

CalOmer Speaks

The California Odyssey of the Mind Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

October 2006

Director's Corner

Welcome to the inaugural edition of CalOmer Speaks, the newsletter for California Odyssey of the Mind. Please feel free to forward it or copy and distribute it to anyone you think might find it of interest; its intent is to provide information to all California Omers about state-wide and national Odyssey news, as well as provide a bit of an insight into the personal side of the Odyssey experience.

Whether we recognize it or not, we are one great big family that gets together each year at our tournaments, celebrating the culmination of our children's journey. Like most big family get-togethers, eventually a pot luck format is needed: everyone has to contribute something, or we'll all feel that the celebration came up short.

California memberships in OotM are growing at a quickening pace. The tournaments are getting bigger, requiring more judges, more scorekeepers, more runners to keep things moving, and more volunteers to monitor doors, assist at the tables, and do the myriad of small tasks that don't get done without them.

[Continued on page 6](#)



A QUICK GUIDE TO THE TRAIL AHEAD.

- Read the Program Guide, cover to cover
 - Read it again: it is updated every year
 - Divisions are now based only on grade
 - There have also been significant changes under "Costs of Materials"
- The 2007 state tournament will be held March 31 at Mt. Whitney HS in Visalia.
- The CalOmer website (www.calomer.org) is being redesigned. We apologize for any inconvenience over the next couple of weeks. The results will be worth it.
- Check the clarifications page regularly www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications/
- With a paid membership, the full versions of the 2007 problems are available online www.odysseyofthemind.com/members/

California in Iowa...

Last Spring's World Tournament

In Southern California, we are constantly reminded that Disneyland is the happiest place on earth. But over the Memorial Day weekend last spring, about 5,000 kids gathered in Iowa, and I doubt if any of them would have agreed.

[Continued on page 3](#)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1	Director's Corner
1	California in Iowa...with Henry's Help
2	Around the State: Regional News
4	International News: Host a team, attend Eurofest
5	Now What !!? Being a parent on a team
5	Coaching: Training and the Program Guide
7	WorldViews: Buddy Teams, My First Time

...with Henry's help

For the second time in as many years, a generous donation from Wal-Mart provided free shipping to our World Tournament teams. Henry, the thoughtful big rig driver who "loves kids", and is himself a grandpa, made three stops across California, filling his 53' trailer with what had to be the oddest assortment of boxes and crates that any carrier has ever seen. Thirty-two of our thirty-three qualifying teams took advantage of this opportunity, and all the sets and props arrived in Ames undamaged and on time.

Thanks to Wal-Mart for its continued support, and for providing this spontaneous solution to a truly long term problem.

Around the State:

[Regional News, Contacts, and Dates to Remember](#)

Capital Gold

Counties included in the Capital Gold Region are Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Stanislaus, and Yolo.

Capital Gold calendar dates:

- Coach's trainings:
 - Beginning coaches: Saturday, Oct. 14 and Wednesday, Nov. 15
 - Advanced: Wednesday, Oct. 18 and Saturday, Nov. 18 (with Michelle Upman)
- Regional Tournament Feb. 24, 2007 at Natomas High School.

Last year, the Capital Gold Region had 65 teams register for the tournament, the second highest of any region; only our good friends and competitors in the San Francisco Bay region registered more teams.

Paula Privitt has passed on the Regional Director role to Richard Price (RichardP@winfirst.com), who hopes she will provide guidance so he doesn't mess things up too much.

Oh yea, and by the way, Capital Gold Region kids **ROCK!**

Northstate/Shasta

The Northstate/Shasta Region covers the Shasta, Trinity, Tehama, Siskiyou, Lassen, Plumas, Modoc, Glenn, Butte, Yuba and Colusa counties....the whole North State. We hold four coaches training days, three in Redding and one in Weed and can arrange long distance training for your county.

Northstate Calendar dates (For more information contact Ramona 530- 223-9378, or at rfletcher@rsdnmp.org.)

- Coaches Training: Oct. 14, Oct. 28, Nov. 4, Dec. 9.
- Spont Day: Nov. 18.
- Regional Tournament: Feb.24, 2007

This past year, Chad Holste was the first recipient of the Northstate Odyssey Scholarship. He is currently studying Engineering at DeVry University. Chad was a member of an outstanding team that won many Spirit of Omer and Ranatra awards over the years. This year he participated as a Judge. We are very proud that Chad was also awarded

a COU Scholarship. Chad gives a lot of credit for his successes to his Odyssey Experience.

Redwood

Redwood Region encompasses seven counties from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Oregon border on the coastal side. It includes Marin, Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Humboldt and Del Norte counties. Like its topography Redwood is a diverse, and many faceted region. For the first time in a dozen years, our regional tournament will be held in February due to a scheduling conflict at the tournament site. Please mark your calendars for Saturday, February 10th at Maria Carrillo High School in Santa Rosa.

Redwood Region could use some volunteer help....including (but not limited to) a Spontaneous Training coordinator and a Volunteer coordinator. The work is fun, it's easy and the pay is unbelievable. E-mail our Regional Director, Tracy Sawyer, for details ootmredwood@yahoo.com, or call her (707) 823-5478 @home, (707) 326-6634 on her cell

Regional dates:

- Tournament set up: Fri, Feb. 9, 2007
- Tournament: Saturday, Feb. 10, 2007 @ Maria Carrillo High School, 6975 Montecito Blvd., Santa Rosa, CA 95409
- Coaches' Training: Saturday, November 18, 2006 (9 - Noon: location TBD)
- Judges' Training: Saturday, January 27, 2007 (9 – Noon, then lunch, then problem specific break-out sessions until 2PM: location TBD)

Los Angeles Basin

LA Odyssey would like to welcome Chad Parker to its regional board.

The LA Basin region is Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, and Santa Barbara Counties. Last year's participation more than doubled, from 23 to 59 teams.

Our regional dates this year:

- "Odyssey of the Mind 101-Why This Program Works" is an intro to the OotM experience, held on Saturday, September 16, from 9:30 am to Noon at the Chandler School.
- Coaches training on September 30th (Time and location TBD)

[Continued on page 3](#)

- Judges training on February 17th (Time and location TBD)
- Tournament on March 3rd (tentatively scheduled for Marshall High School in Pasadena)

Visit our website www.LAOdysey.org/ or join www.groups.yahoo.com/group/la_odyssey/
For more information and any questions, contact Bob Anderson la_odyssey@earthlink.net or on his cell 626-201-7473.

San Francisco Bay

This region is San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Benito, and Monterey counties
Regional tournament: March 3, 2007
For more information, please contact Janis Dewar at jdewar94507@yahoo.com, or visit our website www.sfbayodyseyofthemind.org/

Inland Empire

Inland Empire covers San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego and Imperial counties.
We would like to welcome Jan Johnson to the Inland Empire Board, as well as our new treasurer, Noelle Carroll

- Coaches trainings: Oct. 14, Nov.4, Nov.18 and possibly Dec. 9
- Judges training Feb. 11
- Regional Tournament: March 3, 2007 at Palm Springs High School

South/Central Valley

South/Central Valley covers Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Kern, Mariposa, Merced, Madera, Mono, Inyo and San Luis Obispo counties.
This year we are going to try something new for Spontaneous Day. We are asking each team to bring one volunteer per team in addition to the team's coach. The coach will go to an advanced coaches training while the teams are working on the spontaneous problems. As in the past, all teams from any region are welcome to attend.

- Coaches Training: Oct. 21 in Hanford
- Spontaneous Day: TBD (the beginning of December)
- Regional tournament: Feb.17 at Hanford High School

For more information, please contact Mark Lopes at southvalleyom@hotmail.com



I know seven who didn't, anyway, and for a variety of reasons. Topping the list perhaps was the fact that this was their second trip to the World Tournament, and their parents were more relaxed and willing to "let it happen"...so the kids on my team were allowed to shape their own experience without a lot of "outside assistance".

Much of the credit can be given to Ames: not only do the people there love Odyssey of the Mind; it's in Iowa, which is not thirty minutes from anything. There was no educational adventure nearby, so most of the parents thought they'd be bored, I guess, and elected not to come.

In fairness to them, that was their kids' initial reaction as well...."what's there to do in Iowa!?" One parent suggested that we go sit in a corn field one night and listen to it grow. (I still don't know if he was serious or not).

So, those are the "big" reasons: but Odyssey of the Mind is judged on the details, too, and there were a number of "little things" that made this tournament truly memorable for this team.

Two highlights:

- The creativity festival: the team loved it, especially their time volunteering at the award winning California booth. The "task" demanded teamwork, patience, and a certain amount of finesse. While we were there, many groups showed up shorthanded, so my team helped out, driving the "spirit of the problem" in a new (and unintended) direction. The kids stayed for hours, well past their assigned time.



[continued on page 7](#)

International News

Europe in California, California in Europe

We are seeking teams who want to make a difference and learn more about another country than they can possibly learn in school. CA is opening a door for an ultimate opportunity for our teams to host international teams AND attend the European Festival in Germany this year. Teams who host or have hosted an international team during World Finals or the CA State Tournament will be the first to be considered to attend the European Festival. A decision will be made by Nov 1st on a team to attend the Euro Fest in late April, 2007, to allow them time to raise funds for this once in a lifetime experience. Contact Paula Privitt paula@privitt.com for details if you are interested in participating in ANY international exchange.



This year, the CA State tournament hosted an international team from Potsdam, Germany, in what we hope will be a yearly international exchange program. The division II team stayed in El Dorado Hills and Folsom with state board staff for over two weeks, spending a few days up in Grass Valley with the Magnolia and Bear River school teams. They also had a "buddy" team from Sebastopol during the tournament. Thank you to everyone who made this possible! It was an

unbelievable experience for both the German visitors AND our CA hosting families. We would like to make this a yearly event and are seeking a team who would like volunteer to host a team this year for our state tournament.

2006 also brought us our FIRST Euro Fest experience. CA sent two teams to represent us at the European Festival which was held in Wroclaw, Poland. Our first teams were selected by their incredible support and participation in the Odyssey of the Mind program and were from Magnolia and Bear Rivers Schools in Grass Valley.

There isn't enough space here to tell you how incredible this trip was for the teams, their families, and school representatives. Magnolia Intermediate School placed 1st in the combined problem Level I & II, paired with a team from Poland and the Czech Republic, and Bear River High School received an Omer Award, an Outstanding Creativity award for Costume/Set for their Ancient Egypt solution and placed 3rd in the combined problem for level III & IV teamed with a high school team from Poland and a University team from Russia.



Everyone please consider this life changing opportunity to make international friends. Contact Paula Privitt today if you are interested in participation in hosting, being a buddy team or attending the Euro Festival in 2007. You do not have to "win" to attend the Euro Festival: in fact, a decision will be made well in advance of any presentations. Don't let this opportunity pass you by; part of the Odyssey experience is "risk taking". Put away all those excuses and make this the BEST year ever for your Odyssey team. Get involved in the international experience!!!

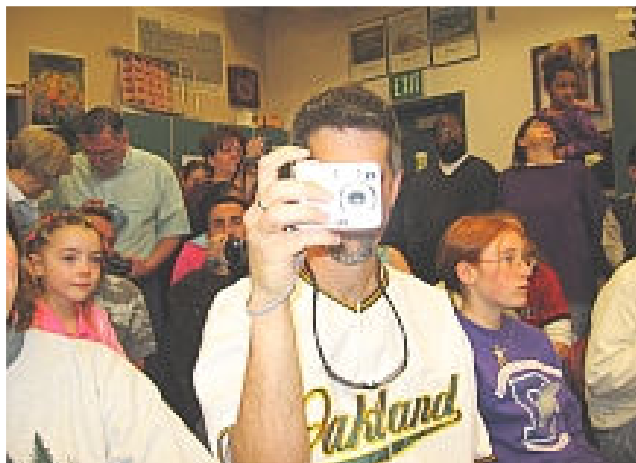
By Paula Privitt: contact her about this opportunity at paula@privitt.com



Now What ??!

Being a parent on a team *by Richard Price*

I have had the privilege of watching both my daughters for the last 4 years in Odyssey of the Mind competitions. I would coach a team for one daughter, and simply sit back and watch the other daughter as her team progressed. The parental (non-coach) experience is really a treat, because, let's face it, there is always some level of frustration being a coach of *anything*, be it soccer or chess club or anything else.



Parents can help out at the tournaments; still see their child's team perform.....and even be kids themselves!!

I am, by nature, an involved and active parent. What I get a real kick out of is seeing my kids becoming involved and active in a fun, creative adventure. And it really is an adventure, because at the start of the year they don't know where they will end up! My daughters can't wait to tell me (in sworn secrecy, of course, so the evil sister can't steal their awesome ideas) about the new invention, new dialogue, and new ideas that they just added to their solution. And they love learning how to work with saws and hammers and to make things from scraps. They like shopping at the thrift stores and yard sales. The kids really become "inventors", whether it is of costumes, devices, or worlds. (Thomas Jefferson said "*To invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk.*") As they progress thru the weeks, scenery blossoms and becomes legible,

Coaching

Training and the Program Guide

When our regional board met last spring, both the number and the size of penalties at the tournament caught our eye, irritated by the common complaint from the penalized about "things not being clear".

In general, the complaints were simply the result of coaches not understanding the rules of OotM. All but one of the coaches from penalized teams acknowledged that they "hadn't really looked at the Program Guide" since it was reviewed at their training. Some weren't even aware it was in their membership packet, and none of them had looked at the national site for clarifications or resources.

This got me to thinking about whether coaches "training" should be called something else. I know I didn't feel "trained" after mine, at least not in the sense being "prepared" to coach. I just felt eager to get started. My trainer was a veteran coach who sat us all down and started with "this is unlike anything you've ever done before: it'll be fun, frustrating, chaotic, and, if your team stays together (and they will, if you're able to let go and become a coach), immensely rewarding."

Then she opened the Program Guide and went through it, page by page. It's not a complex document, but it's very complete. By the time she was done, I was a little over-whelmed by the resources, strategies, and expectations of being a coach. But I also had a good understanding of the rules that governed Odyssey of the Mind. Together, these two aspects of the Program Guide were like runway lights: markers to help me land a team of kids at the tournament.

OotM coaches are trained on the job, learning what works and what doesn't as much by the personality of their team as anything. All we can do is point coaches in the right direction. So maybe "Coaching Tools" is a better name for our trainings: we could emphasize the point by handing out squid-like flashlights with seven bulbs that say something like "Devour the Program Guide".

[continued on Page 6](#)

Odyssey of the Mind is essentially a grass roots organization. It's important to remember this: at every level, our existence depends on volunteers, and our appreciation for those who contribute their time and energy is nearly impossible to adequately acknowledge. Still, there remain opportunities for those willing to participate, particularly in the areas of judging and pre-tournament preparation. These are areas where parents, friend, relatives, and older siblings CAN offer assistance, helping both their teams to meet the tournament registration requirements for volunteers, and the program to provide well organized and rewarding tournament experiences.

Addressing this need is an ongoing topic at both state and regional board meetings, and important to the future of OotM in California. But if you're an avid fan of this program, with a flair for design or writing, there are other ways to get involved, too, and help round out the Odyssey experience for everyone. Think of the following opportunities as spontaneous problems, requiring a burst of input and creativity. Yours are encouraged, and I invite you to contact me (southvalleyom@hotmail.com) with any ideas that you have about:

- This newsletter: suggest (or submit) articles on topics that interest you.
- A theme for World: it is the custom at this tournament for each state to have a hat or a prop -something that all teams have in common. It isn't necessary that it symbolize California, nor even OotM, but it often involves light, and it must be engaging, colorful, and even quirky.
- Pin design: Pin trading is a popular pastime at World, and a growing one at State. Pins range from the elegant, to the inventive, to the outlandish. They should include state identification (CA, at least), Odyssey of the Mind (or OotM), and the year. Beyond that, the only requirement is common sense. For a look at past pins, visit Barbara Parris' amazing collection <http://western.ncom.org/PinCollection/PinCollection.htm>

Whatever your level of participation in Odyssey of the Mind, we welcome you to another year!!



convincing, and sometimes wild. Scripts become polished, and I find myself listening and watching impromptu practices both around the house and on the schoolyard.

As a parent, I contributed only a little time and effort. Getting my daughter to and from meetings, helping shuttle kids to shopping sprees and such, assisting the coach on occasion when the team needed to "divide and conquer" tasks such as scenery construction vs. script writing or costume making. I also enjoyed being an occasional "guest judge" for their spontaneous practices, and constructive critique for their long term solution practices.

In summary, the extent of my parental duties was having fun lending a helping hand to the kids and coaches.

It was particularly fun to watch them practice spontaneous problems. They go from "goofy" to "outrageous", often ending in a giggle-fest, but all the while they are competing with each other to have a better response, a taller structure, a better contraption that they make from bits and pieces of household stuff.

The best, though, is competition day. The kids are excited and nervous, yet almost always rise to the occasion. The amount of energy, exuberance, and sheer excitement at the competition is enough to wipe out any ideas one might have about "kids these days..." Let me tell you, there are a whole bunch of really cool little kids that will be running the county someday.

I know, I've been watching.



Submit/suggest an article for the next edition!!
Comment on what you've read: we love feedback!

Contact Bob Anderson at
la_odyssey@earthlink.net with yours.

Buddy Teams

By Yasi Emamian (2006 Team: Chandler School, Division I, Tech Transfer; 2007 Team: Chandler School, Division II, TBD)

Last year was my first year in Odyssey of the Mind. It was amazing! We never thought we'd make it past regionals, but we made it to World.

This is where we met our Polish buddy team. We first met them in the afternoon on the second day of our stay. At first, I was upset because we couldn't communicate and they were a team of all boys! That, with our team, made a total of 11 boys and 2 girls. After playing a quick round of Frisbee with them, I realized that we would be fine. We did a little bit of pin trading then all of us headed back to our rooms to get ready for the opening ceremonies. Once we were all ready, we went out into the hall to exchange gifts. We gave them LA Dodger shirts and they gave us Polish books and pins. All of us loved each other's gifts. We had a great time at the opening ceremonies and afterwards headed straight to our rooms to get some rest.

The next day we met with our buddy team for dinner. After we were finished, we had an ice cream slurping contest. It was hilarious! We had a lot of fun and it ended up being our personal joke for the rest of the week (even though we weren't speaking the same language). We did a lot of pin trading together. We helped each other get the pins we all wanted until there was nothing left to get. We went to each other's long term performances and waved signs saying things like, "Go Buddy Team!" or "Poland is Awesome!" The signs they made to take to our performance were in English and the ones we made for them were in Polish. We all really appreciated the effort the other team put into the signs.

When the week was over, all our goodbyes were said and we were all sad that we wouldn't get to see each other again. WE all became good friends, even if we could never understand what everybody was saying. Our coaches kept in touch though, and hopefully we'll all see each other again at the 2007 World Finals!



[*California in Iowa, continued from page 6*](#)

- The dumpster was underneath a second floor balcony. Most of the other teams in the prop room took a break to watch the voyage of the 12' long bamboo "reed" boat over the railing to its final resting place and certain destructionwhich proved to be the most challenging spontaneous problem of the year.



My First Time

By Alyssa Carroll, Geometry Structure, Div I, Inland Empire



Odyssey of the Mind is the most wonderful and life changing experience I've ever done in my entire life! It is also the hardest to explain. For someone to really understand the meaning of this program they have to be there for the hard work. They have to see for themselves the bonds that are made within the teams and the struggles that they overcome. A person has to feel the joy when a team gets called down to move on to the next stage. I got to feel that overwhelming happiness twice. And when my team and I got to World Competition... We couldn't have been more ecstatic if we'd won a million dollars! During those six days at World we were surrounded by people who love Odyssey as much as us. I can't wait for the next riveting year!