

The Optimist Monthly

Friend of Youth

May 30, 2022



May

5/04: Tina Leone- Ballston Bid CEO.



Tina Leone being given an Optimist plaque by Brian Kellenberger. Photos provided by Brian.



Robin Rodensky, Arlington girls Softball Assn Marketing Director, given a check from the Optimist Youth Fund.

5/18: Jim Williams as speaker. Jim, a retired Foreign Service Officer (shown right



with Jeff Englander), was stationed in Berlin when the wall came down. He belongs to a group who has periodic dinners known as the "Fall of the Wall." Jim's wife, Anne, who saw their daughter standing on top of the wall that night also related some interesting stories. Thank you, Peter Wehmann, for inviting them.

In addition, Gloria Mora and Peter each invited one other guest. Great efforts toward recruiting new members!

Richard Knight, VP and Chair of the Oratorical Contest, briefed us that in the past month, he was able to work with the Arlington Community School to have an Oratorical Contest this year. See details on page 3.

Finally, Michal Simek presented the Optimist Club's 2022 grant to Arlington Soccer Association President Frank DeMarco (photo right). Frank sent a note to Jeff Englander describing the ASA's gratitude for the Optimist's contribution (reprinted in Appendix 1, below).



5/27: Meet & Greet: Texas Jack's (2761 Washington Blvd) was held again this month. The usual gang was there and brought three guests! Please come by in June to bring prospective members!



From l to r: Hayden Bryan (guest of Peter Wehmann & Sue Gartner), Peter, Eric Turner (guest of Brian Kellenberger), Blair Strejeck (guest of Peter & Sue), Sue, Brian and Mark Zetlin. Photo taken by Sandy Bushue. Missing: Richard Knight, who had just left.

June

6/01: Craig Syphax. Thank you, Frank O'Leary, for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

6/15: Exploration of Mars. Dr. Harold A. Geller is Associate Professor Emeritus, Physics and Astronomy, George Mason University will speak about forty years of exploration of the surface of Mars. On the 20th day of August, 1975, the Viking 1 spacecraft was launched into space towards Mars. On the 19th day of June, 1976, the Viking 1 spacecraft reached the planet Mars. The Viking 1 Lander was to set down on the surface of Mars for the bicentennial celebration in the USA.

Unfortunately, due to the ruggedness of the original chosen landing site, the Viking 1 Lander did not land on the surface of Mars until July 20th, which marked the 7th anniversary since the landing on the Moon. The robotic arm of the Viking 1 Lander malfunctioned, and, in spite of an onboard computer with only 64K of RAM, the computer was re-programmed to extend the robotic arm so that on the 28th of July, 1976, we reached out and touched the surface of Mars. We discuss the exploration of the surface of Mars from the Viking mission in 1976 to the current Curiosity rover on Mars; and, the part it all played in my own life on Earth. Thank you, **Brian Kellenberger,** for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

6/27: Meet & Greet: Texas Jack's (2761 Washington Blvd) will be held again this month! Please come by to bring prospective members! 5:30 to 7:00.

July

7/06: Scott Miller- Pathforward. Thank you, **Sandy Bushue,** for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

7/20: TBA.

7/27: Meet & Greet: Texas Jack's (2761 Washington Blvd) will be held again this month, **but not in August!** Please come by to bring prospective members! 5:30 to 7:00.

August

8/03: TBA.

Oratorical Contest Results by Richard Knight

The winners of the 2022 Oratorical Contest were truly outstanding this year, even more for contestants being in transition in learning in the public schools. Speaking on the topic “Staying Optimistic in Challenging Times,” first place was awarded to Amelie Cohrssen, whose family hails from Ukraine. Second place was awarded to Sean Memon, third place to Ainsley Meck, fourth place to Zach Dabrowski, and fifth place to Ananya Sinha. All speeches were particularly polished and well-delivered and determining the winners a real challenge. Each of the winners is receiving a scholarship check for their future education. Participation in the contest was so widespread that the winners went through a selection process before the actual contest. It began with 39 spirited contestants submitting 5-minute video speeches to the school Coordinator, Leah Graham-McFarlane, the 10th Grade English Teacher.



She then selected the best 20 contestants from the original 39 and forwarded their 20 video presentations to the Optimist Club. The judges, Tricia O’Hara and Richard Knight, viewed each of the 20 video presentations on a You Tube channel and voted on selecting the five most outstanding speeches. All contestants are students at the Arlington Tech/Career Center, known also as the Arlington Community High School, the first time it has participated in the Oratorical Contest. See their photos, below, provided by Richard Knight:



Amelie Cohrssen, 1st Place



Sean Memon, 2nd Place



Ainsley Meck, 3rd Place



Zach Dabrowski, 4th Place



Ananya Sinha, 5th Place

Annual Optimist Scholarships by Mark Whitenton

First, one of our 2021 Optimist Scholarship winners, Mekyah Dunbar of Wakefield High School, deferred entering Old Dominion University until the spring semester of 2022. She has provided her transcript of her first semester which indicates she has achieved a GPA well in excess of the C+ average we require. Our Treasurer, Gerry Marosek, will be sending her \$5,000 2021 Scholarship to ODU in early August. Please see Mekyah's very nice letter to our Club describing her first semester, along with her photo, in Appendix 2, below.



Our 2022 Scholarship Program. Thanks to Sandy Bushue, the Tree Lot Committee and all the Optimists, we had a highly successful Christmas tree fundraising event last fall. These well-earned profits for the Optimist Youth Club allowed the Optimist Board to authorize five \$5,000 scholarships to be awarded in a competition among all Arlington's graduating seniors who are going to a four-year college this fall. The Optimist Scholarship criteria remain that the student must show academic excellence, economic need and some evidence of social giving to the youth of the community.

Our sincere appreciation goes to the high school counselors who alerted seniors to our scholarships, sought applicants and worked to make sure that each applicant submitted all seven of the documents required. The counselors are Katherine Hurley (Bishop O'Connell), John Clisham (Wakefield), Elysse Catino (W-L) and Md Calabro (Yorktown). Thank you all for your help again this year.

After a comprehensive evaluation by the Optimist Scholarship Committee (Brian Kellenberger, Sandy Bushue, Richard Knight, Debbie Whitenton, Erica Burson and Chair, Mark Whitenton), I am happy to report that out of the group of fifteen outstanding students who applied from Arlington's four major high schools, these five have been selected. Clockwise on the following page, starting with the upper left photo:

- **Thomas Ackleson: from W-L, going to University of Virginia.**
- **Rick Escudero: from Yorktown, going to University of Virginia.**
- **Laila El Machtani Idrissi: from Wakefield, going to Virginia Tech.**
- **Mark McNulty: from Wakefield, going to Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute.**
- **Mary Ann Montgomery: from Bishop O'Connell, going to Oberlin College.**

Congratulations and best wishes to these exemplary seniors!

Thomas Ackleson



Rick Escudero



Laila El Machtani Idrissi



Mary Ann Montgomery



Mark McNulty



HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY!



mw: 136
Optimist Club of Arlington 16-005;
Mid-Atlantic Region 3;
Capital- Virginia District 16;
Northern Virginia Zone 4;
www.optimistclubofarlingtonva.org

Appendix I

May 23, 2022 email to Jeff Englander:

Dear Jeff,

On behalf of the Arlington Soccer Association, we would like to thank you for your generous donation.... Because of your contribution, Arlington soccer can bring soccer to many kids who would not have access to the great game of soccer. We believe that soccer can have profound effects on the lives of children and the lessons learned can help change the lives of children in the Arlington Community. We are extremely grateful for your continued support of our organization

Since the Arlington Soccer Association was founded in 1970, we have strived to identify, develop, and fund projects that make a difference in the lives of children in the Arlington community. The support of generous donors like you enables us to provide soccer programming to over 9000 kids every year. We have a large population of over 1000 players that we provide financial assistance to, and they are grateful for the opportunity to play a sport they love in their home community.

It was great to meet you and the other Optimist members at your lunch on May 18, 2022. I enjoyed lunch and the stories told by Jim Williams about the fall of the wall. I really enjoyed hearing Jim talk about how he saw his daughter standing on top of the wall that night. Thank you for the invitation and such an enjoyable experience. We have distributed information to our members regarding the decision by Wells Fargo and have asked them to reach out and reverse their decision on the Tree Lot. We will also have another reminder going out this week to our membership. If there is anything else we can do to help support you in this effort please let me know.

We recognize that there are many worthy organizations in our community, and we are grateful that you have chosen to support the children of the Arlington Soccer Association. If you have any questions about our upcoming projects or how to participate in supporting the Arlington Soccer Association in different ways, please feel free to contact me at frankdemarco@arlingtonsoccer.com.

Sincerely,



Frank DeMarco
Executive Director
Arlington Soccer Association

703-599-5233 | www.arlingtonsoccer.com



Appendix 2

Dear Mr. Whitenton,

As the spring semester finalizes, I reflect on how grateful I am to have experienced pursuing a higher education with little worry in regards to financing my education. This opportunity has eased a great amount of stress that is commonly experienced amongst first generation college students. In turn, I was able to successfully focus and apply myself towards my academic accomplishments.



My first semester as an online college student was time consuming and enhancing. During the semester I was working as a host in a fast paced well known restaurant. More often than not completing school assignments consumed the remainder of the night until the following morning. Weekends were consumed with thoroughly finalizing essays and completing readings as well as the assignments that followed them. The long nights and lengthy assignments encouraged time management and prioritization. I soon found it was important to discover how to array assignments with an early due date and tedious assignments with a later due date.

My first semester highlighted the importance of organization and scheduling. Organizing my assignments with the method of color coding ensured that assignments would be thoroughly completed according to their corresponding due date. As I dedicated specific days and allotted time to accomplish various subjects, I was relieved of burnout and accumulated stress.

As of now I have not selected a profession that interests me. However, I have decided to major in human services with a minor in psychology. I am looking forward to acquiring the skills, lessons, and mentality to effectively work with the public and children. I am intrigued to understand how the individual mind operates and how to make connections with my academic studies and day to day encounters. I soon hope that I can actively relay my interpretations of academic lessons to better assist individuals within the community.

Sincerely,

Mekyah Dunbar