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## Destination Imagination Builds Community

Submitted by:

*Sheryl Goldberg, NY-DI Board Member*

Our town subscribes to the adage, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child." Destination Imagination is one of the avenues in which our town builds community, and gives children a fabulous growing experience.

Being on a DI team provides our participants with an instant extended family, as team members, managers, parents and relatives all participate to make the program work. Whether its supplying snacks, preparing or supervising instant challenges, or shuttling kids to the hardware store or organizing a fund raiser, DI is a community affair.

Kids often report that the best part of DI is the new friends they make. In our town, new teams are formed every year, which include kids from up to 3 different grade levels. Excitement builds as each new season begins, and the teams are formed. Kids submit 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice challenge preferences, and the coordinator forms the teams based on age, experience, talent and interest. Who will I be with this year?

Throughout the year we continually ask... Are you having fun? Did you learn something? Did you make new friends? Invariably each question is answered with a resounding "YES," and another successful season will have come and gone.



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## A Message from the Eastern Regional Director – Seth Davis

Greetings to all outside the box thinkers of the Empire State! As the new Director of the Eastern Region, I thought I'd take a moment to introduce myself.

I live in Croton-on-Hudson, which has been home to my family since I was 5 years old. I am a lawyer, specializing in environmental law, who after almost 30 years of practice in New York City has moved his practice to a small firm in Rye. I have just been named chair of the American Bar Association's Section of Environment, Energy and Resources' Committee on Environmental Transactions and Brownfields. I teach a course in environmental transactions as an Adjunct Professor at Pace University Law School. I am on the board of Musica Sacra of New York, the City's leading professional choral group (come to our *Messiah* at Carnegie Hall December 19 and 20!). So why, everyone is wondering, with all of that going on, do I want to take on the additional burden of being a Regional Director?

The answer is simple, but important. I believe in being active in volunteer organizations that have shown to be worthy of support, and I believe in stepping up to a major role when that organization needs someone to do so. And Destination Imagination has meant so much to my family and me in the last few years that I simply could not ignore this latest call.

My younger son, now 15, participated in DI for two years—winning state championships on both occasions. He is a gifted individual with special needs. His involvement in DI was a key factor in a long process that has made his gifts rise to the top and his special needs fade into the background. I myself have worked with DI as a parent, as a team manager, as an appraiser, as a state board member, as a challenge master, and as an official at Global Finals. I have seen what DI can do for all sorts of different kids, and I have felt the personal thrill of helping make that possible. Even beyond the thrill of my own son's or my own team's success has been the joy I've had watching teams of youngsters from other towns achieve levels of success of which they'd never dreamed.

Keeping those thrills coming is what we're all about. I may be overworked, spread too thin, or inexperienced, but I pledge to you my best efforts in keeping thrills coming in New York's Eastern Region and throughout the State in the coming year. I not only welcome the support of all of you, I need it. But I've been in this organization long enough to know that I'll get it.

One secret I've learned about DI is that it is FUN. The more you do, the more fun you have. Come on and have some fun with us in the Eastern Region! Come join with me in doing something special for a very special bunch of kids.

**Check out the New York DI Website for the dates for all of our Regional Tournaments and Training Workshops! Our NY-DI Website is updated weekly!**

**<http://nydi.org>**

## Getting Started... What Do You Need to get going in DI in NY?

- You'll need a sponsoring organization. This is usually a local school but it can also be a service club such as a PTO, Kiwanis or Rotary. It can be a business or even Mom & Dad!
- You'll need a source of funds. A membership in Destination ImagiNation, Inc. and NY-DI costs \$150 for an Individual Team Passport or \$250 for a 5-TeamPak Passport, check with your Regional Director regarding Regional fees.
- You'll need your organization to fill out the combined International /NY membership application (found at <http://nydi.org/2005Passport.pdf>) and send it with the membership fee to:  
Destination ImagiNation, Inc., PO Box 547 Glassboro, NJ 08028
- The Challenges and Materials will only be sent to our paid members so it's best to send in your membership early in the school year. Once DI Headquarters receives your payment they will send out your Materials CD-ROM within 10 days. You may also register using the electronic registration system DIONline – just go to <http://destinationimagination.org> and click on the DIONline bullseye and follow the on screen directions.
- The International membership fee buys your organization a master copy of the rulebook, guides and Team Challenge definitions for that year, along with curriculum guides, which can be used in the regular classroom.
- Your teams will need funds to purchase their materials. Challenge budgets are usually set around \$100 per Challenge. The \$100 limit is a cap on the amount of money that a team can spend to put materials on stage. That is, the materials that appear in the team's final solution may cost no more than the budget. The amount spent depends on the problem and how the team elects to solve the problem. Parents, community sponsors, or the sponsoring organization usually cover this cost.
- You'll need Team Managers. In most areas, Team Managers are your scarcest resource. Team Managers can be found among parents, teachers, aunts, uncles, neighbors or service club members. Announce the program at back-to-school night, or some other large gathering. Borrow the DI Awareness Tape from the Regional Director and show that to explain the program.
- Your ideal Team Manager will be willing to spend 2 meetings a week from late fall to early spring with the kids. The time commitment on the TM's part is similar to soccer or little league. The TM needs the personal skill of being able to let the kids find the solution and not impose the Team Manager's solution on the team.
- You'll need to train your Team Managers. Regional and Affiliate Organizations provide Team Manager training to help start up a team, conduct meetings and prepare for the competitions.
- Early in the school year, usually around October, there will be a Regional Team Manager Training Workshop. The Regional Director distributes regional TM's materials. TMs may contact the Regional Director at any time when they need help or assistance for additional training and workshops.





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- You'll need to make the commitment clear to parents. Parental support is crucial to the success of the team. Parents must commit to getting their children to scheduled meetings and keeping the child on the team even if the child wants to drop out. Teams take time to coalesce and it's crucial that team members attend almost all meetings. I strongly recommend that parents and students sign a "contract" as a sign of commitment.

- You'll need to organize the teams. In some schools, the teams are built by the school and assigned to Team Manager. In other schools, the TMs pick the kids they think they can work with. In other schools, the teams self organize and draft their own Team Manager. Pick the technique that suits your situation best.

- Teams are organized by age **OR** grade. Children less than 9 years old or in grades Kindergarten through grade 2 participate at the primary Rising Stars! level, less than 12 or in grades K through 5 participate in the Elementary Level. Students less than 15 or in grades 6-8 compete at the Middle Level. Students less than 19 or in grades 9-12 would participate at Secondary Level. Teams composed of teams made up of student enrolled full-time in college/University/Military or technical school would compete at the University Level. Mixed age teams compete at the division level of the oldest team member.

- Once teams and Team Managers are paired, they'll need to pick a mutually agreeable schedule and meeting location. There may be some adjustments among teams if scheduling conflicts arise that preclude the teams meeting on a regular basis. This is usually worked out in the first or second meeting. Remember that the team will often need to meet for extended periods of time to build, paint, and rehearse. It is very important that at least one Team Manager be able to provide a place (a garage or basement works well) where a team may hold a Saturday meeting and leave all materials for storage.

- You should know you are not in this alone, the Regional Director is available to help you as is your Affiliate Director. Issues such as Instant Challenge practice ideas, team time management, problem kid management, paperwork, schedules, team management issues, rules and similar subjects can be discussed. Also the TMs can swap materials and discuss what worked and didn't work.

- Regional, Affiliate and International Newsletters are a great source of information. Check out the NY-DI Newsletter Archive on our Website at <http://nydi.org> !

I hope this information helps you to decide that Destination ImagiNation is indeed the most exciting thing happening in education today! I look forward to working with you as you start your journey....

Dee Urban, Affiliate Director  
Destination ImagiNation NY  
73 Minden Drive  
Orchard Park, NY 14127

Tel. 716-675-7566

e-mail:  
deeurban@adelphia.net

Cre8ively Yours,  
Dee Urban  
NY-DI Affiliate Director