



Orange Coast Optimist Rak Kan April 2008 - Issue 3



President's Message

As we enter the second half of our OCO fiscal year, some of us are having withdrawals from basketball, unsure of what to do with ourselves on weekends, since the basketball season ended in February. Others of us are enjoying the breather and actually welcome the chance to get out of a gym on the weekends.

Regardless of which of the above you are, OCO is pleased to provide plenty of activities to keep you busy and to help continue the development of our youth through sports and community service.

OCO baseball and SEYO T-ball applications are due April 30. Visit the OCO website for more information and application forms. This is a nice way to get outdoors, in the sun and fresh air and for the kids to learn another sport. We would love for all the OCO basketball players to play baseball as well. The season essentially runs from the beginning of June to the end of July. Look forward to seeing your kids on the field.

For those of you having withdrawals and have a desire to get back in the gym, OCO offers volleyball camp for 5th graders and older at Rancho on Saturdays, starting June 14 and running through the end of July. This is another great sport to learn and experience.

If neither of those two sports fits your fancy, how about

trying your hand at golf and participating in the OCO golf camp the week of July 21. It is usually 9 a.m. -12 p.m. Golf course location is being finalized. In the meantime, mark your calendar for a chance to learn proper techniques from golf pros. Your child could be the next Tiger Woods. Check the OCO website for more details (to be posted soon).

But if you have to get a dose of basketball, there are the OCO basketball camps. This year, they will be held at Troy High School in Fullerton the weeks of August 4 and 11. The camps fill up quickly, so please get your applications in as soon as possible to ensure a spot.

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OCO Election Results...

Congratulations to 2008/2009 OCO who will start their term in October:

- President - **Wallace Chan**
- President-Elect - **Dwayne Yoshinaga**
- Vice President (Programs) - **Caryn Ito**
- Vice President (Membership) - **Stacey Yoshinaga**
- Secretary - **Ellen Natsume**
- Treasurer - **Judy James**
- Board of Directors: **Neddie Bokosky, Staci Fujita, Jon Jinkawa, Gene Kato, Alyson Kubo, Jameson Lee, Mark Nakao, Clay Sakurao**
- Seargent of Arms - **Mark Sugamura**
- Past President - **Nori Nishida**
- SEYO Representatives - **Marsha Hamamoto, Bob Kubo**
- OCSA - **Jesse James**
- OCO Webmaster - **Chris Kato**

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OCO Youth Groups

Octagons _____

The past few months have been a very busy time for the 11th grade Octagons. We sold tickets for the SOC Pancake breakfast, helped with the set-up and organized the egg hunt at the OCO Easter party, volunteered with the Challenger Baseball games, and worked the shaved ice booth at OCBC's Hanamatsuri.

We decided to donate the money we raised from our February shaved ice sales to the non-profit organization, Autism Speaks. We will also be selling jewelry for this organization for Mother's Day. Twenty-five percent of the sales will be donated.

At the end of this month we will be joining the other Octagon groups as well as the Junior Optimist in doing a beach clean-up in Seal Beach.

I'd like to thank the OCO membership and our parents for their support with our many activities and for allowing us to help serve our community.

Alysa Ito
11th Grade Octagon President



Zachary Stone assisting his Challenger Baseball youth

Junior Optimists _____

Let's see here, what does it mean to be a Junior Optimist? Does it mean attending meetings? Does it mean giving a helping hand when needed? Or does it mean being open-minded about understanding those who are less fortunate? Being a Junior Optimist means all of those and more.

Over the past few months JO's have been busy working on projects that were focused on helping others. First we participated in Light the Night, a walk for leukemia, joining in on the fun with Team Kai. After that we made origami and little goodie bags for the residents at Tokyo Towers. In December, JO's made crafts, donated gifts and visited patients at Health Bridge Hospital. You may get the impression that when you tell a group of JO's that they are going to a hospital to read to recovering kids, that you won't get the best response? But a record number of JO's attended the Health Bridge Hospital event with smiles on their faces and caring hearts. There was such a good turnout, that we had to visit the patients in shifts. About a month later when we started brainstorming other ideas for our next service activity, that's when we decided to have a bake sale. We raised over \$700 selling homemade baked goods created by JO's. We wanted to donate it to a charitable organization and we chose the Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC). Profits from our sales will pay for DVD's given to the children and CHOC hospital. (The hospital recently converted all of their video equipment over to DVD.) We also are sponsoring two Optimist International youths on a deep sea fishing expedition.

Not only are we giving back to the community, but we also help out at some of the major OCO events. JO's worked the game booths at both the Halloween and Easter parties. There are quite a few games that we have going and they are always a blast to play and work. As a JO you really have to be on your toes. You never really know when someone or something needs your help or an input on how to do something. Being a JO is a great experience. It helps you later off in life and really works on your leadership roles. You rarely see a JO sad to be working or leading a project. That is probably why we accomplished so much this year. I hope that future JO's really grasp all that is taught in future meetings.

Cherylin Blandford
Junior Optimist Secretary

Young Adult Optimists

It has been an exciting first year for the Young Adult Optimist Club. We continue to work on getting our membership up and setting up new and exciting events for the year.

YAO has been very busy for the last few months preparing for our biggest project of the year – the Nikkei Awareness Conference. The focus of this conference is “*Know the Past, Understand the Present, Shape Your Future.*” The goal of this conference is to create a fun and interactive environment where participants are excited to learn about the Japanese-American heritage.

The Nikkei Awareness Conference will be held on Saturday, May 31, at Rancho Alamitos High School. This is halfday event for high school students to attend to learn more about their Japanese-American culture, heritage, and community, and to meet and interact with other Japanese-Americans their own age. The day will consist of different workshops throughout the day and a group activity. The workshop topics that will be offered this year are Internment Camps, 442nd Infantry (presented by Go For Broke), Sushi Making, Learn How to Speak Japanese, Asian Americans in Sports, Making a Difference, Origami, and Odori.

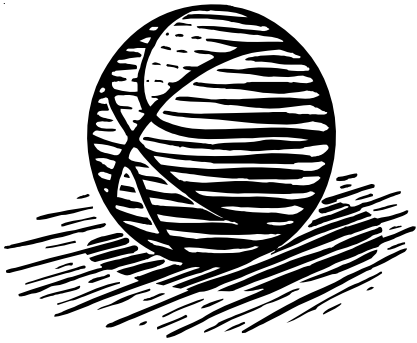
We really appreciate all the support OCO has shown in helping us create a successful conference for the high school students. The Nikkei Awareness Conference did well last year and we hope to continue this streak.

We will definitely be having a busy next few months in our efforts to make this conference a success and are really looking forward to planning more projects in the community. If you have any questions about our conference or our upcoming projects, please email us at YAOptimist@yahoo.com.

*Nicole Nishinaka
Young Adult Optimists, President Elect and Nikkei Awareness
Conference Chair*



From the Bench



Basketball Committee:

Marsha Hamamoto

Caryn Ito

Bob Kubo

Clay Sakurao

Mark Sugamura

Whew! The Winter SEYO Season has ended and the banquets are done...it is time to relax. Except for those coaching and playing Spring SEYO Season... their season is just starting!!! Before moving forward, let's recap the Winter Season.

Hope everyone had a successful season. It is not just the wins-losses that defines success. Did the kids have fun? Did everyone get involved? Did the kids improve? Did the coaches improve? From where I stood, we had a very successful season. There were a lot of happy faces that were drenched with perspiration, great turn-out at all the OCO events – record crowds at the Halloween Party; 99.99999999 % participation of Visions; Casino Night was a great success; and a great Coach's Forum to wrapup the Winter Season.

However, for SEYO, there were several incidents this past season that were quite disturbing. These were events that happened off the court and a reminder that it is "just a game" and it is for the kids. I know all of us signed the Parent's Code of Conduct and some of us read it too. For some reason, we get caught up in the excitement of the game and lose perspective and sometimes our self control. Remember, the referees are human beings, your kids are doing their best, and so is the other team. And the parents of the opposing team love their kids just as much as you love yours. This is after the fifth straight bad call against us, your kid has just missed his/her third straight lay-up, the opposing player has just knocked down your kid to steal the ball, and the parents from the opposing team just gave a thunderous cheer after we missed our freethrows. Wow, I am ready to throw a chair!!! Calm down. Calls will balance out. Make a note to yourself – work on lay-ups. Remember, basketball is a contact sport. Parents are supporting their team the best they can... Okay, they are some "idiots" out there, but it does not mean we have to be ones too. So remember, calm down and keep reminding yourself, "it is just a game and it is for the kids."

Again, I want to thank all the Players, Coaches, Team Reps, Division Reps, and Parents for a very successful season and looking forward to next year...

FYI... OCO season is not over; there is the OCO Steak Dinner, SEYO Baseball, Volleyball, Golf, Nikkei Games, and much more!!!

bob kubo
OCO Basketball Committee

President's Message - continued from page one

And of course, we have non-sporting events as well in the second half of the year. The OCO Easter party was on March 22 this year, but typically is in April. This year we had nearly 40 foster family members join over 200 OCO family members in a beautiful day of food and fun with plenty of shaved ice, cotton candy, popcorn, art and crafts, games and the annual Easter egg hunt. We even had a surprise visit from the Easter Bunny. Thank you to our chairperson, **May Auerbach**, and all the volunteers for putting on a fantastic party for the foster kids. Special thanks to **Clay Sakurao** and his "band of barbequers" for cooking up those tasty cheeseburgers and hotdogs. And thanks to all the **Octagons** and **Junior Optimists** for working all the stations and making it such a wonderful event.

On Friday, April 25, at the Knott's Resort in Buena Park we have the OCO Youth Recognition Night where we award scholarships to worthy high school seniors and acknowledge many of your youth for their display of leadership, dedication and years of service. It is truly a special evening of celebrating the blossoming of our youth. We hope all of you can join us.

The funds that are used to award the above scholarships are raised at the OCO Steak Dinner, being held this year on Saturday, June 7, at OCBC. Tickets will go on sale soon for this event and includes an all-you-can-eat steak dinner. There are also some great raffle prizes and of course the big raffle at the end of the evening. But most importantly, the net proceeds from the evening go to our scholarship fund and the worthy recipients. Please support our Steak Dinner and purchase tickets as they go on sale.

And we have the Nikkei Games in August, which is comprised of ten different sporting events and is one of the largest Nikkei sports festivals in the country. OCO is a proud supporter of the Nikkei Games, and we encourage all our OCO families to participate in the Nikkei Games. While basketball is the largest event, there are other events like Track & Field and Golf in which all ages can participate. For more information, you can go to the Nikkei Games website at www.nikkeigames.org. Even though it is a sports festival, the Nikkei Games is more about celebrating the traditions of our past and preserving them for the future. The Nikkei Games' origins date back to 1928. So, please help us ensure the Nikkei Games are here for our grandchildren and their grandchildren. Remember their motto: **The Nikkei Games: Games for the Generations.**

So, as you can see, OCO sports and activities do not stop at the end of the basketball season. Please participate in as many events as possible. The richness of all of our activities is greater when our OCO families are a part of them. And it is not just the participation, it is the sharing of culture and experiences, and it is the development of life long friendships. That is the treasure we can all enjoy.

It is you who make OCO one of the largest and, in my humble opinion, one of the best community youth service organizations in the country.

Thank you for your continued support of OCO. It is very much appreciated!

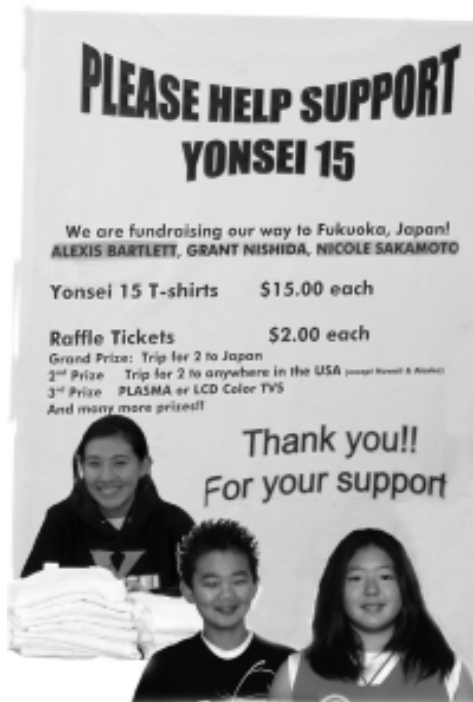
Wallace Chan
OCO President

Spotlight

Yonsei 15

Congratulations to OCO players **Alexis Bartlett**, **Nicole Sakamoto**, and **Grant Nishida** who were selected to be on this year's Yonsei Basketball team.

The Yonsei Basketball Association, founded 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 they endeavor to bridge the gap.



All of us are honored to have been selected to represent the USA boy's and girl's team for Yonsei 15.

In August, the Yonsei team and their families will be visiting the Fukuoka Prefecture, which is located on the northern shore of the island of Kyushu. Each Yonsei player will home stay with a local family for 4 days to experience daily life in Japan. We will also compete in basketball games against teams from Japan. We're looking forward to going to Japan to experience the culture, food and sights, as well as learn a little more about our heritage.

As part of the Yonsei team, we are committed to participate in fundraisers to support the program. Currently, the following items are available and can be purchased from any one of us.

- \$15 - Yonsei 15 T-shirts
- \$ 2 - Raffle tickets (one book = \$100)
- \$200 - Golf Sponsorship

Please let us know if you are interested in any of the above or have any questions.

The purpose for this article is not only to fundraise but also to bring awareness to the community about the Yonsei program. Each year, the Yonsei board selects a group of 8th grade boys and girls to participate in the Yonsei program that will represent the USA in Japan. Each person is required to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher, participate in physical tryouts, compose an essay and be interviewed.

Thank you, OCO members, coaches, teammates and our family for helping us achieve our goals and dreams. Your support is appreciated!

Thank you,

Alexis Bartlett (jbartlett5@sbcglobal.net)
Nicole Sakamoto (pkksakamoto@aol.com)
Grant Nishida (tnishida@sbcglobal.net)

OCO Essay Contest_____

Each year, OCO sponsors an Essay Contest. This year, there were 22 entries from our Octagons and students from high school students in the Garden Grove area. Congratulations to this year's winners:

First Place - Natalie Garcia (Pacifica High School)
Second Place - Sara Seto (Villa Park High School)
Third Place - Qui (Mimi) Tran (Rancho Alamitos High School)

All winners will be invited to attend the OCO Youth Recognition Night on April 25, where they will be recognized for their achievement.

“Today’s Choices Shape My Future” by Natalie Garcia

As a child I remember that my daily schedule consisted of simple things such as going to school and playing with my friends and toys. Until about sixth grade, I had very few worries and concerns, however, that clearly changed as I grew older. I began caring about my actions and over-analyze everything I did. I wasn't the careless little child anymore. Yet, it wasn't until about a year ago as a freshman that I felt more grounded. I began noticing that the choices I made, affected everything. My choices began to alter my education, my friends, and how I grew as an individual. In one way or another, my choices shape my daily life.

These past two years in high school, I've had to make many choices to become a better student. One of the best choices I made was to join a program called AVID. This class has made me a better student because it has taught me many academic skills that will prepare me for a successful college experience. The program has assisted me to become a much more organized person. In AVID, we are held accountable to submit weekly binder notes. In fact, my note taking in Cornell format has made all the difference in preparing me for tests. Twice a week the class has tutorials, which are formed by small discussion groups. This gives me the opportunity to collaborate with other classmates and tutors and get help if needed. This class has also been helping me maintain higher grades. In addition, monthly grade checks prevent me from falling behind in classes. AVID is one of the best choices that I've ever made.

Besides making smart academic choices, I am also trying to be wise about making good social choices. My friends are a very big part of my life and so I choose them wisely. I surrounded myself with a good group of people who have a positive influence on me. For example, I spend time with friends while practicing and playing soccer. Sports have contributed to make me a well-rounded person. As I have gotten older, I've matured and learned to be a better friend.

As a teenager I'm learning that every choice I make is very crucial. I'm choosing to take responsibility for my actions whether they are good or bad and accepting that I'm not perfect. My choices will shape my future; therefore, I hope that I make smart decisions that improve my academic and social life.

OCO Event Recaps

Vision Winners_____

"Visions," a program sponsored by OCO, provides an opportunity for players to use their creative talents by expressing themselves through their own original works. 278 youths participated in this year's contest. The theme was "I can make a difference by..."

Awards were presented at the General Meeting in March to the following winners:

Literature

	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
2 - 3 Grade:	Corey Kuramoto	Wesley Nakao	Branden Pacion
4 - 5 Grade:	Matthew Iida	Shaye Uyematsu	Scott Matsutsuyu
6 - 7 Grade:	Danielle Pacion	Connor Kubo	Brian Hamada and Leigh-Ann Kamifuji
8 - 9 Grade:	Cherylin Blandford	Nicole Sakamoto	Bendan Woo

Visual Arts

Tinkos:	Casey Kuramoto	Kirsten Wong	Ryan Sueki
2 - 3 Grade:	Krista Niewiadomski	Kaitlyn Chu	Erin Matsutsuyu
4 - 5 Grade:	Koby Otsuka	Nick Hisamoto	Jamie Hayakawa
6 - 12 Grade:	Lindsey Uyematsu	Kacie Hitomi	Cody Uyeda

From Tinkos to High School Seniors_____

They truly grew up with OCO!

The following all started in the Tinkos program and continued playing through this year. They will soon be graduating from high school:

**Tricia Asao
Melissa Koga
Jodi Matsumoto
Allyson Oishi
Karly Shimamoto**

**Kyle Chan
Ryan Itano
Andrew Sakakura
Colin Ozawa
Justin Sugamura
Garrett Yamasaki
Kevin Joyce**

Hylond Home



The following note was submitted after the January issue of the Rak Kan Newsletter went to print. So...just a "tad" late, but better late than never...right?

The OCO Christmas Party at the Hylond Home was held on Saturday, December 16, 2007. Like every year, the party started off with bingo. Every bingo player eventually won several battery-operated stuffed toys, which were donated by Rancho Alamitos High School Octagons and their adviser and OCO member, **Eric Hamamoto**.

During the party, OCO Octagons and Rancho Octagons raised the roof by singing Christmas carols. Each resident at the party was paired with an Octagon to help with their bingo cards and lunch. Great job, guys and gals!!!

All 132 residents at the home received their special Christmas wish that were provided by you, OCO members. The Christmas presents were distributed by Santa Clauses **Dan Hardy** and **Jeff Kimura** (12th grade Octagon). Dan lost some weight last year and did not quite fill out his Santa outfit. But nevertheless, Dan's jovial spirit was still there and was felt by all. This was Jeff's first time at the Hylond Home. Without any hesitation, he volunteered to be the other Santa. Due to time constraints and the number of residents in the home, two Santas were required to deliver the presents. You could see the joy in Jeff's face while visiting with the residents and handing them their Christmas presents. He really got into the moment and took the time to talk to each person. Both you guys did a wonderful job.

The Santas were accompanied and assisted by two Mrs. Clauses, played by **Erica Braesch** and **Sara Seto**. We also had several Santa's helpers: **Dane Okuda, Cody Sakurai, Kevin Joyce, Justin Sugamura, Jonathon Lew**, and the **James boys, Tyler, JJ, and Garrett**. You all did a fabulous job.

Special acknowledgment goes to **Donna Okuda, Eric** and **Marsha Hamamoto, Howard (Doc)** and **Andrea Kunihiro, Judy** and **Jesse James, Clay** and **Kathy Sakurao** for your support and helping hands. If I forgot to mention someone, please accept my apology and many thanks.

I would also like thank my co-chairperson, **Jameson (Jamo) Lee**, 12th grade Octagon chairperson, **Ellie Takeuchi**, and 11th grade co-chair, **Duane Murata**. Both Ellie and Duane have attended this event for several years now. Duane has also been the Octagon chairperson for the last couple of years and is ready to take over my job. You both are a pleasure to work with.

Last but not least, thank you, OCO members, for your generosity and thoughtfulness in fulfilling the Christmas wishes of all the residents.

*Mitch Okuda
Hylond Home Chairman*

Jabber from the Editor

I have had several requests from our OCO members for a type of OCO member directory of services...you know, a listing that notes where our OCO members work and allows us to patronize their business. This listing could then be posted on the OCO website, allowing OCO members to support one another.

If you have a business that you'd like to include in this listing, please forward your name and business information. I'll start compiling the list. If we get enough interest, I'll have it posted to the website.

Stacey Yoshinaga
Editor

Rak Kan News Photographer - Warren Lee



Orange Coast Optimist Club

Newsletter

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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.