



Fundraising Ideas

Optimist International Fundraising Policies

The following fundraising policies have been set forth by the Optimist International Board of Directors. They are intended to protect the integrity of your Club and Optimist International as well as to prevent undue liability. If you have any questions regarding these policies, please contact the Membership Department at the International Office.

1. Club Fundraising Policy

Your Club should refrain from conducting, or lending its name to, any fundraising campaign, project or activity that is detrimental to the best interests of the public image of Optimist International and its member Clubs. Some examples are professional fundraising schemes, deceiving or misleading telephone solicitations and other similar unethical practices. No Club shall permit any telephone solicitation campaign for fundraising purposes which is not planned, managed, supervised and conducted by regular, active members of the Optimist Club.

It is essential that members of your Club not receive any personal profit from a fundraising activity, as this may cause revocation of your Club's income tax exemption and non-profit status. Under no circumstances should any of the profits of a fundraising program be placed in the general account of a Club and used for general business expenses! Income from fundraising projects is restricted to the support of your Club's community service programs.

2. Soliciting Other Optimist Clubs

Your Optimist Club's time and money is best spent on your own community and youth projects. Therefore, member Clubs shall not solicit other Clubs for funds to be used in their activities.

3. Convention Fundraising

Individuals, Clubs and Districts shall not offer merchandise for sale, conduct raffles or engage in any fundraising activity at any zone or District meeting, nor at the International Convention.

4. Incorporation

By becoming involved in major fundraising efforts, Clubs often expose themselves to increased levels of liability. For the personal protection of your individual members, Clubs must incorporate. Incorporation is

strongly recommended for affiliation and should be completed immediately after organization. All affiliated Clubs shall be strongly encouraged to incorporate and maintain an active corporate status.

5. Use of the Optimist International Logo

The title "Optimist International," the Optimist "Bringing Out the Best In Kids" International logo, the slogan "Friend of Youth," and the names and logos of Optimist International programs are all registered trademarks of Optimist International. Article XVII of the Optimist International Constitution requires authorization by the Optimist International Board of Directors for use of the Optimist International name, logo, and other registered trademarks.

Therefore, Clubs are not authorized to use Optimist International's name, logos, or slogans on fundraising products. If you have specific questions about the use of the logo, please contact the Finance and Administration Department at Optimist International.

6. Directory

The Optimist International Directory and mailing lists of Optimist International Club members are records that should be held in trust. Their use for commercial or solicitation purposes shall be denied to all. Exceptions may be granted by the International Board of Directors. Requests for mailing lists must be submitted in writing by the District governor.

7. Liability

Optimist International maintains a liability insurance plan that provides liability coverage for Club meetings and events. Designed to provide comprehensive liability protection, the plan has successfully helped to protect hundreds of Optimist Clubs from costly liability lawsuits. Depending on the scope and activities involved with your Club's fundraising project, you may wish to purchase additional liability or event insurance.

It is important to "think safety" when planning any Club project. It is advisable to consider the following in the event planning process:

- a. Facility maintenance, including safety, exits, plumbing and parking
- b. Volunteer training and emergency procedures
- c. Effects of bad weather and a back-up plan
- d. Equipment condition
- e. Insurance coverage of vendors and/or contractors

For more information concerning Optimist International liability insurance, please contact the Finance and Administration Department at the International Office.



8. Project Legality

Most raffles and lotteries are subject to state and local gambling regulation. Regardless of whether your state, province or city permits lotteries, federal law may be violated if promotions of the lottery are sent through the mail. Even mention of a door-prize drawing in service Club bulletins has been challenged by national postal authorities! The sale of other items, such as fireworks, is prohibited in many states, provinces and cities. Always check with local laws and ordinances before embarking on a fundraising project!

Using promoters or professional fundraising organizations

Your Club's credibility and visibility in the community are priceless assets. Before endorsing or partnering with a professional promoter or fundraising organization, check them out! Beware of commercial organizations that:

- Rush to sign contracts
- Will not wait for references to be checked
- Are reluctant to permit a background investigation by the chief of police, Better Business Bureau, or local Chamber of Commerce
- Do not carry liability insurance
- Use a telephone committee to solicit ticket sales
- Will not permit an Optimist member to handle cash with one of their employees or bond the individual handling money
- Do not allow examination of their financial or customer records
- Will not agree to a special bank account with double signatures on checks
- Promise a great deal of money for minimal effort

Before entering into an agreement with a promoter or professional fundraising organization, review the following checklist:

1. Is the contractor honest?

Check with the Better Business Bureau, State/Province Attorney General's Office, Chamber of Commerce and the police chief in the community where the company last operated. Always inspect the quality of the show, merchandise or service before making an agreement. Ask for a reference list of recent clients and survey these individuals for their opinions of the promoter or organization. Remember that your Club, not the fundraising contractor, will receive angry letters and bad publicity if the product is of poor quality.

2. Is the project legal?

Always check with local laws and ordinances before embarking on any activity with a professional promoter or fundraising organization.

3. Is the project ethical?

Money-making schemes, such as sending unsolicited merchandise through the mail in hope of payment, have been declared unethical by the Better Business Bureau. Telephone solicitations and the hiring of professional fundraisers on a commission basis are also discouraged. The Better Business Bureau warns against advertising in unknown directories and offering prizes that require an expenditure of money to make use of the prize.

4. Let Optimists market Optimism!

Optimist members are your best salespersons! Under no circumstances should a sales professional be allowed to campaign or collect in the name of an Optimist Club on a commission basis. The Better Business Bureau considers this practice unethical.

5. Contracts and profits

Before signing any contract, always have it reviewed by an attorney. Ask that objectionable clauses, including telephone solicitations, be removed. Do not be pressured into signing a contract before seeking professional, legal advice.

Secure an exact figure of the profit that will be made by your Club. Always clarify cloudy statements such as "half of the net profit." Insist on seeing an itemized list of expenses and request profit/loss statements from previous operations. Be aware that "padded" expense statements can consume profits and are one of the oldest forms of fundraising fraud.

6. Beware of "boiler room" operations

Newspapers and magazines have been exposing the boiler room operation technique for years, but it is still thriving, often under the auspices of well-meaning local organizations. A boiler room operation is a room full of desks, phones, directories and shady salespeople who often impersonate a well-known local figure. With enough phones, a boiler room can "work" the average city in just a few days.

At best, the boiler room sales techniques are high-pressure and disturbing to your community. At worst, they are rude, threatening and always expensive, leaving little profit left for the innocent benefactor. Boiler room operations can be avoided by carefully researching professional promoters and fundraising firms.



The ABC's of fundraising

All fundraising activities require a great deal of planning, follow-up and member coordination. Before your Club begins the process, review the following ABC's of fundraising:

Activity Selection

- Plan an event that will appeal to your community and socio-economic conditions.
- Consider the size of your town or city. Do you have sufficient citizen participation to match the size of your fundraiser?
- Keep in mind the type of activities to which your community positively responds. An event that profits in a metropolitan area, for example, may prove to be unsuccessful in a rural community.
- Evaluate your Club's fundraising events from previous years. Determine whether the financial outcome from last year's Pancake Breakfast was worth all of the planning and labor involved in producing the event.
- Is the project legal in your area? Before choosing an activity, consult the Optimist Fundraising Policies in this guide. Find out if the proposed fundraiser conflicts with local gaming or commerce legislation.

Be There At The Right Time

- Avoid dates close to major holidays unless the event directly relates to the season.
- Contact other community organizations for their schedules to ensure that your Club's activity does not conflict with one of their established events.
- In order to keep the number of your Club's annual fundraising activities at a reasonable level, plan events that raise large amounts of money.

Come Up With A Plan

- Establish the date and event, then start planning! Create a work calendar for the planning committee.
- Draft a budget, taking into consideration the expenses and income needed for a successful event. Keep your overhead as low as possible in order to maximize profits.
- Locate and reserve an event site that can accommodate the needs of your group.

- Set up committees for publicity, volunteers and cleanup. Appoint one committee member to be in charge of purchasing and record-keeping.
- On-site volunteers are the key to a successful event! Prepare a schedule in advance that includes break times and cleanup staff. Several days before the event, follow up with your volunteers to verify their attendance and work times.
- Secure as many donated services and items as possible. Remember to properly recognize all sponsoring organizations and businesses in your pre- and post-event publicity.

Drum Up Support

- Throughout the year, keep the public informed of the services that your Optimist Club provides to local residents. It will be easier to draw a crowd to the event if the community is aware of your Club's goals and activities.
- Consider obtaining an honorary chairperson of local or regional fame who can assist with publicity and recognition.
- Aim your fundraising activity at a target market of individuals. Naturally, you will gear Super Bowl Party fliers toward sports fans while promoting your Club's annual Flea Market to local bargain hunters!
- Sell advance tickets whenever possible.

Event Management

- Set up a table at the event with Optimist materials, including membership brochures. Offer individuals the opportunity to sign up for Club membership by staffing the table with an enthusiastic Club member.
- If you are selling small items, have an adequate supply of change and small bills on hand.
- Keep a notebook handy to write down requests and suggestions from volunteers and the general public. These thoughts will assist your Club in the evaluation process.

Follow Up!

- Cleanup the premises. Make a good impression on everyone by leaving the location looking better than how you found it.
- Send thank you notes to all volunteers, individuals and businesses who donated their time, services or products.
- Immediately following the fundraiser, evaluate your success. Draft a report to be placed in the Club's official records for future reference.



- Publicize profits to your Club members at the next meeting.
- Give everyone involved a pat on the back!

Get Publicity!

- Publicize your Club's fundraiser event in several different media, including newspaper articles, radio announcements, cable television ads, posters, fliers, church bulletins and word-of-mouth.
- In all publicity, be sure to mention that your event is "Optimist-sponsored." Let everyone know what your Club does for the community!
- Immediately following the fundraiser, send out follow-up press releases, including action photos. While you should not report the amount of profit to the media, do emphasize how the funds will benefit individuals or groups.

Soliciting Large Donations

Your Club may decide to approach a business for a large donation to underwrite the cost of a major community or youth service project. Before setting out to solicit funds, consider these guidelines:

1. Gather background information on the business being approached. Make sure the organization has a history of giving for this specific type of project, or determine if there is an interest within the company for donations.
2. Prepare a brief, concise proposal that includes the following elements:
 - The need for the project and how it will serve the community
 - Proposed cost of the entire activity
 - Amount and description of the requested funds
 - Date, location and anticipated attendance of the event
 - Names of other organizations (if any) that will also be contributing
 - Any special promotion or benefits that the donating organization will receive, including recognition on posters, T-shirts, program booklets, radio announcements, etc.
3. Present the proposal during a personal meeting with an appropriate representative of the company. This will enable you to answer questions regarding the project, your Club and Optimist International. Depending on the scope of the activity, a professionally-prepared brochure may be a great benefit to your presentation.

4. Provide the prospective donor with a detailed publicity plan. The company should be informed of the recognition that it will receive in news releases and other publicity.
5. Always follow up the meeting with a thank-you note, regardless of whether a donation is secured. Present a plaque or award to any donating organizations.

Fundraising Project Ideas

We are interested in your Club's fundraising activities. Please complete the project summary form the end of this guide and mail or fax it to the Programs Department at the International Office.

The following fundraising event summaries, received from other Clubs, may offer your Club new and inventive ways of raising money. We would like to thank all Clubs who have submitted their wonderful fundraising project ideas! Keep up the great work!

Drawings, Auctions and Raffles

**Please note that all monetary amounts given are in U.S. funds.*

Big Money Raffle

Conduct a raffle by selling tickets at \$100 each. The grand prize can be anywhere from \$10,000 to \$5,000. Several smaller cash prizes (approximately \$250 each) can also be awarded. The cost of the raffle ticket includes free food and beverages at the drawing.

Radio/TV Auction

Solicit donations of merchandise to be auctioned off on a local radio station or cable TV channel. Representatives from these local businesses can also be given the opportunity to promote their donated item(s) on the air, which is a great way for them to obtain personal advertisements. Community members call in with bids on items. When an item is sold, it's on to the "next item up for bid."

Millionaire for a Day

Sell chances on a "Millionaire Package" which includes limo service, hotel accommodations and dinner. Jazz up the red carpet treatment by including local television coverage or by simply having a member videotape the event as if it were being televised. The award can be also be given like a sweepstakes prize by having a van go the winners home to present the "Millionaire Package."



Raffle Dinner

Club members can sell tickets at \$100 each for a raffle dinner. Each ticket entitles two people to attend the catered meal, where a drawing is held for cash prizes of \$5,000, \$1,000, \$500, and \$100. Names are announced and ticket stubs are posted on a large board as each winning ticket is pulled.

Service Auction

Hold an auction, not for merchandise, but for services offered by members of your Club. It is often difficult to contribute money, but the donation of their time can be put to good use in a fundraising Service Auction! Services can be sold in a regular or silent auction format. All purchasers should be provided with a bill of sale that includes the name and address of their Optimist worker. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Office

Typing
Filing
Answering phones

Outdoors

Lawn mowing
Car washing and waxing
Garden weeding
Pool cleaning
Leaf raking

Home

Spring-cleaning
Painting
Window washing
Child care or pet sitting
Sewing
Attic cleaning
Furniture refinishing

Entertainment

Maid and butler
attendance for a
dinner party
Evening chauffeur
service
Cooking and delivery of
a theme meal
Pool party for 20 guests

Sports and Recreation

Guided fishing trip
Golf or tennis lesson

For additional revenue, sell refreshments at the auction or include them in an admission price.

Calendar Draw

Sell ads to local merchants to be printed on the top of every page of a calendar. Then members sell the calendars for \$30 each and enter each customer into drawings. Hold the drawings throughout the year with an increasing jackpot amount for each month.

Charity Ball

Sell tickets at \$50 per person for a black tie charity ball. The event can include a catered formal dinner, 16-piece orchestra, guest speakers, a silent auction and bar service. Conduct a corporate fund drive and publicize the event with television, radio and newspaper announcements.

Golf Raffle

Sell tickets for a chance to win pre-paid golf games at nearby golf courses.

Las Vegas Night

Host a Las Vegas Night that includes blackjack, dice, slot machines, pull tabs and a Big Wheel. An outside firm can manage the gaming. At the beginning of the evening, participants purchase chips for gambling. Chips are then turned in for credit to bid on donated prizes in an auction. Donated refreshments can also be served.

Kentucky Derby Party

On Derby Day afternoon, provide a buffet and open bar for a per person admission charge. Issue "Fun Money" at the door and bets are made on two videotaped races. After the betting, the actual Kentucky Derby is shown on a large screen television. The "Fun Money" won on bets can then be used to buy prizes donated by local merchants.

Weekly Bingo

Sponsor a bingo night every week. Club members can divide into four or five teams and alternate working the event each week.

Cow Chip Bingo

Club members sell "deeds" on a small plot of land or football field. The land is sectioned off into 1x1-foot squares. Ask a local farmer to donate a cow (or two) and let it loose on the plot. Wherever it "plops" – that plot is the winner! If the cow's "plop" spans across more than one square, the pot may be split. If no "plop," a winner can be drawn randomly. Open up a concession stand and sell refreshments during the event.

PLEASE NOTE: Bingos, raffles and related activities are subject to state and provincial gambling regulation. Always check with local licensing and commerce offices before planning such activities.



Food

Super Bowl Sunday Barbecue

On Super Bowl Sunday, hold a barbecue with all the trimmings! Orders can be take-out style and/or delivery and should be sold in the late morning or early afternoon. Meal tickets can also be sold in advance and should include “family-pack” values. Club members fire up the grill in the morning so that fresh barbecue orders can be picked up by hungry individuals who are ready to watch the game!

Soup-Tasting Contest

Invite members of the community and/or Club to make different soups and stews to be judged! After the first, second, and third place winners have been awarded their ribbons, sell the mouthwatering creations to individuals by the bowl.

Caramel Apple Stand

This is a great fundraising item to offer at a craft bazaar or county fair! Club members cut whole apples and heated canned caramel sauce in a crock-pot. The small bowls of caramel-drenched apple slices are sold at a nice profit!

“Fish” (or whatever) Fry

Send letters explaining the purpose of the fish fry and soliciting door prizes to local businesses. Publicize the event for at least a week in advance. Set up a tent in a local park and serve lunch and dinner for more than one day. The menu may include fish, oysters, brats, hot dogs, onion rings, barbecue, corn dogs, chilidogs, pizza, tacos, etc.

Candy Bar Sale

Set up a booth at a downtown courthouse and sell candy bars for \$1 each.

Breakfast with Santa

Host a breakfast with Santa and use the proceeds to purchase Christmas toys for underprivileged children. Request donations of breakfast foods and paper supplies from local businesses. Fliers and ticket order forms can be sent to elementary school children. Children’s tickets can be sold for \$3 each, and schoolteachers can collect the money on behalf of your Club. During breakfast, the children are entertained by Santa, as well as local school choirs and a dance troupes. Club members can dress as Santa’s elves and help to serve the children a delicious holiday breakfast!

Rest Stop Coffee Shop

Sell or just accept donations for refreshments at an interstate highway rest stop. Club members donate beverages, such as coffee and hot chocolate in the winter or lemonade and iced-tea in the summer, and purchase cookies and paper products. Members can also work four-hour shifts on a rotating basis throughout an entire weekend.

Mobile Concession Trailer

Get your Club members together and build a 40-foot trailer to serve as a mobile concession stand. This will give your Club a constant facility to use when selling concessions at many community and sports events. For additional fundraising you can also rent the trailer out to other organizations for special events.

Sports

Wheelchair Arm Wrestling

Bring together spinal injury athletes from surrounding states to compete in different divisions in a tabletop arm wrestling competition. Your Club can maintain an Optimist booth where members sell imprinted items and display the trophies. Invite the city mayor to conduct the opening ceremony; secure media coverage on television, radio and in local newspapers. Also invite a professional wrestler or local celebrity to act as the keynote speaker at both the pre-event fundraising dinner and the arm wrestling contest. The contest can be expanded to include children and families.

Basketball Booth

Set up a basketball booth at a state exposition. To participate, individuals pay 50¢ for one practice ball and three official shots. To win, players have to make two baskets out of three shots. Participants can also be given the opportunity to pay \$1 to shoot continuously until missing. At the end of the expo, the Club awards \$50 to the individual who made the most shots. Encourage people to pay several times during the event to beat the record, which will further increase your Club’s profits!

Football Fury

Sell tickets at \$15 each prior to the start of the NFL football season. Each ticket is assigned two numbers and the teams represented by these numbers change each week. The two teams with the highest point total win \$50 and the two teams with the lowest point total win \$10.



5K Fun Run

Organize a 5-Kilometer Fun Run by selling sponsorships to area businesses. The donated funds cover event costs including trophies and T-shirts printed with sponsor logos. All runners pay an entry fee and are given a discount for pre-registration. Hold the Fun Run in October and highlight the event with a Halloween costume contest and a 1-Mile Fun Run for children.

Bowl-A-Thon

Organize an annual Bowl-A-Thon to raise funds for local charities as well as your Club's own community service projects. Ask a local bowling alley to donate the use of its facility and local businesses to donate raffle prizes and small giveaway items. Bowling teams can be solicited from the recipient local charities. Each participant pays a flat admission charge, which includes shoe rental and all bowling for the evening. The bowlers solicit money per pin that they strike during the bowl-a-thon. After the event, participants are responsible for collecting their "pin pledge" money and returning it to an Optimist member. During the evening, conduct a series of independent drawings for donated merchandise (restaurant gift certificates, bowling merchandise, etc.). Tickets for the raffles are sold continuously throughout the event. At the end of the night, the tickets left over from each small drawing are placed into one large bin. One winner is then chosen for the grand prize of a color television.

Miscellaneous

Toilets in the Yard!

This project is a lot of fun and can get a ton of visibility! Toilets, pink flamingos, ugly statues...anything ridiculous can be used! Club members put 10-50 of the selected objects in a local community person's yard. The recipient should be someone who is known to be a supporter and can afford the amount of the donation that it will take to participate. That person then has to pay \$1 to have each item removed. Once they've paid, they get to select the next person to have the objects placed in their yard. This cycle goes on for as long as your Club chooses. Be sure to distribute fliers explaining the fundraising event in advance.

Haunted House

Build, setup, run and tear down a Haunted House! Individual Club members can supply their own masks and costumes or the Club can solicit donations from local costume/party shops. Members work the Haunted House each night starting a week or two before Halloween. Your Club may choose to charge a minimal entrance fee or accept only donations. Sell concessions also to earn a little extra revenue for future service projects!

Diamond Pin (Dime & Pin)

Sell Diamond Pins for \$1 each! Sound unbelievable? Here's how. Obtain safety pins and ribbon...the width of the ribbon should fit the width of the safety pin rung. Cut the ribbon into pieces about 3-4 inches in length. Slip a piece of ribbon through the center of a closed safety pin and bring it down so that the two ends meet. Spread the two ends apart so the ribbon is over the bottom rung of the pin, not around the clasp end, and both ends of the ribbon can be seen. Cut the ends of the ribbon diagonally. Use super glue to attach a shiny new dime to the front of the ribbon.

Mums For Mom

Sell tickets for potted mums in honor of Mother's Day. Tickets are sold in advance, and the Club keeps a record of desired delivery schedules and addresses. The mums are ordered and picked up from a local florist. On Sunday, Club members deliver the flowers to all of the special moms.

Band Festival

Sponsor and organize a high school marching band festival! Print admission tickets and hand them out to several local schools. Students then sell the tickets and keep the revenue for their own high school programs. The Club raises money from local businesses by selling advertisements in a program booklet and can also run a concession stand at the festival.

Rabies Clinic

Be Friends of Youth and Friends of Pets! Obtain authorization from the Vet Society to set up a Rabies Clinic. Ask a local veterinarian to donate their time for the event. Charge \$3-4 for each animal plus the cost of the veterinarian's medications. You will need a space to conduct the clinic as well as plenty of tables and chairs.



Chocolate Feast and Fashions

Conduct a fashion show of pre-owned clothing. The clothing models can be members of the community, including local officials. Chocolate desserts are served during the show, such as cakes, pies, and candy. The Club sells event tickets in advance, sets up the runway, decorates the hall, coordinates music, and of course, cleans up!

Flea Market

This entire event can be held in a downtown parking lot. Members sell donated items and rented booth spaces to other vendors. Additional funds can be raised by selling donated food and beverages at the flea market also.

Bathtub Fundraiser

This is a great fundraiser that can be set up at your Club's weekly meeting place. Find an old bathtub or plastic tub to be used. Members bring in pennies and drop them into the bathtub at each meeting. Allow this to continue for a month or two. When the selected time period is up, count and roll the pennies and cash them in to be used in future Club projects.

Christmas Tree Pick-Up

Instead of selling Christmas trees, why not make a profit by discarding them after the holidays? The project consists of picking up and properly disposing of Christmas trees for a \$5 or \$10 donation. Run advertisements in local newspapers and in future years mail fliers to past customers. Designate a member to be responsible for answering the phone and recording addresses and pick-up schedules. On the assigned weekend, several members help to collect the trees and donations. And don't forget to leave behind Optimist brochures!

Jail Time

Have a prominent community official (e.g. mayor) "do time" in jail! For every \$5-20 you collect have the official spend 1 minute in jail. (Adjust amounts based on the size of your community.) Be sure to publicize the event at least 2 weeks before the day of the "big arrest". When promoting the event, let community members know exactly where to drop off their "donations." Designated Club members locate themselves at the jail to collect these donations and figure how much "time" will have to be spent behind bars based on the amount collected. This is a high-publicity approach to making money and raising spirits around your community!

Sensational Events

Optimist Golf Tournament

A golf tournament is a fundraiser that all ages can enjoy! This activity, however, requires a great deal of advance planning and work. Write letters to the sports editors of local newspapers inviting coverage of your event. To secure participants, send out mailings and applications several months in advance, preferably at the beginning of the year. In all correspondence, advertise the intent of your fundraising efforts, including the support of local charities and your Club's own service activities.

Many different types of donations and sponsorships are necessary to run a first-rate golf tournament. Here is a suggested checklist:

- Sell hole sponsorships at \$100 or more per hole.
- Secure donated merchandise for a prize table and give away items continuously during the tournament.
- Locate sponsors for refreshment carts and an evening banquet.
- Solicit local businesses to advertise in your tournament program book.
- Request that a local car dealer donate an automobile and insurance for hole-in-ones that occur during the tournament.

Other expenses that you may incur include:

- Printing for a program book, sponsor signs, flags and banners
- Dinner and reception for all participants
- Pro Shop expenses for merchandise, including a complete set of Clubs with a golf bag to be raffled off (sell chances to all participants as they arrive). It is standard to spend approximately 10 percent of your tournament expenses at the golf facility's pro shop
- Trophies
- Golf Carts

Choose a location that offers you free or greatly reduced greens fees. Give golfers the opportunity to play on an exclusive course by arranging for the event to take place at a private country Club. Plan the event on a Monday or Friday, as individuals are more likely to take a long weekend off from work to participate. This event requires a core team of dedicated volunteers to work as starters, scorers, marshals, spotters and bag check attendants.



Start the event with a brunch before the first afternoon tee-off time. Arrange for players to use the putting green and driving range before and after brunch. Videotape the event, making sure to shoot footage of each group of golfers. The video can be shown at the dinner and may also be used to solicit sponsors for next year's event!

Glow Golf Night Tournament

Put a new twist on the fundraiser golf tournament—tee-off after the sun goes down! Night tournaments are very popular with golfers and are relatively simple to organize. Choose a location that offers free greens fees and nominal cart charges. The golf course or country Club will profit from concessions, your participant banquet and the free publicity. Establish an entry fee according to the interest level and average income of area golfers. Funds can also be raised by selling advertisements in a program book or 'in-the-dark' hole sponsorships. From local businesses, secure donated prizes such as golf equipment, gift certificates and trophies.

Your Club's biggest expense will likely be the cost of the fluorescent glow-balls. Provide each player with one glow necklace and two glow-balls to start and direct players to return to the Club house for additional balls as needed. Request the use of tiki torches from a local restaurant or party rental company and place them on the course as 150-yard markers. Also, mark the course with glow sticks, sandbag candle lights, or by wrapping glow necklaces around the flag poles. For added illumination, golfers should be instructed to bring along a flashlight to help them get around!

In the dark, a nine-hole tournament with 72 players will last approximately three hours. If interest in the event is high, consider running two simultaneous nine-hole tournaments on an 18-hole course (144 players). It is advisable that your committee pair all golfers in foursomes before the evening of the tournament. Begin play as a shotgun start, placing two sets of foursomes at each hole (eight golfers in all). Scoring should also be kept according to these assigned teams.

After the tournament, award donated trophies and prizes to the top teams at an informal awards banquet in the Club house. If the event takes place around a holiday such as Halloween, incorporate this theme by requiring participants to wear costumes. This event can also be played in polar conditions on a snow-covered course in winter. Creativity is the name of the game with a Glow Golf Night Tournament!

Mystery Bus Ride

Rent a bus and organize an evening or afternoon mystery bus ride! Appoint one or two Club members to arrange the mystery activities for the group, but don't let anyone else know where the bus is headed! Tickets should be sold in advance for a per person or per couple admission price. Beforehand, all ticket-holders should be advised of any required clothing or related items. If there is a local festival or fair in your area, include a stop at this event on your mystery tour. Tailor the activities to suit your crowd, but be creative! The possibilities are endless—here are just a few:

- Attend a play, show, concert or sports event
- Ballroom dancing
- Bowling
- Christmas light show
- Cooking or self-defense class
- Country western line dancing lesson
- Dinner at an elegant restaurant
- Gambling at a casino
- Haunted house
- Hay-ride and bonfire
- Helicopter ride
- Horseback trail ride with a country cookout
- Ice cream social
- Make-your-own-pizza party
- Miniature golf tournament
- Museum tour
- Roller skating or ice skating
- Sailboat or riverboat cruise
- Scuba diving or skiing lesson
- Sleigh ride
- Swim party
- Tour of a local brewery
- Train ride
- Visits with a psychic or palm reader
- Wine tasting

After your event, survey all participants for their opinion of the activities to help you plan the next year's mystery bus ride. Don't forget to thank everyone for supporting your Optimist fundraiser!



Western Night

Cash in on the country line dancing trend by holding a fundraising Western Night at a community center, gymnasium or church basement. Sell advance tickets and allow a limited number of guests to pay at the door. Be sure to charge an admission price that is low enough to attract interest but that covers your expenses (music, food and beverages) and makes your Club a nice profit. Decorate with cactus plants, bales of hay, bandannas, corral gates, lasso rope, saddles and rodeo barrels!

Decorations also provide another fundraising opportunity for your Club. Consider holding a Balloon Pop at the Western Night. Secure donated goods from local businesses including restaurant gift certificates, exercise equipment, cowboy boots or beauty salon services. Club members should prepare for the Balloon Pop by inserting small pieces of paper with prize descriptions inside each balloon before blowing them up with helium. Offer everyone attending your Western Night the opportunity to purchase and pop one of these special balloons for a price, depending on the prize offered. You may want to color code the balloons according to the donated value of the prize for appropriate pricing.

Publicize and hold a western wear contest at the event! Hand out awards to the best, and most creatively dressed participants. Prizes could include country music tapes or gift certificates to a local western wear retailer.

Depending on the scope of your event, the Western Night could include an on-site barbecue. Serve grilled pork or chicken dinners with accompaniments such as baked beans, slaw, Texas toast and iced tea. As an alternative to a barbecue, plan a pot luck dinner with all participants bringing a main course, side dish or dessert. Ask your Club to provide utensils, plates and napkins. You may also be able to raise money on beverage and snack sales by selling items on a cash and carry basis.

Now for the best part—country dancing! Hire a DJ or a local country band to provide music for the evening. Consider bringing along a VCR and instructional tapes for novice line dancers or have an Optimist expert demonstrate the moves. Be sure to announce any sponsors for your event and bring along a supply of Optimist membership brochures.

“Art On The Block”

With the help of a local gallery, organize an “Art On The Block” fundraising auction. Items to be sold could include oil paintings, water colors, sculptures, framed posters, pottery, furniture and original jewelry made by local artisans. Specific agreements must be made in advance with the gallery concerning costs and profits. Also, arrangements should be made for an auctioneer as well as for the transportation of art items to your location.

Plan the auction for a weekend evening and charge a per person admission price. Promote the event as a sophisticated, fun affair. “Art On The Block” could be held at a hall, museum, green house, gymnasium, university or at an elegant home in your area. Provide guests with wine and hors d’oeuvres; consider inviting a classical or jazz quartet to play during the preview session. Publicize the auction in local newspapers and advertise with fliers around the community. If conducting a second-year event, mail personal invitations to those individuals who attended the previous year.

The Great Chefs Of Optimism

Your Club members can “whip” up a cookbook or recipe box while making a “tasty” profit! Before embarking on this fundraising project, determine whether there is a market for this item in your community. How many other civic groups and schools in your area have sold cookbooks or recipe boxes? Are local merchants willing to handle this item for your Club? Are Club members willing to sell the cookbooks at craft fairs, flea markets and local festivals?

“Stir up the pot” by requesting each of your Club members to submit several of their favorite recipes. Assign one individual the responsibility of typing up all the recipes; a computer word-processing program will work best for this project. The introduction to your savory creation should contain information about your Optimist Club and Optimist International. Also, recognize contributing Club members and community sponsors.

Group the recipes according to categories and index them in alphabetical order. Food categories could include:

- Hors d’oeuvres/Appetizers
- Soups and Salads
- Entrees
- Accompaniments
- Healthy/Low Fat Dishes
- Desserts
- Miscellaneous



Ask a local printer to donate or reduce the cost of duplication services. Spiral-bound cookbooks are easiest to use in the kitchen. As an alternative, assemble recipe boxes using low-cost plastic or cardboard boxes and colorful note cards. Determine a profitable price for your Club's spicy concoction and get cooking!

Cardboard or Bathtub Boat Regattas

Boat regattas are fun-filled family events that will raise needed funds for your Club's projects! Specify the type of boat that will be allowed in the race, arrange for an event location, then let the promotion begin! Distribute posters and rules brochures throughout the community. Emphasize the regatta's exciting atmosphere to both potential participants and spectators alike, and invite the media to cover this visual event. Accept advance registrations from teams and solicit corporate sponsors for watercraft entries. Additional funds can be raised by selling refreshments and T-shirts, or by renting booth space to vendors and entertainers.

Cardboard Boat Regatta*

Boats made entirely of corrugated cardboard can be entered in one of three categories:

- Class 1 - any craft propelled by oars or canoe and kayak paddles
- Class 2 - boats propelled by muscle-powered devices, including propellers, paddle wheels and sails (surfboard-style paddling is not allowed)
- Class 3 - "instant boats" which are assembled on-site from a purchased kit containing cardboard, tape, fasteners, etc.

Bathtub Boat Regatta*

Creativity is the key to building a boat using an actual bathtub! Almost anything goes as long as the watercraft contains a porcelain, fiberglass or metal tub. It is certain that the crew members of these home-made pirate ships and submarines will enjoy playing up their new roles with costumes and special effects! Create interesting classes for the boats including the Most Humorous, Most Technical and Man-Powered categories.

For both types of regattas, boat captains should check in for safety inspections several hours before the race begins. All participants should be required to wear life jackets and footwear for safety purposes. Allow boats in each class to compete in heats, then narrow down the races to semi-final and final runs. Permits may be required for the event,

depending on the location. You may wish to contact a local yacht or boating Club for assistance in setting up the course and officiating the competition.

Present awards for the most attractive craft, the best design, and of course, to the first, second and third place speed winners in each class. In addition, give prizes to the most spirited team, the best-dressed crew and the most spectacular sinking boat!

* For general insurance liability purposes, all watercraft participating in Optimist-sponsored events must be limited to less than 26 feet.

A Day At The Races

Like a regatta, a bed race is a wacky fundraising event that is sure to attract a great deal of local interest! Basically, as long as the bed has four wheels, anything goes! Your Club should develop the race's specific rules and regulations in the planning process and conduct safety inspections before the actual competition.

Promote the bed race to both individuals and businesses. Pre-register teams by charging a per bed entry fee that is low enough to attract interest while still raising funds for your Club's projects. Secure sponsorships and prizes, including gift certificates and trophies. To keep in the spirit of the event, approach a mattress manufacturer or local bedding retailer for donations!

Before the race, conduct a "bed dressing" contest and parade for all contestants. Distribute prizes for the most humorous and most originally decorated beds. Encourage participants to dress in sleepwear or costumes that correspond with the theme of their creation. Races should include teams of four runners pushing the bed either with or without a bed-rider. Awards should be given to the first place and runner up teams in each category, including business/adult, child, and family teams. This event fosters a spirit of friendly competition and is fun for the entire community.

Encourage spectators to participate in the festivities by holding a "real" Wheelbarrow Race. Charge individuals a minimal entry fee and provide real wheelbarrows for the game. Participants should be required to wear helmets, elbow pads and other protective gear before climbing in the wheelbarrow. Variations of the wheelbarrow competition include relay team and egg-in-a-spoon races. Present trophies or prizes to the winners during the Bed Race awards ceremony. This event is a great way to keep everyone involved in this zany fundraising day! Consider also providing music, clowns, a dunking booth and



additional entertainment for your Day At The Races.

Haunted Hay ride

Scare your friends and family into giving your Club money—organize a Haunted Hay ride in honor of Halloween! All of your Optimist Club members will enjoy working on this ongoing project during the month of October. Choose a setting that is “off the beaten path,” preferably in a large park, campground or field. Start spreading stories of your spooky event by mid-September. Advertise on the radio and post fliers in local schools, stores and community centers. Be sure to publish the days and hours that your Haunted Hay ride will be open.

Members of your Club should dress up in ghoulish fashions in order to scare the visitors. Provide ample parking for everyone and charge a per person admission price. Drive guests through the park on a hay wagon or trailer and entertain them with frightening decorations, music and costumed characters. After their haunting ride, treat visitors to apple cider and snacks around a blazing bonfire.

Golf Auction

Swing into fundraising with a golf auction to support your Club’s sports-related youth activities! Begin planning the auction by securing donated goods or services from local or national sponsors. These items could include golf-related merchandise, airline tickets, weekend trips to golf resorts, golf celebrity signatures and mini golf passes. Next, establish a site and volunteer staff for the auction. Publicize the event on community radio announcements and hang fliers in pro shops and sporting goods stores. Sell tickets for the auction several weeks in advance.

Start the evening with a cocktail buffet or dinner, and provide everyone with a program listing items to be sold. Large items, such as vacation getaways, should be placed on the auction block for bidding. Sell small items in a silent auction format. During the event, recognize all of the sponsors and volunteers who donated their time and money to your Optimistic cause!

Garage Sale

Raise money for your Club’s projects while getting rid of your old “junk”—organize a garage sale!

Practical items sell best, such as appliances, furniture, dishes, books, kitchen utensils, tools, fishing poles, toys and children’s clothing. Adult clothing usually is not a popular item due to style changes.

Make sure that the scheduled date of your sale does not conflict with holidays or other local events. Advertising will determine your success. Run ads in your local newspaper listing the best items you will be selling. Also, mention your Optimist Club and describe how the profits from the sale will be used. On the day of the event, post signs along area streets and provide ample parking for potential buyers.

For added interest, assemble grab bags or set-up a miscellaneous 50¢ table for odds and ends. Have plenty of change available, including small bills and coins. If your Club decides to accept checks, remember that you may encounter collection problems. Display merchandise according to categories, making certain that all items are clean and in good shape. If a particular item has a special value, be sure to relate this to individuals while they are browsing. Check appliances for needed repairs and provide an electrical outlet so prospective buyers can verify the functionality of these items.

Make arrangements ahead of time to donate any unsold items to a local charity or homeless shelter. Also, develop a work schedule for volunteers to ensure breaks and lunch periods and always offer refreshments to workers.

“Dog Days”

Give your neighbors the chance to bathe their pooches and enter them in a beauty contest, all at the same time! Hold the event at a local park, school yard or community center. Charge each pet owner an entry fee for both the dog wash and the beauty contest.

Request donated merchandise from local beauty and pet supply outlets. Your Club will need grooming supplies such as hoses, shampoo, brushes, clippers and hair dryers, along with colorful ribbons and bandannas. Have each owner wash and beautify their four-legged friend. Afterward, hold a beauty contest for the canines, awarding prizes for the biggest/smallest, cutest/ugliest and best-behaved dog.

Don’t forget to invite the media to attend your “Dog Days.” What a great way to involve the entire family in your Club’s fundraising efforts!