



NOVEMBER, 2025
ISSUE #2

Jane Schmidt, Governor
Marguerite Fehseke, Secretary Treasurer

IOWA OPTIMIST DISTRICT

CULTIVATE OPTIMISM



Let's Roll!

The First Quarter Conference is a great memory for those who attended. Check out the amazing photos on our Iowa District Facebook page that really captured the event. Between those in attendance along with 7 JOI members and our presenters we had 83 in attendance (GOAL=80), there were 8 first-timers (GOAL=10), and made \$3350 for OI Foundation (GOAL=\$1500).

Our luncheon presenter Chris Cornelius presented great advice about *OPTIMIZING PUZZLE PIECES*. She thoughtfully presented how a farm accident was life-changing but also one that changed her view of life. The afternoon presentation was by Dr. Denise Schmidt Crawford, a professor at Iowa State University. We all learned a great deal about *OPTIMIZING OPTIMISM: USING AI TO SHARE YOUR CLUB'S STORY*. Everyone left with a new understanding of AI and how it can be used to tell our story.

Along with learning, we had fun completing a service project and selecting the best cookie baker in the Optimist District.

Governor Jane

BRINGING OUT THE BEST: MARK YOUR CALENDARS

One way to cultivate optimism and bring out our best is to be part of our conferences and annual convention. Mark your calendars with the following important dates:

- **Second Quarter Conference:** January 31, 2026
 - Zoom meeting by Zones or Clubs - let's see about the weather! Plan to get online as we showcase great things Optimists are doing for their community.
 - THEME: Bringing out the Best in our Communities
- **Third Quarter Conference:** April 17-18, 2026
 - Location: Amana Colonies, IA from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM (Exec Board will meet Friday evening at 7 PM)
 - THEME: Bringing out the Best in Youth
- **Summer Zoom by Zones:** June 13 - 9:30-11:30 AM
- **IOWA DISTRICT CONVENTION:** August 28-20, 2026
 - Location: Dubuque, IA
 - THEME: Bringing out the Best

REMINDER

Be sure to check your rosters on the Optimist International website - Leaders Online. Make sure all contact information is up-to-date and correct for your members.

An Opportunity for \$300



Last summer at our Executive Committee meeting on the Friday of convention, a club president called into question the amount of money being held in reserve. It led to much discussion and the sharing of ideas between many Optimists. On Friday, October 17, at the executive committee meeting, it was approved that a portion of the reserve would be used in two ways:

1. To increase membership, develop a Facebook Ad campaign in various areas around the state;
2. Send \$300 to each club to be used in ways that best meet the needs of their club. Some ideas included: offset dues, develop a new project or use for an existing one, have a campaign to welcome new members, donate to the OI Foundation, or send members to the spring conference or summer convention. It is up to the club to determine its use. (Voting members on the executive committee include the Governor, Secretary Treasurer, Governor-Elect, the two most recent Past Governors, and Lt. Governors). This motion was also approved at our Board of Directors meeting on Saturday, October 18. (The voting Board of Directors includes the Executive Committee and club presidents or their representative.)

An email was sent to all club presidents and secretary-treasurers informing them to send an email to:
clubfunds2025@gmail.com

Someone from each club is to respond YES or NO to accept the funds to be used to meet the needs of their club. Responses need to be received by November 30. Checks will be issued late December.

Service Project and Cookie Baking Contest

Thanks to the JOI Members who assisted with our service project, creating 350 pod packets along with inspirational messages for the Homeless. They also named the best cookie baker in the district.



OUR WINNERS

Fan Favorite: Emily Johnson,
Maquoketa

Winner: Janet and Tom Lloyd,
Des Moines Western Des Moines Noon

District Leadership Team at our Summer Retreat

So thankful for all who are serving this Optimist year!



Meet George Volz, Zone 2 Lt. Governor

George and Deb Volz live in Carson, Iowa, Deb's home town. They were married in 1976 and spent most of their married life in Nebraska. When George retired the first time they returned to Iowa where Deb joined a new organization for Riverside called Optimists. A year later, she sponsored George. After several failed attempts to retire, George feels he is finally retired and ready to be your Lt. Governor.

George is an active team player with extensive volunteer and institutional leadership experience. He has a strong belief that true & lasting growth is the result of building on strengths not weaknesses. He has the ability to work with diverse teams with opposing views; the capability to envision possibilities with analytical skills to determine feasibility, and the ability to develop dynamic strategic plans that are flexible as necessary.



"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence." — Frances Frei

Meet Darrell Vossekuil, Zone 3 Lt. Governor

Darrell was born and raised on a dairy farm in east central Wisconsin where he went to grade school and high school. After high school, he drove truck for a few years. He then decided to dairy farm on his own, so he bought a small farm. He did that for around nine years, and then sold the farm in 1992. At that time, he went to work for a small co-op delivering Propane.

In 2016, he and his wife Lisa moved down to Winterset, Iowa, for Lisa's work with the National Speech and Debate Association when the association moved their national headquarters from Ripon, Wisconsin, to Des Moines. Darrell went to work for Farm Services, retiring in 2022. He and Lisa joined the local Optimist Club as a way to give back. In his spare time, he likes to read, workout, travel a bit, while working part time for FS. He looks forward to serving as Lt. Governor for our district.



A message from our Club Building Chair: Marge Hopkins

This year, the Iowa district is poised for significant progress and growth. Several clubs are actively planning to expand by establishing new clubs within their areas. The following clubs are being established for future club development:

- ☒ Keokuk
- ☒ DeWitt
- ☒ Glenwood
- ☒ Waukee
- ☒ Clinton

If you have any leads in any of these areas, please contact either me or Governor Jane. Remember, increasing membership allows us to better serve youth and communities throughout the district. For guidance on launching a new club, visit Optimist Institute for training and resources that will help you get started. Also, check out the growth webinars that are located at Optimist Institute.

Again, if you have any questions contact Marge Hopkins, New Club Building chair, or Governor Jane.

A message from our District Secretary-Treasurer: Marguerite Fehseke

Just a little note to give you some information and reminders.

How To Renew Your Optimist Institute Subscription

If you have not done this yet, get onto the Optimist Institute and take your Club Officer Training Course.. It won't take long. All Optimist Institute memberships expire on April 30 every year. This means that each year, on May 1 or the first time you log into the Optimist Institute after May 1, you will need to renew your subscription. Be sure to visit the OI Website. Click on "Member Resources." Scroll down to "Member Resources" Click on the box: Optimist Institute.

Looking for Optimist shirts, speaker gifts and stuff?

A new brand partner is up and running: Lizard Apparel & Promotions. See what they have to offer at: optimistmerch.lizardapstore.com

To ensure your club is prepared for events you can order necessary supplies like **New Member Pins and Membership Brochures.**

New Member Pin

Request: <https://forms.office.com/r/6MErb8ZfL4>

Membership Brochure

Request: <https://forms.office.com/r/z2B05NDDqL>

Time To Drop: It would be a good time to delete those Members that have not paid their dues. You don't want to keep paying for them and now you have time to replace them with new membership.

ACH Debit: The Automated Clearing House program – or ACH – allows Optimist Clubs to pay their bills electronically. It's an easy and efficient way for Clubs to handle their financial obligations to Optimist International. Best of all, the program is secure!

To initiate the ACH direct debit bill form of payment for a Club, Optimist International needs the following two items: 1. A completed "authorization agreement for direct debits" form. 2. A voided check or bank draft (or copy) for the bank account from which you would like us to withdraw money (debit). Please do not use a deposit slip. How to get started.....

Go to the OI Website.

Click on "**Member Resources.**" Scroll down to "Club Resources" Click on the box: **ACH Debit.**



**Here are committee members.
Contact them if you have any
questions or suggestions.**

Policy Committee (3 past governors)

1. Sandi Schmidt
2. Judy Boyd
3. Cynthia Barber

Finance Committee (3)

1. Judy Boyd
2. Kristi Allen
3. Lucy Hough

Convention Committee (5)

1. Marge Hopkins (PG)
2. Mary Beth Ferring
3. Jacque Engling
4. Barb Perleth
5. Jane Schmidt

Candidate Qualifications (5)

1. Don Pfeiffer
2. Joleen Jorgensen
3. Sue Wunsch
4. Marge Hopkins
5. Need someone from Western IA

**Here are some of our District
Leadership Team members.
Contact them if you have any
questions or suggestions.**

Awards and Achievements

Sharon Philliips

Essay Contest

Judy Boyd

Oratorical Contest

Jeff Schmatt

Conference/Convention Special Events

Caroll Hammill

Julie Weirup

Childhood Health and Wellness

Rebecca Butler Mona

JOI

Geri Barnett

SOCIAL MARKETING/MEDIA

Erin Houseton



A message from our Membership Chair: Dave Phillips

What a Great start in "Cultivating Optimism" across our District in October; i.e., membership growth of a net +5. Continuing this momentum will ensure attaining our membership growth goal for this program year.

Incentive Leaders for the 1st Quarter

Individual: Debbie Keast, Riverside Optimist Club

Club: Riverside Optimist Club

Lt. Governor: George Volz, Zone 2

Friend of Optimist

I encourage clubs to engage in this recruiting option. It is an excellent opportunity to promote your club's existence in your respective communities. Also, it serves as a potential fund raiser as Optimist International rebates \$56 of a Friend's membership dues of \$140 to your club. The Friend application can be downloaded from the OI website. If you want hard copies, please email me (phillips363@mcshi.com) your mailing address.

A message from our OI Foundation Rep: Sandi Schmidt



Thank you for all your support of the Optimist International Foundation (OIF) at the 1st Quarter Conference! I love the way you embraced the theme for the silent auction and bid on the items, your participation in Heads or Tails and your donations for Dime-A-Day and other OIF programs.

Together, we donated \$3113 to OIF at the Conference. That included \$572 on the Silent Auction and \$290 for Heads or Tails. That's an AZAZING start to our year, and I'm looking forward to the outstanding support of ALL the Iowa Optimists this year.

One of the easiest ways to support OIF is through the Dime-A-Day program – you donate \$36.50 or more to OIF and you get this great looking pin to wear, showing your support.

Let's keep the fun going with a bit of friendly competition. The Optimist Club with the largest percentage of their members who donate to OIF at the Dime-A-Day or higher level by June 30, 2026, will win a prize to be awarded at our District Convention in August.

You can donate to OIF in any of these ways:

Donate online at <https://www.oifoundation.org/us-canada-donate.cfm>.

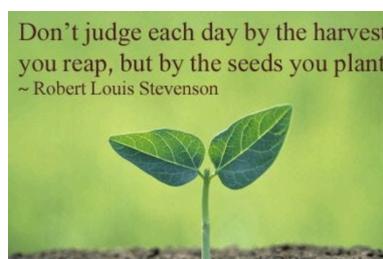
Mail your check to Optimist International Foundation, PO Box 952126, St. Louis, MO 63195.

Send your donation to me (Sandi Schmidt, 3754 47th Street Dr, Moline, IL 61265) and I'll send it to the Foundation for you.

Here's the link to the Dime-A-Day form to make this simple for you:

<https://www.oifoundation.org/individuals/dime-a-day-form.pdf>.

Need more information? Contact me at 309-236-1342 or schmidtsandi@gmail.com.





REMINDER:
Awards and Achievement Report
Due by Jan. 10 to Sharon Phillips



To emphasize the importance of following OI and District policies and procedures and to help clubs be successful, the Awards and Achievements program is conducted in the Iowa District.

The format of the A and A Report has changed. No longer are points assigned to each item. Instead, the report will function as a report card to keep the Governor informed of the club's activities. The report is to be completed on a quarterly basis and submitted by the 10th of the month following the end of the quarter. Each club that returns the report on time will be entered into a drawing to be conducted at the following District Conferences/Convention. The winning club will receive a \$75 check from the District.

This form is to be mailed or e-mailed (preferred) to the A&A District Chair: Sharon Phillips, 4075 Aspen Hills Drive, Bettendorf, IA 563-340-6595
e-mail: IowaOptimistAandA@gmail.com

Please send a copy of your report each quarter. Keep the original and use it to add the information for each subsequent quarter so that the final submission will reflect all four quarters. Copies will NOT be returned. To show which items were accomplished during the quarter being reported, check the box under the appropriate quarter. For those items requiring a number entry, it will be indicated in the description of the item. If an item is repeated in more than one quarter, it should be recorded in each quarter it's accomplished.

The fillable report form can be found on the Iowa Optimist District Website
<https://www.iowaoptimist.org/>
(found under PROGRAMS)



Second Quarter Conference

January 31, 2026

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Theme: Bringing out the best in Communities

This zoom conference meeting will showcase what Optimist Clubs are doing around the state to improve their communities.



Learn about:

- Conducting a Fireman Appreciation Banquet
- Reading to students as Storybook Characters
 - Creating crafts with Special Needs Adults
 - Holding a Kite-Flying Festival
- Honoring Good Citizens and Student Athletes
- Showing Appreciation for local Law Enforcement
 -and so much more!



Plan to hold your club meeting on that morning – January 31. Awards will be given to the club with the highest % attendance and the club with the most creative hats/costumes.

Join us to learn more about what is happening across our state – making our communities better by Cultivating Optimism Across Iowa!



WAYS TO MARKET YOUR CLUB

- Present a flag with the OI or your club logo on it to be hung below the United States flag at a Friend of Optimist's place of business.
- Do an interview on a local radio or TV station – talk about your projects.
- Purchase an ad in the local newspaper.
- Post information about your club on social media.
- Use local electronic signs around town to advertise your work.
- Place brochures about your club in local businesses and medical offices.
- Wear your Optimist shirt with pride!

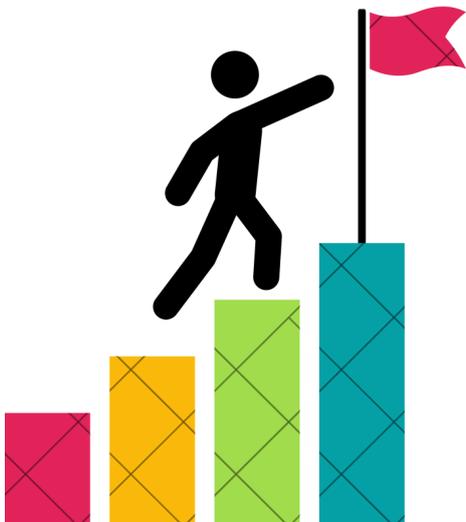
Reminder of our Goals for 2025-2026

Here are our goals for this Optimist year:

- Let's be a Distinguished District – grow by 25 and build 3 new clubs.
- Governor Jane hopes to make at least one visit to each club – meeting or event.
- Each club is an Honor Club (grow by +3 members).
- Build 5 new clubs in the district.
- At least 10 distinguished clubs in the district – grow by 3 and assist in building a new club.
- At least 5 distinguished Lt. Governors in the district.

The Six Steps to achieve Distinguished Lt. Governor Status:

- Net + 6 in Membership and charter one or more Clubs (JOI Clubs do not fulfill this requirement).
- All Clubs current on District and OI Dues (all financial obligations paid by September 30).
- All reports filed with Optimist International on a timely basis.
- 50% of Clubs appoint a Club Foundation Representative and make an unrestricted donation to the OIF.
- Attend 75% of all District meetings/conferences.
- Visit all Clubs once or more, including any new Club that is built.



“The rung of a ladder was never meant to rest upon, but only to hold a man's foot long enough to enable him to put the other somewhat higher.” – Thomas Henry Huxley