

District 5190

Achievement Beyond Obstacles (ABO)

Elements of Success

Achievement Beyond Obstacles (ABO) was started by Reno South Rotary Club in 1996 and has evolved significantly since that time. Four Area 8 clubs now co-sponsor the program and it now has several components. The Area 8 Team continues to refine ABO each year. Area 8 does have large numbers of resources and a history building this program, so the current configuration is not necessarily how other Rotary Clubs/Areas might want to start an ABO program.

This document explains various aspects of Area 8 ABO as separate components that are part of a continuum. A Rotary Club/Area can choose to build a program that fits their clubs and community. This document also contains components the Sebastopol Rotary Club uses in their program, "Overcoming Obstacles Awards" (OOA), and some ideas that have been tried by the national Horatio Alger Association. Both sponsor scholarships for students with a similar demographic to ABO students.

The remainder of this document provides components currently in use, divided into categories. Not all categories need to be included in a program. Most programs start small and add components as they learn what works for them.

Criteria for Selection

- High school senior, graduating this year, having overcome some major life challenges who can succeed at the "next level." This includes trade school, university, community college and apprenticeships. (Area 8 and Sebastopol RC)
- A "growth mindset": an outlook that focuses on the growth of skills and abilities as opposed to a "fixed mindset" that believes things cannot be changed. In addition, applications are graded based on 40% adversity overcome, 40% financial need, 10% community service and 10% display integrity and commitment to complete a college degree. (Horatio Alger)

Students Selection Process

- Educate school staff, especially counselors, about the ABO program and have them select candidates that fit your criteria. (Area 8)
- Work with school counselors to educate them about OOA and have the counselors solicit applications from all students that fit the criteria. A committee then reviews the applications and selects 6 students. (Sebastopol RC)
- Reach out directly to students that fit this demographic via email, social media, scholarship listing websites and other organizations in your community (examples being Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, etc). Applications are reviewed by individuals to make the final selections. (Horatio Alger)

Leadership Training (personal leadership)

- Hire professional staff to lead a weekend leadership program to help students build self-confidence, better learn about themselves and make better decisions. (Area 8)
- Identify successful members of your community who have overcome major life challenges in their students and have them spend a few hours with the students to let them see they can also succeed. (Sebastopol RC)

Speeches

- Students present to Rotary Club(s) in a short speech (3 to 5 minutes) what their challenge was, how they overcame it and where they are going now. (Area 8 and Sebastopol RC)

Financial Training

- Workshop on how to manage the cost of attending post high school education, budgeting scholarship information, etc. It is led by a Rotarian or a Financial Aid professional and includes students and prior participants contributing. (Area 8)

College Applications and FAFSA

- Workshop in a computer lab with Financial Aid professionals and Rotarians helping students to complete relevant forms. Parents or guardians are encouraged to attend with appropriate documentation on financial status. Providing day care service for younger siblings and/or translation services is helpful. (Area 8)

First Year Scholarships

- Students are selected for interviews based on their speeches, participation in the program activities and information provided on their counselor's nomination form. Based on the interviews (which includes additional requested information) and need, scholarships are awarded. (Area 8)
- If your club is judging the speeches for scholarships or other activities, create a template for scoring and procedures for evaluating ahead of time
- To select the scholarship recipients, a committee reviews their application and \$1000 is granted to all that are selected. One student is given an additional \$1000 based on their Rotary Club Speech. (Sebastopol RC)
- Students are awarded a scholarship based on an application that includes a student-completed form, a third-party supporting letter (not counselor), evidence of financial need, and a transcript. These scholarships are for 4 years and continue if student maintains acceptable GPA and stays in school. (Horatio Alger)
- Ask college Financial Aid Departments if they will match the at least ABO Scholarship. (Horatio Alger)

Future Years Scholarships

- Additional scholarships are available but require letter explaining why they are applying, budget information and current transcript. (Area 8)
- Scholarships are awarded for a full 4 years. (Horatio Alger)

Mentoring

- Work with another organization (Deans Future Scholars) to have their current college students mentor awardees. (Area 8)
- Have program alumni mentor the awardees while in school and after as needed. (Horatio Alger and Area 8 starting this effort)
- Have Rotarians mentor the students with monthly meetings. While young people mentoring the awardees is very important and effective, Rotarians with all their life experiences bring a very different and important component to the awardees. (Area 8 and Sebastopol RC)

Awards Event

- Having an event to celebrate can be an important component helping students to recognize the significance of their achievements. Students invite a guest (paid for by the Rotary Club) to attend. It also gives an opportunity to fund raise. (Area 8)
- If there are just 1-2 scholarships or recognitions this can be accomplished at a regular Rotary meeting.

QUESTIONS?

Information is available on the website www.abonevada.com