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# Opti - Topics

## **August Regular Noon Meeting**

At very good turnout of 18 Optimists and 4 guests filled up all the available seating at our ORC Meeting Room. Gay Pepper brought the lunch today from Nothing But Noodles: a choice of two pasta dishes plus a fresh tossed salad, breadsticks, cookies and a choice of drinks. We were happy to see some Optimists we've missed recently: Denise Watson, Kathy Anderson and Charlene Higgins were with us today.



Our guests, invited by Eureka Battie, were Dr. Joseph Lee, Mr. Samar Misra, Ms. Janity Strong and Ms Iesha Watts, all with Americorps' VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) Program at Alabama A & M University. I was told they are all potential members of our Club.

## **Opening**

President Vastell Williams asked Rev. Jim Berry to bring the opening prayer, and Jim also led the Club in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Announcements & Committee Reports**



Tom Casteel, Eureka Battie are heading to the District Meeting tomorrow (Friday). President-Elect Eureka will undergo extensive training for leading our Club next year. The District Meeting is in Southaven, MS, and runs from Friday evening to Sunday noon.

**Club meets**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday**  
**At 6:00 p.m. at Blue**  
**Plate Café**

**3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays**  
**At 11:45 a.m.**  
**Optimist Recreational**  
**Center**

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Alfred Adams, Chairman of the **Pecan Sale Committee**, passed around a sign-up sheet for ordering pecans (and other nuts or nut assortments, if desired). He stated he will order the pecans by mid-September so they will be here by October 1<sup>st</sup>. If you didn't sign up at the meeting, please let Alfred know how many bags of pecans you need.



Committee Chairman Tom Casteel reported that the 70<sup>th</sup> **Anniversary Banquet Committee** had ruled out Embassy Suites as being too expensive. Their \$500 meeting room charge priced it out of reason. The Committee is leaning towards the Cooper House and having the meal catered. Kenny Anderson in the Mayor's Office has been contacted about having the Mayor issue a proclamation. The Governor-Elect of the ALMS District will be here for the occasion.



Alfred Adams will take the school supplies we originally collected for Morris Elementary School to the Huntsville Achievement School. Morris, it was learned, will supply their students with everything they need, and the HAS has welcomed the donation.



Band Program Committee Chairman Tom Casteel presented a motion to buy an **additional 50 band instruments** for the Club's Band Program due to the great need that cleaned out our supply very early this year. (This item was tabled at the business meeting last week for Tom to better define the costs involved). Tom moved that the Club request \$14,000 from the Huntsville Optimist Foundation for this purpose. Vastell Williams seconded the motion. The only discussion came from Alberto Duarte, President of the Optimist Foundation, who reported he had anticipated this action, and the money was already available. The Motion passed.

## Program



We enjoyed one of the most entertaining programs of the year, today, with a presentation by Ms. Beth Roberts, Executive Director of Therapy Partners, Inc., and Sutton, a (pale) yellow Labrador that is one of their Therapy Dogs. Tom Casteel, this month's Program Chairman, introduced Ms. Roberts and handed out a fact sheet to all the Optimists and guests.

Ms. Roberts began with a brief history of the organization, which was originally founded in Huntsville in 1993 as "Therapy Dogs." However, by the time it was incorporated in 1994, a kitty had become part of the program and the name was changed to *Therapy Partners*. The organization is affiliated with the international organization, Pet Partners, who insures the local program for \$2 million.

The program works predominantly through 30 volunteers. Training of the animals (29 dogs and 1 cat) and volunteers can take two years. All types of dogs are used in the program, since the temperament of the dog is the main criterion for selection. Fifty percent of the dogs are rescue animals, and 49% of them are purebred animals.

Scientific studies have shown how petting an animal can lower blood pressure and anxiety. The UAB Medical School teaches their students the use of Pet Therapy along with Art Therapy and Music Therapy.

Ms. Roberts described two of the Therapy Partners programs she is involved with. She has taken Sutton to Brookdale Assisted Living, where after a time or two there, he knew the route to visit his human friends. He gets along well with older adults, but Ms. Roberts has learned that "he loves kids best, hands down." This finding has led her to phase out the Brookdale facility and concentrate more on children's needs.

Ms. Roberts and Sutton are serving at Blossomwood School with the Partners Achieving Literacy (PAL) program. They visit 2<sup>nd</sup> graders there every week for a 1/2-hour reading session. Kids chosen by the teacher read books to Sutton, who may put his head in their lap or sleep during the session. Once the child has read a complete book, they can take the book home. One of the books being used is "The 7 Habits of Happy Kids" supplied by Huntsville City Schools. The *average* reading improvement from these sessions is 3 levels.

A recent program taken on by Ms. Roberts and Sutton is working with grieving children at Caring House Hospice. There, Sutton provides much-needed consolation to kids who are grieving about lost loved ones.

Ms. Roberts concluded her program by passing around scrapbook sheets which showed photos of Therapy Pets “in action.”

## **Closing**

Tom Casteel gave our speaker a tile with our Optimist Creed, and asked our speaker to draw for our attendance prize. Bill Clarke won on the first drawing.

President Vastell Williams led the Club in reciting the Optimist Creed to close the meeting.

*Clyde Nevins*



**Our Speaker, Ms. Beth Roberts and Sutton**



**Guests Iesha Watts, Smar Misra, and Janity Strong**

## Optimistic Quote of the Week

**“Dogs are our link to paradise. They don't know evil or jealousy or discontent. To sit with a dog on a hillside on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing was not boring--it was peace.”**

*~ Milan Kundera*

## CALENDAR

9/5 Tuesday 4:00 pm 1st Commercial Bank – Whitesburg Dr.

**Board Meeting**

9/7 Thursday 6:00 pm Blue Plate Cafe

**TBD - TBD**

9/21 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center

**Business Meeting - Food – (Gay Pepper)**

9/28 Thursday 6:30 pm TBD

**Officer Installation and 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

10/3 Tuesday 4:00 pm 1st Commercial Bank – Whitesburg Dr.

**Board Meeting**

10/5 Thursday 6:00 pm Blue Plate Cafe

**TBD - TBD**

10/19 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center

**Business Meeting - Food – (TBD)**

10/26 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center

**TBD - TBD**

**Website: [hsvoptimists.org](http://hsvoptimists.org)**

## THE OPTIMIST CREED

Promise Yourself -

**T**o be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

**T**o talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.

**T**o make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

**T**o look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true

**T**o think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best.

**T**o be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

**T**o forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

**T**o wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

**T**o give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

**T**o be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

Optimist International



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PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

**TO:**