

Hello Greater Jacksonville Optimists,

Thank you to all of you who participated in making the 35th Annual Independence Day Celebration a success! It was a real team effort guided by Carol Porcher, our Independence Day Committee Chair.

The kids, pets, and their families went all out in looking patriotic in the Bike and Pet Parade. It was beautiful. The Jacksonville Volunteer Fire Department provided two fire trucks for the parade and Phil Mearig drove his antique car with Optimists Oscar Schapiro & Bob Rigger riding with him. Optimist Mary Lu Hartley and her team of registration assistants registered the kids and pets and a group of four non-Optimist members handled the judging--a very difficult job. Optimist Fred Figlewski and Kevin Alban provided the sound system and music. Optimist Sue Gilmore made sure that we had plenty of water for the pets. GJOC President Barbara Crain along with members Gail Calleri & Bill Litsinger carried the Optimist banner leading the parade followed by Optimist Fran Betty carrying the Flag. All of the other Optimists present assisted along the parade route making sure that everyone was safe. The kids really enjoyed receiving the goodie bags we provided and the Be our Guest Coupons for desserts/fires from McDonalds. The winning pets received treats and gift certificates from the Feed Bag. Optimist photographer Ann Lane took some great pictures and had them on display during the evening activities.

During the afternoon, a team of GJOC Optimists roped off the field in preparation for the fireworks, set up the field for the closest to the pin golf contest, met the crew from Baltimore County who brought in the stage, and prepared the games area.

The evening celebration was also super. The people of the Greater Jacksonville area showed up in large numbers and really enjoyed the celebration--music by The Objections; kids games & entertainment including Apple John Phd Fun & the Carroll Manor Dance Performance Company; closest to the pin golf contest; Brooks-Huff's NASCAR; golf ball drop for the Childhood Cancer Campaign; food & beverages provided by the vendors; the patriotic activities with the Cub Scouts of Pack 444 of Chestnut Grove Church leading the Pledge of Allegiance and Jacksonville resident Paul Malstrom singing the National Anthem; and of course a super fireworks show provided by Fireworks Productions, Inc. People all over the Jacksonville area also had family and neighborhood parties to watch the fireworks.

To show their appreciation and support of the celebration, the audience at the Jacksonville fields donated \$2,752 in the buckets which may be a record.

The 7th Annual Golf Ball Drop raised \$1,030 to benefit the Optimist Childhood Cancer Campaign. Bill Morales of Alpine Tree Experts provided the crane and assisted with the ball drop. We had a hole in one with ball # 38 going into the cup. Adam Drescher III of Jarrettsville was the sponsor of ball # 38 and receives the \$500 prize. Congratulations to Adam and thank you to everyone who supported the drop.

Optimist Gail Calleri and her team of Optimist volunteers sold lots of raffle tickets in front of Safeway and Rite Aid on the past four weekends and we drew the winning ticket before the fireworks. The winning ticket was # 2089 which was purchased by Gina Woodard of Baldwin. Gina wins the \$500 prize. Congratulations to Gina and thanks to all Optimists who assisted with the ticket sale and to everyone who purchased tickets.

Thank you to Optimist Fred Calleri who worked very hard on soliciting business donations and giving local businesses and professionals the opportunity to support the celebration. We had several new sponsors this year.

Then there was Sunday morning, the day after. On Sunday morning you get to see the fireworks with a much different perspective--exploded shells, paper, fuses, etc. all over the field. Part of our agreement to use the fields includes putting the fields back in same condition they were before the fireworks so that means a lot of hot cleanup work. All debris has to be cleaned up and the field checked for any unexploded shells. Mike Borowitz, Barbara Crain, Adam Drescher, Carol & Steve Porcher, & Dennis Lane did the clean up. During the cleanup we found two unexploded shells and then when Ann Lane came with a bucket of water in which to put the shells, she found one more unexploded shell. We're confident that we left the area clean and safe for use by the teams that play there.

Thank you to the Baltimore County Public Schools, the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks, the Baltimore County Police Department, the Fire Marshall, and the Jacksonville Volunteer Fire Department for their assistance with the event.

We can all be proud of what we did to provide a wonderful Independence Day Celebration for the Community--definitely an example of the Greater Jacksonville Optimists in Action!

Have a GRREEAATT and Optimistic Week!

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Optimist International Mission Statement--By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in kids.