



Orange Coast Optimist Rak Kan August 2008 - Issue 4



President's Message

It's been another busy OCO summer! OCO baseball and volleyball, and then the Nikkei Games. We hope all of our OCO families participated in the Nikkei Games, one of the largest Nikkei sports festivals in the country with over 3,500 participants in ten different sports. 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. It is also about enjoying healthy competition and building lasting friendships. The Nikkei Game's origin dates 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.***

And with summer coming to an end, our minds start conjuring up thoughts of Fall and the change of seasons. And instead of picturing the changing colors on the leaves like people back East do, we begin thinking about OCO basketball and getting back into the gyms.

Basketball registration is scheduled for Sunday, September 14, 12:30 p.m. at Rancho Alamitos High School in Garden Grove. Registration day will include a hot dog and hamburger BBQ for all the OCO families registering that day. Notification has already gone out to last year's 5-year-old Tinko group regarding pre-registering as a returning Tinko. Due to the strong response to our Tinkos basketball program, we have

moved to a pre-registration process to ensure OCO members are given the first opportunity to register their child. Any current OCO members can pre-register their 5- and 6-year-old child (as of Dec 2, 2008) by emailing **Ellen Natsume** at enatsume@cox.net with their child's information and intention to register for this upcoming Tinko season. The pre-registration period expires Sunday, August 17.

Speaking of Ellen, she is the 2008 Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council (OCNCC) OCO Community Service award recipient. She has been a

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OCO Receives Human Spirit Award

OCO was selected to receive the 2008 5th Annual Human Spirit Award from Asians for Miracle Marrow Matches (A3M). This award is presented to organizations that have exceptional commitment to the community through their philanthropic support of A3M's mission to save lives. Past recipients have included Union Bank of California, ABC7 and Raytheon.

This award is for all of you who have added your name to the bone marrow donor registry and those who helped support the OCO Golf Tournament in December, where 100% of the net proceeds were donated to A3M. Whether it was golfing, being a tee sponsor, getting donations and sponsorships, or helping run the tournament, it was through all your hard work and giving of your time and monies to such a worthy organization as A3M that made OCO a recipient of this award. And we know A3M truly does save lives. Just ask our own Nancy Sakakura, who received a successful bone marrow transplant three years ago on Mother's Day! There is nothing more precious than the gift of life.

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OCO Youth Groups

Junior Optimists_____

We asked some of our current JO members what it was like to be in the club...here is what some of them said:

When I became a JO I didn't know what it was and what to expect. I was new to OCO, transferring in from another SEYO team and new to Juniors. I knew several of my teammates already after having attended many years of OCO Basketball Camp and having played some tournaments together. OCO is still a pretty big organization, though, and it was kind of scary to join a group where people had already been together for a while. Add the JO part of it and I was unsure about it all at first. I didn't have to worry - everyone was really welcoming to me and I felt I was able to connect right away. JOs gave me an extra opportunity to make relationships and opened my eyes that OCO is about much more than basketball. JOs can teach you to work together to not only make baskets, but to give generously to help the community or even people in need. I didn't think Junior Highers could do much to be helpful, but JOs organize and motivate us to make things happen. Now, I can add helping people around me to what I do with OCO. That makes me feel good about being part of the OCO team. Plus, I get to have fun doing it because it is with my teammates. I got to know my team a lot better and have become great friends with some of them. It is all worth it to play! I have enjoyed going to the beach cleanup and providing some Christmas cheer to the kids at the Hylond home. This encourages me that I can make a difference in my little world.

*Jonathan Sawada
Member*

There are many things I enjoyed about being a Junior Optimist. The experience was not only fun, but I also learned how important it is to give back to our community. Three activities that I liked the best about being a Junior Optimist was the Halloween party, Tokyo Towers, and the trip to Health Bridge. The Halloween party was fun because we got to work the games and play them as well. I liked that we got to work in pairs so that we would not have to work the booths by ourselves. Being a new member to the OCO organization, this was a fun way to get to know many of the other JO's. I had good time at Tokyo Towers; even though we did not get to deliver the gifts to each resident, we still were able to drop off the gifts and I hope our goal of bringing happiness to the residents was accomplished. After dropping off the gifts our group got to walk around Little Tokyo. I felt that this was a good opportunity to bond more with the other JO members. Health Bridge was heartbreaking; the patients were not in great health so, it felt exceptional to donate gifts and make them feel better. It was a good lesson because we got to help others who were not as fortunate as us. These three activities were enjoyable and had excellent lessons to each. Being a new member to OCO and the Junior Optimists has given me a greater meaning to teamwork, commitment, and community service. Thank you so much for giving me such a great opportunity!

*Tori Itatani
Member*

CHOC Prom

In July, the Junior Optimists and the Octagons assisted in decorating for a special prom. The prom was for the cancer patients at CHOC hospital, who were not able to attend their high school prom. The Junior Optimists, Octagons, and their parents spent three days helping with the decorations: painting, assembling, etc.

We heard that the patients who attended, all had a magical time!



Octagons_____

As I am writing this article, I am reflecting on the past four years of being in the Octagon Club. I remember when I was a freshman, I came into Octagons young and immature, looking up to role models such as **Dean Otsuka** and **Brent Hashizu**. Basically, we were the scrubs who did the “dirty work.” We had to mop the floors and pick up trash. As time passed along with the next two years of Octagons, we grew older and became more mature, yet the responsibilities and the dirty work still remained on our shoulders. After we split the Octagons into grade levels, it gave each group their own sense of self-responsibility as a whole. Octagons have become stronger than it has been before. Now the group that I grew up with finally became “the big dogs.” As senior year hit us, I took on the role of president of the twelfth-grade Octagons. Parents always told us that the younger guys would eventually take the responsibility of sweeping the floor and staying late picking up trash and cleaning up the gym. But till this day, we still hold that job. I guess we are so used to it that it has become second nature. I feel that my group has set a standard of what all Octagons should strive to be: they should work hard, be committed and dedicate time to Octagons because their actions shape who they will become. Now finally, after four years we got our chance to be the role models.

On behalf of the 12th grade Octagon Club, I thank OCO and our parents for the opportunity they have given us to grow and become better individuals. We wish all future Octagons much success in their years to come!

*Garrett James
President, Twelfth-Grade Octagons*

Young Adult Optimists_____

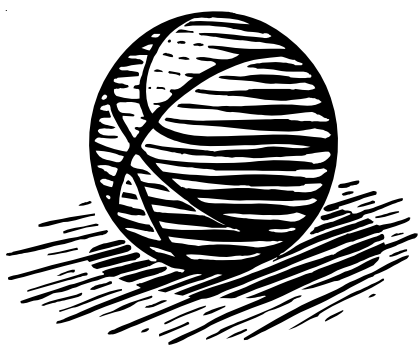
Well, the Young Adult Optimist club is getting ready to kick off the start of their third year!!! Elections are just about to start, and the club is really excited to have a brand-new board take control next month! The beginning of a new year also means new blood coming to join the club – the high school graduates! These new college students have also graduated from their involvement in Octagons, and we are really looking forward to having them join YAO. And we’ve heard really great things about the 12th grade Octagon group!

YAO also put on their second annual Nikkei Awareness Conference in June. Chairpersons **Christine Kimoto** and **Kenny Tanaka** did a great job putting on the event this year. New ideas and workshops were offered such as Karate by **Mr. Art Ishii** and learning about Little Tokyo, as well as the favorites from last year like Sushi Making, Odori by **Sensei Asao**, Learning to Speak Japanese, and the 442nd workshop put on by Go For Broke. Everyone also got the opportunity to participate in a lunchtime activity about Internment Camps which left some attendees eating only bread and water! (Well, until they were allowed to enjoy the delicious food from the Loft!) The highlight of the day was definitely the performance by Cold Tofu. Cold Tofu is an Asian Pacific Americans improv group that left everyone crying from laughter with the various different skits they performed.

The YAO Club is really looking forward to the start of the new year. They have a couple of events already planned to get the year started. It has been fun being the president the last couple of years, and I am really looking forward to see how much more our club will grow with the new board!! Have a great rest of the summer!

*Michelle Ito
President, Young Adult Optimists*

From the *"friendly"* Bench



Basketball Committee:

Marsha Hamamoto

Caryn Ito

Bob Kubo

Clay Sakurao

Mark Sugamura

Parents -

Hope everyone's off-season was just as uneventful as mine...
NOT!

With OCO volleyball, SEYO baseball, and the Nikkei Games just ending – what off-season break? What no basketball! Yes, I know there was some basketball in there someplace. However, this is a good thing.

For all of you pre-high school families, this is the time to do other things, because once you hit high school, if it is not basketball, your summers will be filled with baseball, volleyball, band, ASB, etc. This time prior to high school is the time to enjoy other activities. Plus, how else are we going to experience these sports? You don't want your children to be the one who have to sit on the sideline at a picnic because they don't know how to play volleyball or softball. Have them get out there and enjoy all the "other" sports.

There is a disturbing thing we feel is happening with some of our coaches and parents – the fear of talking with the Basketball Committee (BBC). We have a concern that you are afraid to approach us, because you may be fearful that we will reprimand you and your team. Please know that we are here to help assist with issues or concerns about OCO basketball.

We'd like to hear directly from you, as opposed to concerns being brought to our attention via someone else. Having someone else asking the questions can lead to miscommunication. You know that telephone game that we all played at one time or another... where a person starts at one end with a message, whispering it in the ear of the person next to him and he passes it on to the person next to him, and so on. By the time it reaches the other end, there is no resemblance to the original message. Please, come and talk with us. We are here to assist.

Thanks!

bob kubo
OCO Basketball Committee



Shoyu Hot Dogs

By Bob Kubo

Remembering some family traditions...typical of what many sansei generations experienced!

I am not sure about your family, but food was a big deal in my home, and attending family dinners was mandatory. There was a hierarchy too: my dad was served first, then me (first and only son), then my sisters, and my mom always ate last. Our typical meal was not much different from my friends', except we had rice with every meal. We also had some special meals, i.e. shoyu hot dogs, shoyu pea rice, spam musubi, ketchup and eggs on rice, etc. I always thought this was food my mom made up. Then talking to my Japanese friends, I learned that their moms were feeding them the same meals. Hot dogs, spam, ketchup are not your common Japanese food ingredients. Was it a JA conspiracy? It was not until my sister emailed me this link about food and the Japanese Internment, that it started to make sense. The article discussed Japanese-American Internment food staples... "They lived in barrack-like conditions, standing in long lines for little food, eating off tin pie plates in big mess halls. They were fed government commodity foods and castoff meat from Army surplus — hot dogs, ketchup, kidneys, Spam and potatoes. The Japanese diet and family table were erased." Not totally erased, but came back as shoyu hot dogs and rice and spam musubi, becoming staple foods of our culture at our family meals.

The family dinner is one of the traditions the Kubos have preserved. Even during these busy times, we always ate dinner together. Now it is almost impossible with kids in college and their own lives to live. However, every Sunday we have dinner over at my mom's and everyone tries their hardest to make it. I do not recall being able to leave the table to play video games, surfing the net, or texting friends, but at least we are together and I know this make my mom happy.

Okay, I want to hear from all of you... What was your favorite meal that you did not get at your hakujiin friend's house? Do you feed it to your family today?

For more information here is the link to the NPR article: "Weenie Royale: Food and the Japanese Internment," by The Kitchen Sisters; <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17335538>

President's Message - continued from page one

part of OCO for over 13 years and has done so much. Just to mention some of her accomplishments, she served on the Board, held numerous officer positions, handled basketball registration, uniforms and awards luncheons, been on the scholarship committee, heads up our annual elections, was a Junior Optimist advisor, ran OC Nikkei Junior Golf and is the current OCO secretary. And in this coming year, she will take on the role as 9th grade Octagon advisor. She is truly deserving of this award. Please join me in congratulating her!

Getting back to basketball, as President I have the responsibility to inform you that with the growing pressure from the school districts regarding their budget issues and further rising gym costs, we have no choice but to increase the basketball fee this year to \$100 per player. This is the first increase in about ten years for OCO; and while it was a difficult decision for the Board, I believe it was the fiscally responsible thing to do. At \$100, there is still tremendous value provided to our members from the OCO basketball program. Thank you for your understanding as we come to grips with the mounting pressures from the school administration to do more to help their school.

In September, there is the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Light the Night Walk on Saturday, September 20 at Angel Stadium. OCO is supporting this event under TEAM KAI, for our very own **Kai Fujita**. He was one of the 2006 Honored Heroes of that year's Walk. The event this year will begin at 4:30 p.m. The Fujitas will be there early to reserve our gathering spot. Please mark your calendar, wear OCO orange, and join in the walk for such a great cause!

You should be proud of all that you do to help those less fortunate. I am proud of all of you and proud to be a part of OCO. I believe our lives are richer because of it.

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

Wallace Chan

Spotlight



Community Service Awards _____

Each year, the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council honors individuals for their contribution to the community. This year, OCO's recipient was **Ellen Natsume** and OCSA's recipient was Phyllis Sakamoto. Congratulations to both for all that they continue to do to enrich our youth!

Ellen Natsume

Ellen, who was born and raised in Los Angeles, caught the community service "bug" as a young teenager at Belmont High School. Working at the Asian Women's Center, she was exposed to many of the community service organizations that helped Asians in the L.A. area. It was through these connections that she was recruited to volunteer on the campaign of Star Trek's "Mr. Sulu," when George Takei ran for the Los Angeles City Council. Ellen has continued volunteering in the political arena by working the polling booths in her neighborhood for several years. She has also been actively involved in the politics at Capistrano Unified School District, attending board meetings, helping distribute information on a recent recall campaign and working on boundary committees.

Ellen first became involved with children when she volunteered at the Camp Fire Girls summer camp as a counselor in Big Bear. Then she volunteered with the UCLA Extension program tutoring children at Castellar Elementary School in Chinatown.

Soon after they were married, her husband, Wallace Chan, was transferred to Houston where Ellen continued working with children. She earned a Master's degree in Elementary Education from the University of Houston and taught elementary school until their first son Kyle was born.

After nine years in Texas, they returned to Southern California and added two more boys, Michael and Steven, to the family. Having committed to staying at home to raise a family, Ellen became involved with a parent group and helped start a babysitting co-op in her neighborhood. When Kyle started elementary school, Ellen began volunteering in the classroom and with the PTA. She has been on many of the PTA committees as well as a member of the Executive Boards for Bathgate Elementary School, Las Flores Middle School, and Capistrano Valley High School. She is still on the board at the High School and is currently the PTA President of Bathgate Elementary.

For many years Ellen has volunteered with the Child Abuse Prevention Council. One of the committees she

worked on raised funds and collected donations that would help children who were leaving the social services system when they turned 18 years old. Additionally she scheduled victims of abuse to speak at local schools to help educate students about the effects of child abuse.

For the past 13 years, Ellen has been involved with OCO. She has helped with various committees and programs and has been on the Executive Board for ten years.

Community Service and volunteering are integral parts of Ellen's life. She hopes that her boys follow her example and enjoy the many intrinsic benefits of helping others.

Phyllis Sakamoto

Phyllis was born and raised in Orange County, attending Rancho Alamitos High School and UCSD – John Muir College. Phyllis grew up playing sports, including many co-ed sports: basketball, volleyball, softball, racquetball, bowling, and golf.

Her involvement with OCSA began in the early '80s, when her best friend **Debbie Kumagawa** taught her how to keep score for basketball. Debbie ran the OCSA league back then and Phyllis was often recruited to assist with various tasks, like copying applications, recording rosters, etc. Phyllis also assisted with all of the community service events that OCSA took part in, such as canned food drives and visiting the residents at Tokyo Towers. So in between scorekeeping and volunteering her time to community service, Phyllis found time to play in softball, volleyball, and bowling leagues. OCSA became a big part of her life growing up.

Phyllis' nature is to help out with whatever needs to be done. She plays an active role in her children's, Nicole and Sean's activities. She assists with the Boy Scouts, being a basketball team representative, and volunteers to assist with many OCBC events.

As with many volunteers who do community service, she does it from the heart!

A Tenth-Grade Octagon Community Service Project

AnySoldier.com

By Chairperson, Michelle Joyce

This year for the tenth grade Octagon's decided to ship goods to the soldiers in Iraq as one of our community service projects. In order to raise enough money to accomplish this task we held a bake sale at Rancho Alamitos High School, where we earned approximately \$600. With our earnings we purchased the items that the soldiers requested on the AnySoldier.com website. We encountered a slight obstacle, as the shipping costs were too high to ship all of the items that we purchased. We held another fund raiser, selling produce boxes at the Steak Dinner. There we raised the funds to pay for the postage. We shipped over 50 boxes to the soldiers in Iraq and it was a huge success.



Jabber from the Editor

I recently was talking to a father of a player, who was saddened by the cutting words of another parent. The "root" behind these cutting words of this parent was his frustration with the coach and playing time for his daughter. As a result, this parent was making biting comments about the performance of the players on the team. As I listened to the father talk, he was more disappointed at the fact that the parent didn't seem to care about how his words were hurting those around him. How could verbally abusing other players on the team be productive? I started to observe this parent at games...and I could understand the hurt that this father had. Oh...and the even sadder thing...I had the opportunity to spend some time with the players at a recent tournament. I overheard the players talking. They hear the comments that this parent makes...especially the child of this parent. The daughter made the comment that she was embarrassed by what her father said during the games. She made it a point to offer encouraging comments to those girls he belittled during the game. How sad, that the daughter feels the need to make up for her father.

I mention this, because I think we as parents want the best for our children. Sometimes we can get caught up in "things" reacting in ways that in the end are embarrassing for our children. In most cases they won't say anything to you, the parent. But know...they hear it and can see it. They will either mirror your actions or will find the need to apologize for your actions.

Whatever happened to being supportive parents, fans, and positive role models? Let alone the golden rule of "if you don't have anything nice to say, keep your comments to yourself"?

Here's to a "supportive" and fun basketball season!

Stacey Yoshinaga
Editor



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.