Great speakers – speaker each week – makes the meetings interesting
- Being active with other community events and/or other service groups
- Common interests – of the members – let them come together & work up an event or project – this will bring people together
- KIDS – Common Bond
- Leadership – strong president
- Leaders need to be good communicator
- Participate in/at District meetings
- The community is aware of their programs due to coverage in the newspaper

5. What programs do you find most helpful to your club in terms of touching the lives of kids and/or expanding your club's community service efforts?

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- Fun Run – Childhood Cancer – community involved
- Music in the Park – Jr & Sr high school kids volunteer
- Skating programs – 4 elementary schools & outlying schools
- BUG Awards – Bring Up Grades – mall kids, 4 – 8 grades – school goals
- Santa's toy box – underprivileged kids
- Food pantry @ Christmas
- Food drive – most foods – donations for equipment
- Boys & Girls Club – business community help get outlying kids to club
- Christmas – needy families
- Newspaper contacts, radio station too
- Father's Day Fishing Derby – each child receives a fishing pole
- Youth Appreciation event – approx 120 children get nominated – most for academic reasons – Certificate given
- BUG program (Bring Up Grades)
- Youth Appreciation event – free roller skating for approx 600 children Free Throw contest in cooperation with Park & Recreation Dept; tiered approach through schools
- Childhood cancer event, cheese curds as a fund raiser

- Donated Playground equipment
- Student of the Month/honoring & recognizing students
- Tri-Star Basketball
- Food & Clothing Collections
- Reading
- Sponsoring Youth Clubs
- Serving meals- children's hospitals to family members & staff
- Winter items collections – "Caring Tree" or "Mitten Tree"
- BUG Awards – give out "good job pencils" for grade school. Look at 1st quarter grades & 2nd quarter grades – work with principal for grades – have reward items
- Sponsor All-City Wrestling banquet. Involves 150 kids; give awards
- JOOI Club is large (150 kids) - Kids reach out to other kids
- Run district Special Olympics Games
- Involved with YMCA youth basketball
- Youth scholarships – recipients come back to tell how the scholarship helped
- Sponsor a meal for 7th graders after school program – 180 kids – once a year
- Fisheree – Lake Mills – kids fish, give away rods/reels
- Caring Tree - Optimists giving away food, Christmas gifts for the needy
- Challenge other organizations to give to Food Pantry
- Santa's Hotline – "Elves" (members) call kids on phone – parents pay \$5 for Optimists to call their kids
- Meal once a month to parents/children at UW-Madison children's hospital
- Fund raiser to help Eagle Scouts send care packages overseas
- Tri-Star Basketball for kids
- Bike Rodeo (Bike stickers, logo's etc)
- Back Packs
- Scholarships (through Octagon Club)
- Oratorical & Essay Contests
- Speaker program gives inside track to places for scholarships
- Publicity
- Community Service & the give presentation on what done (give & take)
- Publicity on what has been paid for
- Liaison in school for promotion – English Teacher/Guidance Counselor
- Meals at Ronald McDonalds
- School Breakfast Club
- Concession stands at basketball games
- Popcorn Wagon, regular basis, manned by Optimists
- Student of the Month at various levels (4 diff grades at the same time)
- Optimist Park to develop area
- Swim meet – ages 8-10 – can't be in a swim club – 300 kids/year-15 year history
- Santa calling – phone calls to girls and boys – ask parents to choose a good night to call (Mon-Wed) form with interesting facts or specific gift ideas
- Fishing Derby – partnership with local Park & Recreation Department
- Tri-Star Basketball
- Pancake Breakfast – intergenerational – seniors, club members, children
- 4th & 5th grade recognition for "turnaround students"
- Childhood Cancer – Courage Books