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## Optimist creed in action for 50 years

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by bob allen

What's most vivid for longtime members of the Timonium Optimist Club are their memories.

Memories of 50 years of lending a helping hand through a variety of worthy causes.



Dick Price, left, and Jim Yates were two of the founding members of the Timonium Optimist Club. They are still members, along with their wives, Mickey Price, left, and Missy Yates.

"The thing that we all have in common is feeling the swellness of being able to give something back to the community," said Dick Price, a past president of the club who has been a member since it was chartered in 1957.

"You only have to go to Shop With a Cop one time to understand that," agreed Price's sister, Missy Yates, referring to an annual Optimist-funded holiday event in which county police officers take at-risk children on a pre-Christmas shopping spree.

"It's overwhelming," said Yates, also a past president of the Timonium club.

"I've been to Shop With a Cop many times, and I don't think there is one time I haven't cried," said Yates, who lives in Hunt Valley with her husband, Jim, who is also a former president and a charter member. "The kids are all so happy."

Shop With a Cop is one of many Optimist-led philanthropic programs that have benefited the community during the past half century.

Last year, the Timonium Optimists raised about \$10,000 that was used to take 100 children from Police Athletic League centers across the county on a holiday shopping excursion to the Hunt Valley Towne Centre. The children are

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chauffeured to the mall in police cars and are also treated to lunch at the Hunt Valley Outback steak house.

"Bringing out the best in kids is a big part of our mission," said James Righter, a Monkton resident who also is a past president

"And the truth is, we all get more out of all this than we put in," said Righter, whose wife, Dolores, served in 1991 and 1992 as the Timonium Optimist Club's first female president. Dolores has been a member since 1988, a year after women were granted full membership for the first time.

Shop With a Cop is just one way the Optimists have won young hearts and minds. They also sponsor scholarships programs, annual student oratorical and essay contests and youth sports teams. Every holiday season, they donate food and gifts to those on the economic fringes through their Adopt-A-Family program.

They also raise money for childhood cancer research and treatment, host bingo games at senior centers and run a volunteer program called Senior Cyber Net that teaches home-bound seniors how to navigate the Internet.

Funds for all these good deeds are raised a number of ways. Some of the biggest fundraisers include annual bull roasts and crab feasts. The club also raffles two Baltimore Ravens season tickets every year.

Recently, the club held an aluminum recycling drive. Proceeds from the sale of more than 10,000 pounds of cans went to a local childhood cancer center.

Jim Yates is quick to admit he had a fine old time squashing cans by running over them with a tractor.

"We filled up Mr. Price's pickup truck with squished cans till it was overflowing," said Yates, referring to his brother-in-law Dick Price.

Price, a farmer and past president of Sparks Bank, is a charter member of the club. He and his wife, Mickey, have both served as president. Every year, the Prices also host an annual farm day for 80 children from the county's nine PAL Centers on their 300-plus-acre farm. Farm day includes a picnic, games and hay rides.

The Prices are an Optimist family in every sense of the word. Mickey Price, a retired schoolteacher, said, "I've always considered the Optimists my second religion."

Dick Price's big family farm is where he and his sister Missy grew up. He said he knew he wanted to be an Optimist even when he was a small boy.

His father, the late T. Howard Price, joined the Baltimore Optimist Club in 1928 and was instrumental in chartering the Timonium club in 1957. He recruited most of the first 27 original members, with a minimum of 25 required to launch a new club.

And Jim Yates says, only partly in jest, that the late Mr. Price wouldn't let him and Missy get married until he joined the Optimists.

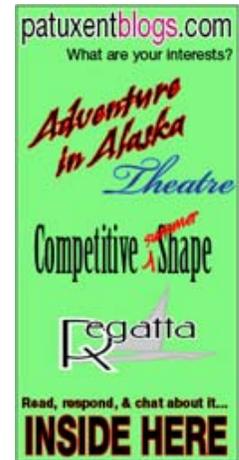
Jim Yates, like just about every dedicated Optimist, can recite the club's creed at the drop of a hat. It's too long to print in its entirety, but it centers on being honest, hopeful, law-abiding and "giving of one's self in service to others."

Yates says there is not a day of his life when he hasn't tried to live up to the mission statement.

"Even if you only live up to one line of the creed every day, you'll still be a better person," he said.

E-mail Bob Allen at [ballen@patuxent.com](mailto:ballen@patuxent.com)

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