



## **PRESIDENT**

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## **SECRETARY TREASURER**

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**Club meets**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays**

**At 11:45 am**

**Check Website for**

**location**

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

# Opti - Topics

## **Opening**

After winter storms caused cancellation of two consecutive meetings, the weather on this Thursday was balmy and fortunately scheduled between rain storms. We met at the 88 Buffet today, and the selection of food items was overwhelming and far too tempting. The meeting was scheduled to start at 11:30, but with the University Dr. traffic and remote parking, it was 12:00 noon before the last of the 18 Optimists straggled in.

We had one guest today: a prospective member, Fred Lorenz, guest of Richie Myers. Fred works with Richie, and Richie said Fred was the most enthusiastic guy in their group. He had even volunteered to go to Alaska last month. We were also happy have Ralph Canear back with us, and it was good to see Bill Peters after a being absent from our meetings for a while.

President Al Adams, asked Rev. Jim Berry to open the meeting in prayer, and Al led the Club in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance despite having no flag.

## **Announcements**



President Al Adams thanked Tom Casteel for pulling together our table display at the **Kite Festival** last Saturday. Tom said the Club gave away about 500 of our balsa wood gliders during the festival. We had the opportunity to talk Optimism to a dozen or so adults during the day, and several expressed interest in visiting with us at a Club meeting.

**Our business meeting  
is held on the 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Thursday of the  
month at the Optimist  
Recreation Center on  
Oakwood Avenue**

## **DIRECTORS**

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1 YEAR

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## **NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

**Clyde Nevins**

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Tom said he had a bunch of photos taken at the festival and would be sharing those with the Club soon.



Business Meeting.

## **Program**



Al Adams introduced our speaker for today, Mr. Jerry Mitchell. Jerry is President/CEO of the ASBCC. He is also an adjunct professor at Alabama A & M and participates in a talk show periodically on WEUP. He is on the Board of Directors of the National Black Chambers of Commerce. He was recently named as one of the 17 most influential citizens in Huntsville.

Mr. Mitchell opened his talk by complementing our Club on the many projects we sponsor for the youth in our community and county. He said he is the father of 3 sons and knows the value of programs that bring out the best in youth.

The mission statement of the ASBCC is: *The ASBCC is committed to advancing the economic, intellectual, and social conditions of its affiliates and members and the communities that they serve throughout Alabama.* In short, Mr. Mitchell said that means “We are all about helping Black-owned businesses to start and to grow.” In Alabama there are four Black Chambers of Commerce: Greater Birmingham, North Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and Southeast Alabama (headquartered in Dothan). Our own Al Adams is the Director of the North Alabama Chamber.

Mr. Mitchell said there was some good news about Black firms in Alabama. Between 2005 and 2010, Black firms in Alabama had a 90% increase, the fourth highest in the nation. The bad news, however, was that the average gross revenues of Black firms in Alabama during this same period decreased 34% while the national average increased 37.5%.

Mr. Mitchell listed the current problems of Black businesses in Alabama as:

1. Limited access to capital and credit.
2. Primarily in slow growth industries.
3. Inability to obtain contracts and historic underutilization of Black Businesses on state and local contracts.
4. Limited access to information and tools to grow their business.
5. No advocacy for Black business community statewide.

Mr. Mitchell said the ASBCC does surveys in cities and communities within cities to determine if there were areas suitable for new businesses. As an example, he said the area near Alabama A & M and Drake State Technical College appear to be excellent locations for a restaurant or dry cleaners as there are none in that area of Huntsville.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there were questions he could address.

- Q.** Jim Berry asked: What is the relation of the Black Chambers of Commerce to the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce (for example)?
- A.** The Chambers are not in competition; rather they go about their missions in different ways, and in general address a different (smaller in capital) clientele. There are Black businesses in the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce.
- Q.** Clyde Nevins asked: Is there any data on the types of businesses owned by Blacks in Alabama?
- A.** Yes, that data is available, but Mr. Mitchell said he didn't have the specifics at hand. As he remembered it, the predominant businesses were personal services like tax preparation and real estate. Cooking barbeque and lawn mowing are popular ("Every Black person thinks he can cook outstanding barbeque"). Retail businesses came in at third place.

**Q.** Bill Peters asked: Does the ASBCC work with the Small Business Association?

**A.** Yes, but in general the SBA support seems to favor larger businesses run by well dressed and articulate owners. In his opinion, people at the SBA don't relate well with a Black entrepreneur trying to start a very small business.

## **Closing**

President Al Adams gave our speaker a tile with the Optimist Creed on it, and asked him to draw for the attendance prize. Vastell Williams won on the first drawing.

Dr. Carl Winkler led us in the reciting the Optimist Creed to close the meeting.

*Clyde Nevins*

## **Optimistic Quote of the Week**

**"Like a tiny candle in a dark room, even just a little positivity can cancel out a whole lot of negativity."**

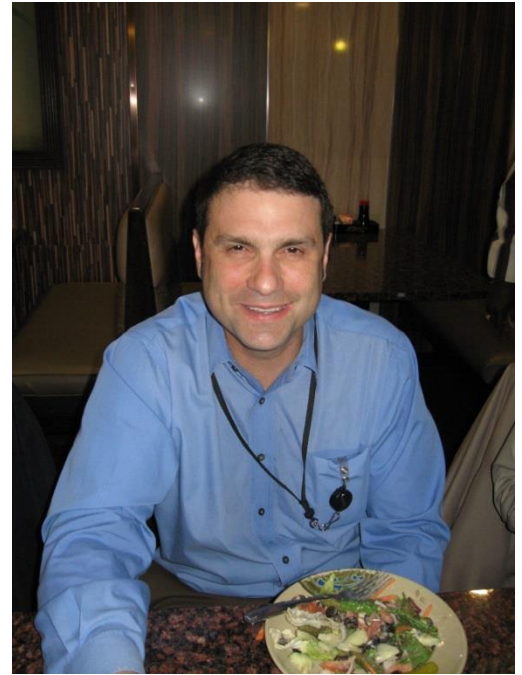
*~ Eleanor Brownn with 2 N's*



**Our Meeting Room at 88 Buffet**



**Our Speaker, Mr. Jerry Mitchell**



**Fred Lurenz, guest of  
Richie Myers**

## **CALENDAR**

- 3/19 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center  
**Business Meeting - Food – (Alfred Adams)**
- 3/26 Thursday 11:45 am TBD  
**Mr. Carlton Wright – Director of Bands, Alabama A&M**
- 4/2 Thursday 11:45 am TBD  
**TBD – Alberto Duarte**
- 4/6 Tuesday 4:00 pm 1st Commercial Bank  
**Board Meeting**
- 4/9 Thursday 11:45 am TBD  
**TBD – Alberto Duarte**
- 4/16 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center  
**Business Meeting - Food – (Alberto Duarte)**
- 4/23 Thursday 11:45 am TBD  
**TBD – Alberto Duarte**

## 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



**Huntsville Optimist Club**  
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PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

**TO:**