

Optimist Club celebrates 100 years in Canada

By Brian Lockhart

The Optimist Club is celebrating 100 years in Canada as a service organization.

In Canada, the Club was founded as the Toronto Optimist Club on January 22, 1924, making it an international organization. The Club first started in Buffalo, New York in 1911.

The Club was founded on a vision of "community betterment," aiming to "help delinquent boys and to spread the doctrine of optimism."

Since the beginning, the Club's mission has evolved to bring out the best in youth, the community, and themselves. The Optimists are proud that the same passion and hope for the future that inspired the original Toronto Club still drives the Club today.

In its first 20 years, the Toronto Optimist Club sponsored 16 other Canadian Clubs, and Canadian membership grew to more than 1,000 by 1944. Today, there are over 10,000 Optimists in Canada, and the organization continues to grow.

The organization recently welcomed the newest club in the country - the Seaway Optimist Club in Central Ontario.

The Optimist Club has expanded into more than 27 countries worldwide, including Uganda, Jamaica, Japan, and South Korea, with Districts also in the Caribbean and Nepal.

The Orangeville Optimist Club has been operating for 50 years.

At a recent meeting, the Orangeville Optimist Club collected 100 cans of food for the Orangeville Food Bank.

During the Coldest Night of the Year Fundraiser on February 24, they raised over \$8,100 for the Orangeville Food Bank.

Supporting local not-for-profits continues to be the Optimist Club's focus. Other causes they've supported in the past include Big Brothers Big Sisters, Westminster Milk Program, the Dufferin Child and Family Foundation, Scouts and Guides, and Orangeville minor sports.

In addition, the club has supported Orangeville District Secondary School and Westside bursaries, bike rodeo, junior golf, One Voice One Team, the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation, Youth Empowerment Day, Oratorical and Essay contests, and Central Ontario Leadership Seminars. They also make donations to Family Transition Place and the Headwaters Health Care Foundation.