



JOIN US AS WE CHANGE THE WORLD!

The All Important First Project

Exciting and carefully chosen first projects strengthen even the weakest Clubs. Good projects will attract more Members and pump up the founding Members. Clubs that get off to a good start through successful projects rarely struggle with membership losses.

What works?

“Hands-on” events and projects that students can do on their own with relatively little planning generally make the best first projects. Some successful first projects include cleaning up graffiti on highway underpasses, picking up litter in the community park, walking dogs and cleaning cages at an animal shelter, helping at school athletic events, or decorating schools or nursing homes for an upcoming holiday. Such projects are flexible. If a few students forget they have signed up, the project can still work. These projects require little funding – for a new JOOI Club funding is probably in short supply. Most importantly, hands-on projects are fun and offer students a chance to immediately see their impact on the community. As the Club matures, more complex or long-term projects can be tackled. Some ideas for more advanced projects include tutoring younger kids, holding a community or school dance or some sort of “-a-thon” (e.g. Bowl-a-thon, walk-a-thon), organizing a blood drive or food drive, or volunteering at local nursing homes. More complex projects require significantly more planning and a longer commitment from the students. These types of projects are best saved for Clubs you are certain are up to the challenge.

As a first project, fundraisers pose a challenge. If the students choose to do a fundraiser, help organize and plan the event. Encourage most of the Members to get involved in the project and help the students set a reasonable goal.

JOINT PROJECTS

Joint projects are an excellent way to allow Optimist and JOOI Members to get to know one another. Joint projects allow both Clubs a chance to do a project that the Club could not or would not do on its own. Try to plan a joint project in conjunction with an officer from each Club. One-day events work well for joint projects. Optimist International Programs such as Bike Safety Rodeos, Respect for Law Rallies or essay or speech contests make excellent joint projects. Successful past joint projects include spaghetti dinners before school events, tree planting, holiday decorating and food drives. Encourage as much participation as possible from both Clubs by carefully selecting the event, location and time. Excellent publicity will help ensure the project's success.

Choosing a project:

Ask your sponsoring Club's President to see the *International Program's Planning Guide*, available at www.optimist.org. The Programs Department at Optimist International can provide you with a list of past Community Project Award winners, which you can repeat. Call (800)500-8130, ext. 235, for more information.

- Brainstorm for project ideas in which many of the Club Members are interested.
- Identify specific needs in your community.
- Determine how many people your project will benefit.
- Determine if the project is reasonable – can the Club accomplish the project with the Members and resources it has?

"The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience."

Eleanor Roosevelt

The Wonderful World of Activities

- Environmental clean-up
- Christmas caroling
- Organize a teacher appreciation day
- Start a pen pal program
- Peer tutoring
- Visit nursing homes
- Help with Special Olympics
- Donate clothes for the needy
- Hold a Halloween party
- Clean up school grounds
- Toys for Tots
- Conduct a recycling project
- Plant trees
- Sponsor a book drive
- Food baskets for the underprivileged
- Collect school supplies for schools in other countries
- Answer phones at a telethon
- Usher at school plays
- Sponsor a \$50 scholarship

Fundraisers

- Hold a garage sale
- Have a car wash
- Organize a bake sale
- Sell Christmas stockings
- Have an ice cream social
- Baby-sit
- Sponsor a talent show
- Sell pizzas
- Hold a dance

- Hold a spaghetti dinner
- Work a concession stand
- Sell school spirit items
- Sell pictures with Santa
- Create and sell calendars
- Sell flowers and cards for holidays
- Do odd jobs
- Sponsor a marathon dance contest
- Hold a fashion show
- Sell tickets for a raffle
- Sponsor a bowl-a-thon

Tips for successful planning

Perform these steps and answer a few key questions before you begin a new project:

- Form a team. Club officers or advisers choose Members to form the nucleus of the project team.
- How much money will you need to run the project?
- Do you need to do a fundraiser before you start?
- Choose a date on which many of the Members can participate and make sure enough Members sign up to pitch in.
- Publicize the event. Publicity helps attract new Members to the Club and pumps up current Members. Make posters and fliers to distribute in school and in the community. Make an all-school announcement inviting participation in the event. Send a delegate to the sponsor Club's meeting and invite participation from the sponsor Club.
- Should we do this project again? Keep records! Next time you choose a project things will be much easier if you have a place to start.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING IDEAS

TRIED AND TRUE: TWO PROJECTS THAT WORK!

Let's Do It!

These ideas provide a great first project for any Club. They can be done with relatively little advance planning and the effects are seen immediately.

SERVICE PROJECTS THAT WORK

Octathon Little Olympics

In an effort to provide local elementary school students with a day of fun, competition and camaraderie, the Meeker, Oklahoma Octagon Club put together the Octathon Little Olympics. Ensuring that no child was left behind, the Club opened the competition to every local elementary school student.

Letters were sent to each student a week before the event. Posters were hung in local schools and the newspaper ran an informative article describing the activity. The Club purchased soda and candy bars to serve as refreshments.

On the day of the event, the students participated in eight events at the elementary school playground. The events were: obstacle course, tennis ball throw, water carry; basketball, knock your socks off, 50-yard dash, wheel barrel race and jump rope.

After each grade completed an event, first, second and third place ribbons were presented. At the conclusion of the day, eight overall winners were presented awards. Every student received participation ribbons.

Results: Students received a full day of fun and exercise, which is good for the body and soul. The elementary students also had an opportunity to interact with older local students, giving them role models in the community and encouragement to stay in school.

Club members also benefited from the event. Members got the chance to experience hands-on service with

younger peers. The Club also got excellent publicity in the local school system as well as in the community newspaper, who covered the event.

Variety Shows and Ice Cream Socials for Senior Citizens

Upon realizing that many senior citizens at retirement homes do not receive many visitors, the Woodside, California Octagon Club decided to organize an ice cream social and variety show for residents.

After a chilly spring, the weather has just begun to show signs of summer. Club members felt it was the perfect time to refresh their senior neighbors with some ice cream. Octagon members also wished to entertain by orchestrating a show with singing, dancing and music.

The Club publicized the event by placing fliers and reminders around school and at the retirement center. Organizers also met with the center's activity coordinator to help advertise. A short article was printed in the local newspaper and reminders appeared on the Club Web site.

Results: The show entertained senior citizens who are often bored in the retirement home. The program helped improve the relationship between generations, while giving the community's older generation some faith that the future is in good hands.

Club members felt the project was beneficial for them as well. Working directly with members of the Club and the community solidified their interest in JOOI.

If your JOOI Club just can't seem to think of a project, help them brainstorm. Explore the following ideas:

Local Parks and Playgrounds

- Do they have plenty of safe, fun equipment?
- Are they clean and supplied with trash cans?
- Are there enough picnic benches?

- Is there plenty of shade?

Check out your school

- Are there enough bike racks?
- Are crosswalks safe and marked appropriately?
- Is the library well-stocked?
- Does the school have an adequate number of computers?
- Are there Clubs or sports teams needing new equipment or uniforms?

Senior Citizens

- Do seniors have transportation to run errands?
- Does the local nursing home get decorated for holidays?
- Do seniors receive visits from any groups? Chatting and playing games are important activities!

Homeless

- Is there a facility for homeless people to get food and shelter?
- Do food pantries and shelters have enough supplies and volunteers to distribute them?

Town Safety

- Are there enough streetlights to allow people to walk comfortably after dark?
- Does your neighborhood have a watch program and police patrol?
- Are there safe places for kids to play off the streets?

Community Improvement

- Are there trees or flowers along city streets?
- Are nearby beaches, streams, lakes and rivers clean?
- Are buildings and underpasses graffiti free?
- Is the trash picked up along highways, sidewalks and public places?

KIDS-HELPING-KIDS PROGRAM

Imagine how you would feel if suddenly you were without a toothbrush, comb, shampoo and even your favorite teddy bear. Unfortunately, many kids experience this trauma daily when they're placed in foster care. While nothing can take away the pain of being removed from their home, you can help ease their suffering.

Junior Optimist Octagon International (JOOI), in conjunction with the Foster Care Coalition of Greater St. Louis, developed a "Kids-Helping-Kids" program. Because many children are placed in a foster home on short notice, there often isn't time to buy necessary toiletries for the child. By participating in the Kids-Helping-Kids program, your Club can provide these items for children caught in this situation. Your Club gathers personal items and gives them to local social service agencies. The agencies then give the packages to children when they're placed in foster care.

This simple program can comfort and reassure a child caught in a traumatic situation.

Getting Started

Contact your local social service agencies to explain this program, and ask what items they need most.

Next, your Club should decide:

- Which age group to help. (The agency may know which group needs the most supplies.)
- How many care packages to assemble.
- What items to include in the packages.

- How to get the items. Ask local businesses to donate items, or conduct a fundraiser so you can purchase the items. Assign a committee to solicit donations and a second committee to scout the lowest prices. You can even do a school-wide collection, or ask your sponsoring Optimist Club to help.
- Set a deadline by which all items need to be collected.
- Appoint a committee to package the items.
- Schedule a time with the agency to drop off the packages.
- Send information about your project to your local newspapers, television and radio stations. If other people in town know the details, they may want to contribute. Also, if they see what great things you're up to, they may want to help you with future projects.
- Take pictures of your Club in action. Photos are great for publicity, can be placed in your Club scrapbook, used with Club Project Award entries and even published in *the Torch On-line*.

Suggested list of package items:

Infants

- diapers/wipes
- baby shampoo
- pacifier
- stuffed animal
- baby lotion
- bottles/nipples
- blankets
- undershirts
- sleepers
- socks

Pre-Schoolers

- toddler diapers/training pants
- shampoo/conditioner
- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- comb/brush
- game/puzzle
- coloring book/crayons
- Play dough
- T-shirt
- toy/teddy bear

Adolescents

- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- comb/brush
- shampoo/conditioner
- hair products
- pencils/markers
- toy/book
- hat/gloves
- T-shirt
- game

Teens

- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- comb/brush
- shampoo/conditioner
- deodorant
- shaving supplies
- feminine hygiene products
- T-shirt
- book/notebook/pen
- hair products

Good luck with your project! If you have any questions, feel free to call the JOOI Clubs staff at (800) 500-8130, e-mail youthClubs@optimist.org; mail, 4494 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108, or fax (314) 371-6006.