

August 31, 2017

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The Optimist Monthly

Friend of Youth

Upcoming

September

9/06: Homeward Trails. Sue Bell, founder and Executive Director of Homeward Trails, will discuss the phenomenal success of this animal rescue organization (over 21,000 animals since its founding in 2001). Thank you, Leigh Hurley, for arranging for this speaker. In addition, Shandra Niswander, Director of Development for Arlington Thrive, Inc. will be inducted. Thank you, Sue Gartner, for sponsoring Shandra. WGCC at 12:15.

9/20: Ken Williams, Chaplain (Col.), Senior Military Fellow, National Defense University. A trained executive leadership coach, Col. Williams has



August

8/02: Arlington's Greatest Scandal -- E. Wade Ball (Arlington's County Treasurer who went to jail). Past Arlington County Treasurer and fellow Optimist Frank O'Leary gave us the inside scoop on the corruption in the Arlington County leadership in the 1930's. He ended his talk with his own



Frank O'Leary prepping Leigh Hurley on his talk.

written articles on team building and ethics training. Thank you Leigh Hurley, for this speaker. WGCC 12:15.

9/27: Optimist Meet 'n' Greet

resumes at the Westin Arlington Gateway, 801 N. Glebe Rd. from 6:00 to 7:30.

The Westin will validate free parking for the Optimist members of our Meet 'n' Greet Happy Hour .

Appendix A:
Optimists at Play
this Summer.

Appendix A, below, has photos submitted by your fellow Optimists of their favorite moments during this summer.

Appendix B:
Clayton Depue's
Summary of the O/I
Convention.

Our President-Elect's memo and comments on July's Optimist International Annual Convention in Albuquerque.

surprising conclusion on why the missing millions of dollars were never found -- they never existed. The County Treasurer lied about the amount of the taxes the county took in order to boost his bonus! Thank you Leigh Hurley for talking the otherwise shy Frank O'Leary into being our speaker.

8/16: No luncheon.

8/23: No Meet 'n' Greet.



MW # 80

Arlington Optimist Club 16-005 ; Mid-Atlantic Region 3; Capital- Virginia District 16; Northern Virginia Zone 4

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Appendix A -- What did you do this Summer?



Mark Zetlin and family went to Hungary to celebrate his wife Zsuzsi's father's 95th birthday.



Julie Zetlin (2010 Olympian) warily holding an eagle at Budapest Castle



Matt Kuhns at Continental Divide, carefully not choosing sides.



Mark Whinton and wife Debbie before attending a musical at the Adelphi Theatre. Note how hot London was in July!



Barbara Nicastro and Grantham family reunion down the Jersey shore!



Linda Chandler's daughter Laura and grandson Leo, out to lunch!!



JB Whitlow's view from a golf course near Ocean City -- note the rainbow and the geese.



Jeff Englander's wife Hope, son James, dog Gemma, and Daughter Sally cycling on Figure 8 Island, NC.



Erica Burson (r to l) with her brother, mother, and sister at the Great Wolf Lodge in Mason, Ohio, which Erica observes must be a moneymaking enterprise of House Stark.



Greg Clough golfing with friends at Cabot Cliffs, Canada.



Steve Bouchard and wife Barbara with two guides at the Great Wall.



Whiz Mountain and granddaughter Kate Mountain (in blue, graduate of VA Tech) at the graduation from Duke of granddaughter Elizabeth White.



Conley Ricker with daughter Laura at Newport Beach, CA



Sue Gartner (in blue scarf) enjoying the newest scary ride at Busch Gardens with 7 grandchildren!! (Honey, who *does* your hair!!) Wheeee!

Appendix B -- Clayton Depue's Assessment of the 99th Optimist International Convention Albuquerque, NM, July 4-8, 2017

First Timers Orientation – This was the first meeting I attended at the 2017 Convention. I attended my first OI Convention almost 50 years ago and I wanted to see and hear whether the message from OI to the “First Timers” had changed over the years. It remained largely the same message about mission, membership, new club building, goal setting, and administration.

OI Web Site Shell for Individual Clubs – OI is just beginning consideration of offering a web site “shell” which clubs could customize and use as their own club web site. Interest in this seemed to be high as this is an opportunity for OI to provide a consistent marketing image across all clubs; provide an easy to implement and maintain club web site; get the OI message out to more people; and require less time and expertise at the club level. The incoming International President, WI. H. (Nick) Prillaman Jr., is involved.

OI By-Law Changes – Several changes in the OI By-Laws were proposed, considered, and passed at the Convention. Most were “clean-up” with little substantive effect, but one. The Convention recommended to the Board that they consider changing the age eligibility for the Oratorical Contest from a maximum from 18, to “...still attending high school.” There was a lot of debate, but the resolution eventually passed with an estimated 70% margin. The OI Board must act on this recommendation before the rule is changed.

Anti Bullying – An Optimist anti bullying program was a topic of interest at the Convention. A few clubs have an anti bullying program and OI has started looking into an Optimist program to help address anti bullying. The OI effort is being led by Danny Schuette, Director of Membership, OI. Given OCA’s mission of supporting youth services, I would propose that OCA consider implementing an anti bullying program.

In recent years, bullying in our schools has seen dramatic increases, especially with the saturation of social media, which offers a sometimes anonymous forum for bullying. At the same time, social media makes it more difficult to detect, control, and remedy bullying. Anti bullying is a subject that is reportedly of high interest to millennials.

Club President Elect Training – Yes, I attended the all day meeting! Half of this meeting was devoted to membership building, with a lot of enthusiasm about how to go out and just do it! More below.....

Membership Building, the Underlying Theme – OI membership has dropped from a high of 138,000 to 67,292 today, a decrease of over 51%. The number of clubs has also shrunk from 3,355 in 2002 to 2,357 today, a decrease of 30%. OI and the OCA have been relatively successful in retaining members who joined in the past but we have not been very successful in recruiting new and younger members. In general, we have been “locked out” of attracting younger members, including Generation Xs, millennials and Generation Zs!

Note: Here are the birth years for each generation: 1. GenZ, iGen, or Centennials, born 1996 and later; 2. Millennials or Gen Y, born 1977 to 1995; 3. Generation X, born 1965 to 1976; 4. Baby Boomers: Born 1946 to 1964; and 5. Traditionalists or Silent Generation, born 1945 and before.

All OI Clubs have programs to aid and assist our youth. The Creed is the same. We meet and have lunch, breakfast, or dinner, with a program. Many clubs have gone from meeting weekly to biweekly or twice a month, and a surprising number meet only once a month. As membership has shrunk, 998 Optimist clubs have faltered and lost their franchise, in just 14 years.

During the Convention meals (seven in all), I made it a point to sit at different tables with different Optimist members from around the country. I asked the same questions about their membership. Had it grown? If not, what were they doing about it? What had worked to bring in new members? The answers without exception were “Nothing,” “Trying,” or just a pessimistic “...we keep asking, but nothing seems to work.” Yes, just asking someone to become a member of a club does not always work today.

Our own OCA membership has declined over the past two decades. Mark, our President, set a goal for OCA of a net of ten new members for the year ending September 30, 2017. We are inducting a new member, Ms. Shandra Niswander, on September 6th. There are a few others in the pipeline but it will be a stretch for us to make this goal that Mark has challenged us with. I myself have wondered whether I have not worked diligently enough to recruit new members, or whether it is just more difficult than it used to be. After all, we

have many obstacles and excuses: potential members need to either live or work within a small radius of WGCC; prospects are busier than ever; work is all-consuming; people travel.... I think the challenge is how to approach potential new members in a way that resonates with them and creates a desire for them to become involved.

One of the things I sensed at the Convention, and have since researched and learned a little more about, is that younger people want to be “relevant” and not just join a “club.” They want to volunteer!

Some of you may have noticed my salutation on e-mails and letters has changed from “Optimist Club of Arlington” to “Optimist Volunteer.” This is one way I am trying to better relate to potential new members. Another idea is to approach prospective members with “We need your help¹...” or “We are looking for a few volunteers to help us with some important youth programs in Arlington.” Or specific youth program(s) that may be of interest to the prospect. But, that takes a little more effort to find out what their interests are – an important part of recruiting new members. If you are interested in exploring other ways we can reinvigorate our membership campaign, please let Tricia, Mark Z., or me know.

Meanwhile, let’s help to meet Mark’s goal of a net plus ten new OCA members by September 30, by becoming an Optimist Volunteer! Think of the people you know whose schedules would allow them to attend a lunch at WGCC two times a month, and those who would like to volunteer to help the young boys and girls of Arlington. We have three meetings in September, and we can always have a special board meeting to approve a candidate on or before September 30th. And, new Friends of Optimists (FOOs) also count as new members.

Respectfully and optimistically submitted,

Clayton Depue Optimist Volunteer 703-408-6651

¹ Attributed to Margaret Mead. This simple introductory phrase (“We need your help.”) was a major factor in the process of recruiting over 600 volunteers for another organization here in Arlington.