



Opti - Topics

Bulletin of the Optimist Club of Huntsville

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A beautiful Groundhog Day brought out 18 Optimists and one guest, Elaine Plank. First Vice President Jack Fauble presided in the absence of President Jim Pepper. Dr. Sidney Sandridge opened the meeting with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jack announced that today's meeting was the **birthday of Dr. Carl Winkler** who admitted to being at least 60 years old. Carl has been a member of the Optimist Club of Huntsville since January 1, 1956, a span of 56 years! Carl reported that he is enjoying living at the Regency retirement facility, especially the warmth of the people living there.

First Vice President Tom Casteel reported on his trip to Orange Beach for the District meeting last weekend. He complained about having to go forward so many times to accept our Club's awards: First JOOI Club of the year in the district, Friend of Youth Award, First Place in Category II A & A, Second highest donation per member to Optimist International Foundation in the District, and **Honor Club for the past year**. Past President Jim Roe will receive an award for this at a future meeting when he is in attendance.

Byrom Goodwin introduced the speaker for today's luncheon, **Mr. Pat Maloney** who is with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Maloney works for the VA's Rehabilitation and Employment Program in Huntsville. Mr. Maloney graduated from Huntsville High School and has degrees from both UAH and Alabama A & M.

Mr. Maloney began his talk by outlining the three "business lines" of the VA: (1) Veterans Health and Medical, (2) National Cemetery Administration, and (3) Veterans Benefits Administration. In his specific area of vocational rehabilitation and employment, he serves two groups of veterans: those who need help in independent living and/or those needing either building modifications or adaptive

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equipment, and those needing vocational rehabilitation and employment. His office helps veterans with service related disabilities, either physical or psychiatric impairment (or both) from 10% to 100%.

He reported that the GI Bill passed by congress after 9/11 has allowed many, in fact most, returning veterans to obtain a bachelor's degree. However, even with training and/or education, veterans in Alabama are experiencing a 41% level of unemployment, as opposed to about 8% for the general population.

Mr. Maloney reported he has **68 veterans** educated and/or trained, job-ready for employment. Most are veterans from either the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts and are in their 20s or 30s. He stated he would welcome any help our club could give in finding them a job. There is a national web site, www.vetsuccess.gov which lists veterans looking for a job, and there is a local employment coordinator, Ms. Rosalind Burrell, Phone 256-533-2507 Ext. 224.

Tom Casteel led the club in closing the meeting with the Optimist Creed.

Sidney Sandridge won the door prize on the first draw.

Clyde Nevins

Optimistic Quote of the Week

"One of the sanest, surest, and most generous joys of life comes from being happy over the good fortune of others."

~ Robert A. Heinlein

CALENDAR

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|------|-------------------|--|
| 2/7 | Tuesday 4:00 pm | 1st Commercial Bank
Board Meeting |
| 2/9 | Thursday 11:45 am | Downtown Holiday Inn
Mrs. Bryon Dodson - President & CEO
Phoenix of Huntsville |
| 2/16 | Thursday 11:45 am | Optimist Recreation Center
Business Meeting - Food - (Byrom Goodwin) |