



Building a New Junior Model Club in Cincinnati

By Will Kuhrt

"Do You Understand What It Means When You Start Something Like This?"

This movie quote from Yul Brynner (as Chris Adams from the *Magnificent Seven*) is the perfect title for this article because it truly sums up the commitment to a journey, one which began at the 2025 IPMS USA National Convention in Hampton, VA. It is a commitment that I am honored to throw my weight behind - to a group of kids and our newly-formed Junior Model Club in Cincinnati.

It all began in the middle of the afternoon on the last day of the Nats. I was at the Military Aviation Museum and when an email sent to the Cincinnati Scale Modelers website arrived on my phone, and I instantly became very excited. My buddy's wife asked me what was going on. I told her how excited I was because the email was inquiring if we had a club for kids. I had wanted to begin such a club for a long time. But, since we didn't have anything, I was unsure how to respond.

I responded explaining I was out of town attending the National Convention - assuming the person on the other end was in Cincinnati. I explained that we did not have a special club



for kids but that for a long time I have wanted to start one and when I return to town, I would be happy to reach out and discuss it more. I received a reply instantly saying that they were also at the convention and that their son had entered several models into the junior categories. Now, I was really very excited and we arranged to meet at the banquet.

At the banquet, I met the parent Melissa and her son Levi. Right away, Levi told me he really wanted to have a club to join. At that moment, his mom and I knew we had to do something. As coincidence would have it, Levi won Third Place in his category, and near the end of the banquet, part of the speech centered on how all of us need to become involved with young people.

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Upon returning home, the chance encounter I had at the Nats turned into serious discussions between me and Melissa on how to start a club. She had already taken the initiative by recruiting several children. Knowing that I am already a pretty busy guy working full time, plus two part-time jobs, in addition to editing articles for the IPMS Reviewer Corp, managing our club's website, and in what little free time I get, I still build a lot of models, I had to ask myself "can I really do this?" Knowing what was at stake, I knew I could without a doubt!

The first step was to secure a meeting location. My co-founder Melissa found a local library and we set up our first meeting. Luckily, I had brought a box filled with some Revell Snap-Tite

kits and some other pretty simple kits. I packed up my tools and supplies and headed off to the library. It was great to see Levi again, and he radiated enthusiasm at this first meeting. We had three kids in attendance and for two hours, we had a blast! It was like being at summer camp. At this first meeting, the kids worked on Bandai Gundam kits, some Snap-Tite airplanes and a car. Listening to them banter, sing Mario songs, and say things like, "I love this hobby so much even though it is frustrating me" made it all worthwhile.

One month later, our second meeting was scheduled. I really didn't know what to expect. I was worried I would show up to an empty

meeting room. Would the kids from the first meeting return? Was it a one-off? I decided going into this journey to remove my personal ego. The Junior Club is not about me, I decided. It is about the kids. I realized all I can do is give it my all. Well, they came back AND they had finished their models at home and brought them back to display! I was blown away. Also, we gained another participant. The seeds we planted were starting to sprout. The second meeting was just as much fun as the first. But, this time, two of the boys really began to show their strong interest in the models. One boy, Ayden, learned how to apply water slide decals for the first time. He and his friend Levi also began to pay attention to the Skill Level of kits.





When the meeting concluded, I gathered the kids around for a discussion. I said, "Remember, your models aren't toys. They represent your talent, your patience and your hard work. If you respect your models . . ." One of boys interrupted me and finished my thought saying, "You respect yourself." Yes! Now the boys are

desk as well as being the webmaster, I saw a recruitment opportunity. I built a special web page discussing the new Junior Club as well as created a sign with a QR bar code, that when scanned, will take the viewer directly to the web page on their phone. I also made it a point to introduce myself to families with children and

Fin, said to me, "I can't believe I made an airplane. I thought it would only take me two minutes." I laughed and congratulated him on his accomplishment

learning life lessons, too. I felt like Kevin Costner in Field of Dreams watching a fledging group grow and become better. Then, Levi and his buddy Ayden approached me, each carrying his model and asked me to please take it to the show the grown-ups at the Cincinnati Scale Modelers meeting. I was touched and honored, and I promised the boys I would.

In between the second and third meeting, Cincinnati Scale Modelers hosted our amazing show. Seeing that I work at the registration

talked about the Junior Model Club. As it so happened, one week after the show, I received a sign-up!

At our third meeting we now eight kids! One of the new boys, Fin, said to me, "I can't believe I made an airplane. I thought it would only take me two minutes." I laughed and congratulated him on his accomplishment. In December we started collecting ideas about what to name this new club. How about "Plastic Delinquents"? LOL.



The commitment to this group is not easy. It takes energy to schedule the meetings, load supplies, worry about how to get supplies, making sure kids (and parents) are happy, keeping them engaged, and cleaning up and re-loading the car at the end. When I told John Noack early on about the formation of our small group, I said to him, "I am fully committed to making this work, and I believe that if you have the right enthusiasm each and every time, combined with positive energy, and committed to the consistency of keeping up with it, I really believe it can work." I also told him that I want to use our experience in Cincinnati as an example as to how other chapters around the country can give it a try.

I have been very grateful to the support and assistance I have received so far. Thank you to my fellow Cincinnati Scale Modelers members who have attended to mentor the kids. I have received some donations, which is enormously helpful, and I am fully grateful for any future support still to come. I know I cannot do this

alone. IPMS USA was kind enough to send me some swag goodies, which the kids really loved. Thank you.

Today, I will be sending an email to the group thanking them for attending our last meeting and welcoming our new members. I believe the follow-through and showing appreciation to the parents for bringing their child is important to building long-lasting relationships.

I'm looking to the future, and my goal is to have as many kids as possible from our Junior Club in attendance at the National Convention in Fort Wayne with models entered into the competition. This would certainly be a dream come true.

Do I understand what it means when you start something like this? Yes. It means you are impacting a young person's life. It means you are imparting life-long skills. It means you are encouraging creativity, encouraging exploration, and celebrating achievements. It means giving of yourself to make a difference in someone else.