HOW TO START YOUR OWN
OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOX CLUB
by Evilyn Pinnow
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PART 1, SECTION 1

WHERE DOES YOUR GROUP WANT TO BE?

In Steven Covey’s book, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, he talks about thinking with the end in mind. That’s what we want you to think about in this section. What do you want this group to look like in the next 5 or even 10 years down the road? Brainstorm it, maybe even invite some friends over that want to participate, and they may have some ideas.

Establish some goals that you want to hit. Come up with a mission statement for your group, so others will be able to see clearly what you want to accomplish. Be sure to write down your mission statement and goals somewhere, so they will not be forgotten later on.

Luke 14:28 ~ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

PART 1, SECTION 2

ADVANTAGES

There are several advantages that your group will experience if you chose to follow through with this ministry.

1. Teaching leadership to kids.
   When I was president of Shoebox Club, I learned responsibility, how to speak in public, not to be afraid to express myself, and how to have a deeper walk with and trust in God.

2. Helps kids feel they are making difference.
   Kids feel important when they know they are doing this all on their own.

3. Kids will inspire their community.
   I have seen many cases of adults being inspired by a kid’s eagerness to give and their hearts for the kids the shoeboxes are going to.

Proverbs 22:6 ~ Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.
PART 1, SECTION 3

CHALLENGES

Challenges are important to know up front before you get started. But you will also find that challenges will occur within the ministry as it is growing. This is necessary for the growth and strengthening of any ministry.

1. **Finding the president of your group.**
The president of your group should have certain qualities, such as maturity, understanding of the task, willingness to help, and a love of God. They should also be willing to talk in front of groups to present this idea.

2. **Getting enough donations to start.**
You do not need to start right away with monthly meetings. When I first came up with Shoebox Club, it was in February, but we did not have our first meeting until May, when we had enough donations.

3. **Kids willing but the parents are not.**
Parents need to be a part of this process. They are needed for driving, encouragement, answering questions and supervising. Both the kids and the parents need to be willing to take on this ministry.

*John 16:33 ~ In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!*  

PART 2, SECTION 1

MAIN COMPONENT PRAYER

Once when we were in need of stuffed animals, which can be very expensive to purchase, we asked God very earnestly in prayer to help us with that need. It wasn’t even one week before we received a bag full of approximately 1000 beanie babies. Ever since then, stuffed animals have kept coming.

You can look up many stories of the power of prayer. This just goes to show how God is always at work.

God sometimes says yes, sometimes says no, and sometimes says please wait. But your prayer will always be answered. So, the first thing to always do is pray.
Pray for members, pray for donations, pray for the children that will receive the gift, and pray for God to be glorified in this work.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 ~ Pray without ceasing.

PART 2, SECTION 2

CONTACT KEY PEOPLE

If you are in a church, you need to be in contact with the leader of your children’s ministry about your idea. Your children’s ministry director will be necessary to help you promote your club, let you speak in front of the kids about your idea, and help you figure out about supplies and locations for your group. She or he will be a wealth of information for your club.

If you are in a community group, you need to be in contact with the adult leader, for the same reasons that I just stated above.

Next, you will want to write letters to friends, family and businesses about your idea and asking for their help in the form of money or donations. Below is a sample letter to a family member that you can use as a guide when you write your own letter.

Dear ________,

Hello there! I have an idea to start a club at my church to help kids around the world. I am naming my club Shoebox Club. We will be packing shoeboxes filled with toys, hygiene supplies, school supplies, arts and crafts items, and clothes. Then they will be sent around the world by Operation Christmas Child, to kids who are in very needy situations, such as war, famine and natural disasters.

But we cannot do it without you! We cannot buy all of the items necessary for packing these boxes. Please prayerfully consider sending a donation of money or any new item listed above. If you have any questions, please call me at ________.

Love,
______
Nehemiah 2:5 ~ ...and I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me.”

PART 2, SECTION 3

SPREAD THE WORD

You may know some people who run their own business or happen to have some items they would like to give away. Be in contact with them, either by writing a letter like we spoke about in the last section, or by talking with them personally. I do not think you should call them on the phone, because it is not as personal. I feel the same way about writing a letter versus an email. A letter just adds a very personal touch in a world where there is so much technology.

To make things go faster, contact some local businesses in your town. Be sure that you go to the owner/manager of that business because he/she will have a more sure answer. I also find it is better if you know someone who works in that business or even better, if you know the owner/manager. If you don’t know the leader, spend some time getting to know him/her. Not only will it help you to get initial donations and a friend, it will help you get more donations later on.

Acts 2: 44-47 ~ ... and they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
PART 2, SECTION 4

FUNDRAISING IDEAS

There may be businesses in your area that do fundraisers. These are the best ones to go to first, because they are local and know you much better. They may also be very willing to help your cause. For example, in my area, there is a place that sells pies for fundraisers.

You can also go to your local banks or grocery stores to see if they will let you have a bake sale or a lemonade stand. Then see if anyone is willing to donate items for your sale. Shoebox Club did a lemonade stand/bake sale at our local bank. Someone donated all of the lemonade and several members of our church and bank employees baked the items for the sale.

Another good way that you can raise money or donations is through a competition, especially for children. When we did our pie sale, we had gift certificates for ice cream for the winner of the most pies sold. For our local Vacation Bible School (VBS) we have a competition between boys and girls, without telling them there is even a prize to win - they enjoy the competition so much. I will go into further detail about VBS later on in this guide.

Exodus 35:21 ~ ...and they came forward—every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whose spirit was willing; they brought the offering for the Lord for the work ...

PART 2, SECTION 5

ADVERTISEMENT

This is very important for getting the word out about your club. You will want to hang up signs at your church, and go to other churches nearby or local businesses. Let your friends know to invite others to your club meetings.

Get in contact with your local newspaper to see if they would like to write a story about what your group is doing. For us, a newspaper article was all that was needed to let some businesses know about Shoebox Club and want to donate. A newspaper article will open doors to businesses you don’t even know exist!
Any event you host needs to be advertised! People need to know when your meetings are, what you are most in need of, and what type of meeting this will be. The sky is the limit on the type of meeting you want to hold. Shoebox Club held movie night themes, but you could also have a dress up theme, etc. Also, get the word out on any fundraisers you are holding, so you can earn the most money for your club.

Isaiah 6:8 ~ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

PART 3, SECTION 1

ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING

This is very important and should not be skipped! Without organization and planning your club will eventually fall apart. What I mean by organization and planning is having a budget, knowing what your club stands for, and making to do lists.

Let’s take each one of these individually. We will start with knowing what your club stands for. I highly recommend having a mission statement for your club. A mission statement broadcasts what you hope to accomplish through your club. Here is Shoebox Club’s mission statement:

Shoebox Club’s mission is to help kids to learn about God by giving shoebox gifts through Operation Christmas Child. Each shoebox is filled with toys, soap, toothbrushes, notebooks, arts and crafts supplies, clothes, and a letter or picture from each child. One shoebox could help teach a whole family about Jesus. Shoebox Club’s vision is not only to bring joy to kids in other countries and in our state, but in the end to multiply the kingdom of heaven.

Now we can talk about making a budget. Without a budget, you will not have a plan on how to use your money. Without a plan, you could spend money on items you do not really need. Here is a sample budget from Shoebox Club:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Total Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bar Soap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothbrushes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hair Things</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Combs</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brushes</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washcloths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Shirts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Shirts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crayons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colored Pencils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalk</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Modeling Clay</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Watercolors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glue Sticks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencil Sharpeners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rulers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Notebooks</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coloring Books</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stickers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cars</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacks</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jump Ropes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Basketball Hoops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffed Animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Toys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubberbands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrapping Paper</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack Food</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soda or Juice</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT:
Lastly, we will talk about to do lists. Do not get bogged down with a lot of details, since this is not complicated and should not be made to be. The biggest thing to do is pray, so that should always be at the top of your to do list. Know what you are praying for, such as items you need to be donated, children that will receive the boxes and kids that come to your meetings (be specific). Here is a basic to do list:

- Pray for money and donations
- Pray for other kids to help with the club
- Write letters to family and friends about club
- Talk to my leader about talking in front of the kids about club
- Write out a small presentation and practice it

Deuteronomy 27:8 ~ And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up.

PART 3, SECTION 2

SHARE THE LOAD

There is a point in time when everyone feels overwhelmed with what they are doing. It will probably happen in your club. It was in that time we discovered the benefits of sharing the load. Let me explain, when you share the load you ask other kids to do an even part of the work. That will take away the overwhelming feelings. For clubs I feel that it is a good idea to start a board of directors. A board is made up of a treasurer, secretary, vice president, and president. When each one of the people does their part, your club will run smoothly.

Also, be sure that you write down job descriptions for your board members, so that they don’t feel unsure of what to do. Here is an example that we used for our Board:

Board Guidelines

1. Everyone in the board must work together, and do their job. If someone in the board doesn’t do their job, it means harder work for the rest of the board. Then the board should get together, and try to find a way to help the person do their job. If he or she still doesn’t do their job, it would be a good idea that he or she steps down and a new person is elected.
2. If you feel that you want to go to a business or organization to present the Shoebox Club for donations, feel free to do that. The president doesn’t have to tell you where to present.

3. If you have an idea for Shoebox Club, go ahead and share it with the rest of the board. It doesn’t have to go with this booklet. Feel free to share any of your thoughts on Shoebox Club at board meetings.

4. At the monthly meetings, try to act like an example to the younger members. You’re probably the one the kids will try to follow.

President

1. The president goes to all the presentations unless they can’t make it (then call the Vice President).
2. The president is in charge of getting all the donations to the storage spot, and keeping it organized. Keep a list of the donations we are most in need of on a monthly basis.
3. At each shoebox meeting you will need to get there 45 minutes early to help set up.
4. The president is in charge of everything that happens at the shoebox meetings. If no one is saying the prayer you need to.
5. During the meeting you will help look through shoeboxes and inspect them.
6. You need to bring the finished shoeboxes to the storage spot.
7. You need to write out thank you letters to businesses and other people that donate regularly.
8. You need to set up board meetings on an as needed basis.
9. If you want to stop being president of Shoebox Club you need to still help as an advisor to the next president for the next 6 months.

Vice President

1. You need to be in charge of any presentations and meetings the president can’t go to. Fell free to do any other presentations with businesses and churches that you want.
2. Call the children’s ministry director right after the last Shoebox Club meeting to figure out the date for the next meeting. After that, call the church secretary to make sure that the space is available. Two weeks before the meeting, email the church secretary the information about the next meeting for the bulletin insert.
3. For the Shoebox Club meeting arrive 45 minutes early to set up.
4. Stay after the meeting to help sort through boxes, and clean up.

Secretary

1. In the beginning of each month, write out a newsletter. Get the information from the president and vice president.
2. Make sure that the bulletin board each month is updated with a new newsletter or anything from Operation Christmas Child. You can change the bulletin board theme whenever you want.
3. Write out flyers for movie nights and Shoebox Club meetings. Add these to the bulletin board and give copies to hand out to an adult.
4. Get to each Shoebox Club meeting 45 minutes early to help set up, rubber band and label the inspected shoeboxes.
5. Contact Operation Christmas Child if you are running low on any items such as stickers, balloons, and pamphlets.

**Treasurer**

1. You NEED to get your birth certificate, then go to the bank, and input your name as the main withdrawer for the Shoebox Club account.
2. Contact the president to find out how many shoeboxes will be packed at each meeting, and what is needed. With that information, write a budget (a budget might not be needed for some months).
3. Withdraw the needed amount of money from the bank and go shopping for the items needed.
4. Bring all the donations you buy to the next meeting and help sort it.
5. Collect all money from the Shoebox Club collection box and put it in the bank, on a weekly basis.
6. You also need to collect all checks, VBS money, or other donations and put them in the bank.
7. For each Shoebox Club meeting, get there 45 minutes early to help set up, rubber band and label shoeboxes.

*Galations 6:2 ~ Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

**PART 3, SECTION 3**

**WHAT A MEETING LOOKS LIKE**

Before you start any meeting, you should be sure to pray about it, so that God’s will be done. The next step is to make sure everything is set up the way you want it. Figure out how much room you have and how many tables you have when planning your room. You can even draw a floor plan of how you want your room to look and where all the donations will go. Before the meeting, make sure you have:

1. All your shoeboxes pre-wrapped that you are planning to pack.
2. Any donations you need for your meeting, purchased using your budget sheet.
3. **Snacks for your meeting.**
4. If you are playing a video, make sure it is in working order.

Now you are ready for your meeting to start. First, after waiting 5-10 minutes later for all the kids to arrive, you can gather all the kids in a circle and start with prayer. You or another kid can do the prayer. After that, it is time for announcements. If this is your first meeting, you will need to explain how it will work. We found that it helps to dismiss the kids by age to pack shoeboxes, so there isn’t a huge rush to get to the shoeboxes first. That is only in the case of 15 kids or more at your meeting. Initially, most kids may not know how to pack a shoebox, so you may need more assistance for them. In our case, we ask if anyone has never packed a shoebox before and then we ask someone to walk around with them to help them. Be sure to have pieces of paper or coloring pages, so the kids can write a letter or color a picture for the kids in another country. This is very important because kids in other countries have been known to write back if kids leave their addresses in their letters. You can also encourage kids to bring photos of themselves to add to their letters.

After a shoebox has been filled, we go through an inspection. At this time, we ask if they would like to add a letter or picture if they haven’t already. We are also looking to see that all items are added, such as toothbrush, soap, toys, etc. We want to make sure that each shoebox has at least one of each necessary item or if there is more room in their shoebox, that they can go and put some more items in.

With about 15 minutes left in the meeting, we call everyone over to pray over the shoeboxes that have been filled. Then we have snack. In some cases, the kids may be finished packing and want to have snack earlier, and that is okay. If parents haven’t arrived yet, we play games until their arrival. Usually there are parents and kids cleaning up while the games are being played.

If you are having a movie night, you will want to have enough time to watch the movie and pack shoeboxes. Snack time takes place during the movie. It is up to you if you want to pack boxes first and then watch the movie or vice versa.

*Psalm 68:10 ~ In your goodness oh God, you provided for the needy.*
PART 4, SECTION 1

BRINGING YOUR CLUB TO VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS)

Get in touch with the person who runs your VBS. Most VBS like to sponsor a mission. You can talk with the leader about Shoebox Club being that mission. Once you are the mission for VBS, you want to make sure that your club is advertised along with VBS. Set a goal with what you want to achieve at this VBS and be in communication with the director of the event, so they are on board with you.

Our goal was to raise as many donations and money as we possibly could during the week, so we could have a packing party on the Friday of VBS. Here are the steps that we went through to achieve that stated goal.

1. We decided to make a competition between boys and girls for donations and money given. Competitions are really good, because they excite the kids into winning. But, you need to remind them what the competition is really about. That is where step two comes in.
2. Have a daily Operation Christmas Child video explaining the reason behind the mission and why they even want to donate.
3. Talk with the director or teacher who does the closing each day and make sure they talk about the competition, the video, and what will happen on Friday.

Now, I will talk about what we did for the competition between boys and girls. We had points for bringing any donations and double the points if you brought the donation of the day. On Monday, we make sure to make the donation of the day something we do not need as much of. For example, if you have a lot of pencils, make Monday your Pencil Day. If you need a lot of one item, be sure to put it on Friday, which is the climax of the competition and all the videos they have been watching. Below is a sample of each day.

- Monday - Toy Day (small dolls, small cars, small balls, stuffed animals, jump ropes, jacks, etc.)
- Tuesday - Clothes Day (new underwear, socks, shirts, hats, shoes, etc.)
- Wednesday - Hygiene Day (toothbrushes, soap, floss, washcloths, no shampoos or liquids, etc.)
- Thursday - Book Day (small notebooks, picture books, coloring books, etc.)
- Friday - Arts/Crafts Day (crayons, pencils, colored pencils, glue sticks, small scissors, modeling clay, chalk, etc.)

So for each item that a child gives there is 5 points, but if they bring a toy on toy day, they receive 10 points for that item. A completely filled shoebox is worth
100 points for their team, and we make sure we provide empty, wrapped shoeboxes. At the end of the competition, the points are all totaled together from the week and the winner for donations and for money receive a prize.

*Proverbs 22:9 ~ He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of his food to the poor.*

**PART 4, SECTION 2**

**BRINGING YOUR CLUB TO AWANA**

Talk with the AWANA leader and ask if your club can do something for story time. We decided to make a play that tells what OCC does, but you can do anything. For example, a puppet show, read a story, have a devotional, or any other ideas you can think of. Try to do this in September or October and have empty shoeboxes with information on what to put into them to take home.

*2 Timothy 2:15 ~ Approved workmen are not ashamed.*

**PART 5, SECTION 1**

**PRAYER, LOTS OF IT**

As we have mentioned before, prayer is the most important thing you can do before one of your main events. Here are some times you will want to pray most.

1. When you are not receiving donations.
2. In praise of donations.
3. For helpers to set up, clean up and to lead with you.
4. Before each meeting.
5. For every shoebox packed and the child who will receive it.

I think you are starting to get the point, which is pray in every situation.

*Philippians 4:6 ~ Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.*
PART 5, SECTION 2

PREPARATION

When you are starting to feel God’s leading to move on from leading Shoebox Club, you should start looking at the other kids in your group to see who your leaders are. For Shoebox Club, I was starting to feel lead into another area by God, so then I made an age limit for our leaders. You do not need to do this; this is just an example of what we did.

Once you have established the leaders, start talking with them and their parents about praying to God about this opportunity and where God is leading them. Talk to as many kids as you can about this opportunity, to give all your leaders a chance. Then prepare the kids in your group for elections. Encourage the kids to pray to God about the decision of voting beforehand. After that, what will happen is all in God’s hands.

1 John 5:14 ~ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

PART 5, SECTION 3

ELECTIONS

At elections, prepare the kids for what is to happen. Make ballots with each candidate’s name. Take the kids aside one by one to vote privately. It is best to have an adult to help the younger kids vote. Make sure this parent does not have a child running for a position.

When it is time to say who won, say it as gently as possible so not to hurt the feelings of the people who lost. Always be considerate of others feelings.

Deuteronomy 1:6-13 ~ The Lord our God spoke at Horeb, saying...“Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.”