



## Message from the President

*Time.....summer is over which means we had another successful year of baseball. Volleyball was fun in the months of June and July. Our Junior Optimist and Octagons helped fundraise at the OCBC Obon festival and volunteered their time to the Nikkei Games, which was again a huge success.*

*But just as quickly as the summer has passed us by so has my term as President. It has been one year and 11 months since I first took office. During this time, I have learned to really appreciate how special the organization is. The people who are actively involved in OCO are very passionate about the success of the club for selfish reasons . . . that reason being "our kids." As our motto states, we are about "Bringing out the Best in Kids." It is an experience I will never forget.*

*I thank all of you for your support over the past two years. OCO is a tremendous organization that is successful because of its members.*

Nori Nishida  
OCO President

## OCO Board of Directors for 2007 - 2008

President - **Wallace Chan**

President-elect - **Dwayne Yoshinaga**

1st Vice President (Programs) - **Caryn Ito**

2nd Vice President (Membership) - **Stacey Yoshinaga**

Secretary - **Ellen Natsume**

Treasurer - **Judy James**

Board of Directors - **May Auerbach, Neddie Bokosky, Staci Fujita, Jon Jinkawa, Ann Joyce, Jameson Lee, Mark Nakao, Clay Sakurao, Karen Uyematsu**

SEYO Representatives - **Marsha Hamamoto, Bob Kubo**

OCSA - **Jesse James**

Octagon Advisors - **Judy James**; twelfth grade - **Jesse James**; eleventh grade - **Caryn Ito**;  
tenth grade - **Ann Joyce** and **Neddie Bokosky**; ninth grade - **Jameson Lee**

Rancho Octagons - **Eric Hamamoto**

Junior Optimist Advisors - **May Auerbach, Stacey Yoshinaga**

OCO Webmaster - **Chris Kato**

## Young Adult Optimists

The Youth Adult Optimist Club is continuing to tackle new community service projects and events and welcoming in new members for the upcoming year.

YAO is currently working with H.O.P.E. an organization that provides support and services to abandoned and/or abused women and children. We are currently collecting used cell phones, batteries and phone chargers to donate to the battered women's shelter and help benefit victims of domestic violence. The phones collected will be refurbished and then distributed for the use of lifelines in an emergency to call 911, providing victims with access to immediate help.

We participated in Light the Night in support of Team Kai and to provide assistance to Leukemia and Lymphoma research. We registered under our own team, gathering donations and spreading information about this great event.

YAO has been collecting school supplies for the Indian reservations located in Arizona, providing people with material to further their education as well as providing them with the opportunity to learn and communicate with others. **Robert Lew** is chairing this project working with the Bogdan family who periodically delivers different types of supplies such as clothing material or used items.

This year we are also looking forward to participating in a Habitat for Humanity project and giving to many in need during the holidays.

YAO congratulates one of our own board members, **Christine Kimoto**, for being named Miss Tomodachi in this year's Nisei Week Coronation. Most importantly, we want to thank all of you who have graciously donated to many of these causes!

Marci Asao  
Board of Director

## Octagons

This past quarter we Octagons have been very busy with numerous events.

**Jacquelyn Chew** and **Kelsy Saida** chaired the Easter party. In the morning, we filled the Easter Eggs with candy for the egg hunt. Then we helped with food, crafts, and the jumper. It was very satisfying knowing that we helped the kids have a fun time.

The "movie night under the stars" at the James house was a nice event. We ate, swam, and watched a funny movie on a projector. The Octagons would like to thank the James family for letting us use their home for this event.

We had a great turnout at the SEYO Dance. **Bryce Kubo** and **Lani Okuda** organized the event, with **Trisha Asao** in charge of this event. Under her direction, we decorated the OCBC gym into a sugar-sweet Candy Land. It took a little while to get everyone dancing, but once they did, everyone had a blast.

**Justin Sugamura** was the chairperson for the SOC Pancake Breakfast. Unfortunately, we did not do as well as we had hoped. We only reached half of our goal, so next year we plan to work hard to prevent a repeat of this year's disappointment in selling the tickets.

The YAO Nikkei Awareness Conference was an eye-opening experience for many of us Japanese-American children as well as others. It was a great opportunity to learn about the past, present, and future of Japanese history and people. A favorite event was the Sumo wrestling session where we experienced this sport wearing a sumo outfit.

**Erika Braesch**, **Sappy Chung**, and **Sara Seto** were the chairpersons for the OCO Steak Dinner. Prior to the dinner, we setup the gym. Upstairs, we had rooms for movies, crafts, and games for kids. We had a great time enjoying the delicious food and playing with the kids.

The OC Food Bank was a great success. **JJ James** and **Aaron Sok** were the chairpersons and organized the event. We helped pack boxes with food for those who are less fortunate. It was an interesting experience working the assembly line...but it was fun.

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# Rotary Youth Leadership Awards

By Bob Kubo

The last weekend of April, we sent three Octagons, **Lani Okuda**, **Jason Lee**, and **Sara Seto**, to Camp RYLA. It is a youth leadership camp run by the Rotary Club. We are fortunate to have two OCO members, **Jesse James** and **Howard Kunihiro**, who are distinguished Rotarians. They gave us the opportunity to send three 11<sup>th</sup> grade Octagons to Camp RYLA. Lani is our current Octagon President and Jason and Sara are outstanding Octagons. All three demonstrate leadership qualities, and Camp RYLA was a great opportunity for them to improve their skills and meet other aspiring youth leaders.

Here are excerpts of their experience at Camp RYLA:

**Lani** – “RYLA, a three-day leadership camp, what I would call a once-in-a-lifetime experience. From the minute I got to the parking lot of the Palms Hotel in the City of Orange, I met so many new people with all of us in the same situation. We were all not sure what to expect about the camp. Little did I know that I would learn so many life lessons in such a short period of time. I not only believe that I learned a lot, but that I matured as a person as well.”

**Jason** – “I learned how to be a leader, while also being able to follow others who wanted to lead. I learned that I am capable of making decisions when called upon. I brought back the ability to help others when they need it. I am also able to follow directions better and have become a much better person.”

**Sara** – “I loved the positive energy RYLA had each and every day. I met so many amazing campers who were so determined and persistent with their lives. I learned some life lessons that I will always cherish in my heart. The camp helped me grow even more as a leader and helped me gain the confidence I need to lead my peers.”

For **Sara** the Boojum Institute left a significant impression...

Camp RYLA 5320 has the extreme honor of hosting the impressive multi-element high ropes and low ropes Boojum Institute.

**Sara Seto** – “What mattered was that each and every person did their very best, and that’s all that anyone could ask for. I, although crying a river, was able to execute the zip line and the leap of faith. I was scared beyond belief and I thought I would never be able to get through it. But with the help of my family members and the instructors, I swallowed all my anxiety and jumped. When I did, I felt bravery and accomplishment. When you know you faced your deepest fear, you can’t help but unceasingly smile. I am glad I went through Boojum, but in the end, it was a very long day, almost too long of a day.”

All would recommend this life experience for future Octagons...

**Jason** – “I would definitely recommend this to Octagons who would like to break out of a shell and meet some pretty interesting people. You cannot imagine what people will do when they are not with their friends or with people who they do not know yet.”

**Lani** – “I would encourage next year’s Octagons to go to RYLA to learn life lessons. Everyone at RYLA had different opinions about the camp and learned different lessons and everyone had their own personal challenges to face.”

**Sara** – “I would definitely recommend this camp for the juniors of next year. Especially if they have never gone to a camp such as this one, it would help them set a base in pursuing leadership roles in their lives. Not only is it a leadership camp, but you are able to make tons of friends! I made a few friends up at camp and I still keep in touch with most of them.”

## Final Message from

## 2006 - 2007 Octagon President . . .

*Continued from page 2*

As the Secretary for the Octagons, I am privileged to know about all the events that our organization gets to do. All the events exemplify the Optimist manner of OCO and Octagons. It is a very gratifying feeling to know that we have helped others in our community. I am proud to call myself an Octagon and look forward to future events.

Jonathon Lew  
Octagon Secretary

### Junior Optimist

*It seems like the year whizzed by! It seems like only yesterday that we were having elections for our officers for our club.*

*The last couple of months we assisted with the OCO Easter Party where we organized and manned the game booths. **Michael Chan** was in charge of this part of the event, while **Taka Iwashita** and **Holly Kamo** were in charge of the ticket redemption table.*

*During the summer we assisted by working shifts at the OCBC Obon Festival in the snow cone booth. Then, we helped out at the Nikkei Games Track and Field events by running starting line up sheets to the finish line. At the 3-on-3 Basketball tournament we assisted with scorekeeping and running game results to the scorers' tables.*

*A group of us participated in the Light the Night walk at Anaheim Stadium. This walk was in support of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.*

*My mom, who is one of the advisors, says that this upcoming year will be a fun and active year.*

Blake Auerbach  
Activities

*It's hard to believe that my term as Octagon president is coming to an end. During my term as Octagon president, I realized that Octagons is not only a high school community service group, but also a group of people which you build wonderful friendships upon, and with that I realized how much of an impact Octagons has on my life.*

*This year as Octagons we accomplished many wonderful tasks. The Seyo Dance had a wonderful turnout! We attended the YAO Nikkei Awareness Conference, which was very long, but a very fun experience. Many of us enjoyed sumo wrestling and making sushi. The OCO Steak Dinner is always a fun event, plus we get to eat an extremely delicious meal! The Hylond Home Christmas Party, my personal favorite, is always a touching and memorable event. It means so much to me to see the residents smile as we play bingo, eat cake and pizza, and sing along to Christmas songs. Those were only some of the events that we accomplished this year. I am very proud of all of our members! We had a terrific year and thank you for all of your help and participation.*

*I had a wonderful time working with the Octagon advisors, **Mr. Kubo** and **Mrs. James**, and of course all of my fellow board members! **Bryce Kubo**, thank you for all of your help and continuously helping me when I was stressed out! **Jonathon Lew**, thank you for taking wonderful notes at all of our meetings and sending out new emails when I would forget to put some important information in my previous email. **Tyler James**, thank you for making sure that we had enough Octagons at each event and making sure that they were doing their jobs. **Andrew Sakakura**, you did an awesome job at keeping track of all of our members!*

*Although I am saying goodbye as Octagon President, I look forward to my last year as an Octagon member. Our Octagon Club will now be following a new format, due to our large membership. The Octagon Club will now be separated by grade, with each group having their own officers. I would like to welcome and wish good luck to all of our new presidents and their board members.*

Lani Okuda  
2006-2007 Octagon President

All these years, you heard "OCO is more than basketball." Well, the OCO Board made a big commitment and is "walking the talk"...for all seventh and eighth grade teams, eligibility to play for OCO now requires that all players must be a member of the OCO Junior Optimist Club. The same is true for the high school Senior teams, where eligibility to play for OCO requires all players to be a member of the OCO Octagon Club. To maintain your JO and Octagon membership, you must be a member in "good standing." The OCO Board, Junior Optimist, and Octagon advisors and past and present club presidents discussed and decided what a member in "good standing" is.

Basically, for Junior Optimists, you must attend a minimum of:

- four meetings a year
- three OCO events
- three community service events

For an Octagon, the minimum requirements are:

- five meetings a year
- three OCO events
- six community service events

For more information, please contact your coach.

Hope to see everyone this season. Hopefully, everyone understands that "OCO is more than basketball!"

Thanks for your support!

Bob Kubo  
Basketball Committee Member

# Coaches' Corner

## From the Bench:

Marsha Hamamoto  
Caryn Ito  
Bob Kubo  
Clay Sakurao  
Mark Sugamura

## Yonsei Basketball

The Yonsei Basketball Association, founded by Frank Kiyomura in 1993, consists of specially selected young men and women active in Japanese-American Youth Basketball throughout Southern California. The vision of the Association is to provide our American youth with a glimpse of their rich heritage through immersion in the Japanese culture by staying with a local Japanese family and participating in their daily lives. Basketball is the medium through which we endeavor to bridge the gap.



My home stay family on Oki Island - Mr. and Mrs. Katsuyoshi Tanaka

# "Kokoro no nokoru subarashii ryoko deshita."

*(This was a wonderful trip that I will always remember in my heart)*

By Taka Ishiwata

Yonsei 14 was one of the best experiences I've ever had in my life (YON means fourth and SEI means generation - we were the fourteenth group to participate in this program). It was a wonderful journey that changed me in many ways. We started as 24 girls and guys, and by the end we had become a family. We bonded so well, we were sad the day we left Japan because we knew we wouldn't see each other every day.

At the beginning of the trip on the days we had games, the Y14 players stayed with a Japanese family (three nights in Matsue and two nights on Oki Island), while our parents, relatives and siblings stayed at a hotel. Our home stay families were very kind and they treated us like part of their family.

During the days I stayed with both of my Japanese families, the parents took the day off from work. They were very eager to please me and make my stay comfortable. Somehow they knew I liked sashimi and I had the most delicious sashimi. In the morning, I had the regular American breakfast, toast and eggs. Then we had to leave for our basketball game. At night after returning home, we played video games and basketball and they always had a friend sleep over. We had so much fun together!

The people in Oki were so warmhearted that the minute we arrived they made us feel welcome to their island. We went kayaking and our hosts cooked a very delicious BBQ at the beach. In Matsue, they had a nice welcome party at a hotel. We did the bon-odori (Japanese dance) dressed with our yukatas (summer cotton kimono). We will never forget all the fun we had at these two beautiful cities and the kindness of our host families.

We also went on various tours. We learned more about our culture and where we came from. On one of the fun tours in Shimane city, all of the Yonsei players, family members and coaches were taught how to make hand-made soba (buckwheat noodles). It was good to see everyone having fun and laughing together.



Taka Ishiwata with the Yonsei 14 SEYO players Ayssa Kinoshita, Lyn Higashigawa, Kelli Shimizu, Kari Arita, Mark Loper, Colin Togashi, Jeffrey Takigawa

In Hiroshima we went on a historical tour to see the Peace Park where we had a ceremony at the Sadako Sasaki Monument and offered 1,000 cranes as our symbol of peace. Here we learned that The Flame of Peace was built in 1964 and heard our tour guide tragically tell us that they have 181,000 names registered of people who died because of the atomic bomb that was dropped on August 6, 1945. A small stone at the base of the arch reads, "Let all the souls here rest in peace; For we shall not repeat the evil." In the museum you could see how frightened the people were and how much destruction occurred. We felt so much sadness and reverence for the people of Hiroshima who had to go through this.

I also had the opportunity to spend some time with my Grandpa and Grandma when we arrived in Tokyo. It was fun to see them again and to visit my cousin and aunt. They took me to all the stores I wanted to visit and I was so happy to be with them.

Some other things that the Yonsei players enjoyed while we were on the trip was shopping at interesting stores (Bape, Nike Town, Billionaire Boy Club, UNIQLO), going to the arcades, trying different foods (McDonald's hamburgers are delicious!), visiting temples, riding all the different transportation systems, and performing our Yonsei dance at the welcome and farewell parties that the host families carefully planned for us in Japan. They actually prepared for our visit four years in advance.

I think that Yonsei is a good experience for everyone. More people should try out and go to Japan because is the best way to learn about your roots and Yonsei becomes like your second family. It also made us change as people. We became more outgoing, responsible and confident about ourselves. Our coaches were also great because they made us work hard, but they also made basketball an enjoyable, challenging and learning experience. Basketball was just part of my Yonsei journey experience, but I think more important and meaningful was that I formed such a tight bond with all the other families and coaches on the trip, and those memories I will always remember and keep close to my heart. I am a Y14 for life!

This experience would not have been possible without the help of the wonderful OCO families who kindly supported me in my fundraising efforts. I would like to extend my special thanks to the following families: **Shirley & Duane Asao, Cheryl & Michael Arzouman, Wallace Chan & Ellen Natsume, Susan & Vince Hamasaki, Marsha & Eric Hamamoto, Judy & Jesse James, Ann & Todd Joyce, Stephanie & Dan Hardy, Carolyn & Cliff Hitomi, Eileen & Chris Kato, Liz & Wade Kato, Irene and Wayne Koga, Judy & Ted Matsumoto, Sue & Dave Sugimoto, Vicky & Dave Tanabe** and to my great Tee sponsors **Tami & Nori Nishida and Donna & Mitch Okuda.**



Drinking water from the temple to purify our souls.



My home stay family in Matsue - Mr. and Mrs. Masaaki Omura

**Orange Coast Optimist** is affiliated with Optimist International, a world-renowned organization. Optimist clubs throughout the world are dedicated to the scholastic, physical, moral, and civic development of the youths in every community.

## Mark your calendar . . .

*OCO Halloween Party - October 27*  
*OCO Holiday Boutique - December 8*

**Check out the OCO Website:**  
[www.ocoyouth.org](http://www.ocoyouth.org)

### Jabber from the Editor

I had the opportunity to see a screening of the documentary, *Cats of Mirikitani*. A very good friend became friends with the filmmaker and the "subject" of this documentary. She told me prior to my seeing this film, that the kindness of the film-maker and the inspiration of the "subject" affected her life. After seeing the film, it too has affected my life.

I noticed that this documentary is showing at the Japanese American Museum in Los Angeles on October 13 at 2 p.m. If you can make this screening, I highly recommend it. The filmmaker, Linda Hattendorf, will be present to discuss her film after the showing.

The film follows an 85-year-old Japanese-American artist who was born in Sacramento and raised in Hiroshima, Japan. By 2001, he was living on the streets of New York with the twin towers of the World Trade Center still ominously anchoring the horizon behind him. What begins as a simple verite portrait of one homeless man becomes a rare documentary of daily life in New York in the months leading up to 9/11.

I encourage you to make time to see this documentary!

*Stacey Yoshinaga*



## Orange Coast Optimist Club

Newsletter  
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