



JANUARY, 2026

HAPPY  
New Year

Jane Schmidt, Governor  
Marguerite Fehseke, Secretary Treasurer



IOWA DISTRICT OPTIMISTS

# CULTIVATE OPTIMISM



## Message from Governor Jane

Hello 2026! Brian and I just got back from visiting our son and his family in CA. On our way home, we stopped at the Hoover Dam and the Grand Canyon - a Marvelous Wonder of the World. It literally took my breath away along with causing a few tears to be shed. In many ways, seeing something that wondrous made me consider what we do as Optimists. Aren't we Wonders of our Communities as we bring out the best? Let's keep up what we do. If we feel our clubs are stagnant, consider new projects. The Jan. 31 Zoom meeting will give you some new ideas that might inspire you to breathe new life into your clubs. Also continue to seek new members that will bring new enthusiasm to your group. A goal for this year is for each club to grow by 3 - "a pair and a spare." Encourage people to join your club in pairs - it is always fun to serve with a friend. Like-minded people re-energize what we do and help us to see new ways to bring out the best in youth, our community, and ourselves. Let's grow this District!

Governor Jane



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT FROM OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL!



## FEBRUARY 5, 2026 – INTERNATIONAL OPTIMIST DAY

Optimist International Foundation is presenting a check to the governor of each district to present to a Ronald McDonald House of their choice on Feb. 5 - International Optimist Day. Each club is encouraged to plan a special volunteer activity in their community that day - wearing their Optimist shirts and being visible in the community. Ideas include serving meals to the needy, volunteering at a local food pantry or school, or any number of ways you can serve your community. Take photos and post on social media with the following: **#OptimistDay2026**

In our Iowa District, the donation will be made to the **Ronald McDonald House in Iowa City**. When a child is seriously ill or injured, many families must travel far from home to get the specialized treatment their child needs. Sometimes the treatment lasts a day or two, other times it may be weeks, months, or more—that’s a long time to be away from your home, your job, and your family. The Ronald McDonald House of Eastern Iowa & Western Illinois serves these families by providing the comfort and amenities they need while their child recovers. This facility helps keep families together when their child needs medical care. Clubs are welcome to add additional donations to include with that from the OIF.

I will be making arrangements with the Ronald McDonald House for a time to deliver the check. Whoever is available and would like to attend this, please let me know and I will give you the time and location for Feb. 5. I will also ask what ways we can serve them that day.

Here is the link to the resources we currently have available on the website for Optimist Day: <https://www.optimist.org/member/optimistday.cfm>

Consider having your local leader give a proclamation declaring International Optimist Day. Template is on the website.



**MOVIE NIGHT**

SPONSORED BY  
THE BLOOMFIELD  
OPTIMIST CLUB

**ZOOPTOPIA 2**

JANUARY 2 @ 7PM  
JANUARY 3 @ 7PM  
JANUARY 4 @ 4PM

**KIDS TICKETS  
\$1 OFF  
\$2 CREDIT  
TOWARD  
CONCESSION  
ITEM**

### Great job, Red Oak!

RED OAK OPTIMISTS proudly presented Red Oak Vocal students Will Pollock and Anna Butz with medallion stands to display their All-State Choir medallions. Then, they presented a challenge donation to the Red Oak Music Boosters to launch their fundraising campaign for improvements to the Auditorium and Larry and Rhonda Mannasmith stage.



**Great Idea, Bloomfield Optimist Club!**

# Second Quarter Conference Via Zoom

## Saturday, January 31, 2026

Encourage clubs to have a meeting date scheduled for January 31.  
Encourage a breakfast or rolls and coffee time to socialize.

Awards:

Most in attendance by %  
Most creative hats/costumes



### 9:30 Welcome

**Theme: Bringing out the best in your community.  
How are we making an impact in our community?**

### 9:40 Potpourri of ideas

Maquoketa: Fireman's Banquet, Law Enforcement Banquet  
DesMoines area: Student Achievement Banquet (THERESA)  
Bettendorf: Honoring good citizens  
Davenport Noon: Honoring coaches and athletes  
Oskaloosa – Kite Flying Festival

### 10:00 Videos of potential community projects

### 10:15 Potpourri of ideas

Council Bluffs – Manna Cares: (THERESA)  
Burlington-West Burlington: Storybook Characters  
Dubuque AM: Monthly crafts with special needs  
Underwood: Dictionaries for Third Graders  
Grinnell: Fly In Breakfast

### 10:30 Guest Speaker: Diane Nelson, Iowa Girl Scouts

### 10:50 Committee reports

Membership – Dave Phillips  
Club Building – Marge Hopkins  
Jr. Golf – Sue Wunsche and Cydni Barber  
Oratorical – Jeff Schmatt  
Essay – Judy Boyd  
JOI – Gerri Barnett  
CCHW – Rebecca Butler Mona  
OI Foundation – Sandi Schmidt

### 11:15 Awards – A&A and membership

### 11:20 Closing and final words



# Membership Update

While our District experienced net membership growth of -16 during the 1st Quarter, we should be Optimistic about reaching our membership growth goal for this year of a net +50 members as we reflect on the following. The average net membership growth at the end of the 1st Quarter over the past nine years was a net -52 members. Also, the retention of existing members compares very favorably with prior years; i.e., as of December 31st, 52 members had been deleted from our membership rosters compared to an average of 116 members deleted over the previous nine years. Our biggest challenge is to recruit more members, regular and Friends. A total of 36 new members were recruited as of December 31st compared to an average of 64 members during the 1st Quarter over the past nine years. Bringing our current club-building projects to fruition will be the key to reaching our membership growth goal.

I encourage all of us to think of one person (or more) whom we believe would relish the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of youth in our respective communities by joining our Optimist clubs. Also, reflect on professionals (i.e., your family doctor, attorney, Pastor, dentist, optometrist, etc.); and local business owners whom you could approach to financially support our youth-serving efforts by becoming a Friend of Optimist.



From Membership Chair, Dave Phillips



## Iowa District Growth Initiative: Facebook Marketing Campaign

**The following clubs will take part in a the Facebook Marketing Campaign:**

Washington Township, Burlington West Burlington, Kalona,  
Fort Madison, Mediapolis, Bettendorf,  
Wayne of Corydon, Maquoketa, Peosta,  
Dubuque AM, Cedar Rapids Thursday Noon,  
Urbandale, Grinnell,  
Southwest Iowa collective effort



**New Club Projects**

Keokuk, DeWitt, Clinton, Glenwood, Waukee



Zoom meetings with Jim Boyd have taken place and Erin Houseton has agreed to provide instruction for those who need help in designing their ad. It is the intent these will begin around Jan. 15. If you are a club who is not listed and want to try this campaign, please let me know. Hopefully, we will be successful and grow this district!



# **Achievements and Awards (A&A)**

## **DUE JANUARY 10**

**Chance to win \$75 for your club! Must be submitted by January 10!**

**Sound good? All you have to do is submit the Achievements and Awards report by January 10th to be entered into a drawing for your club to win \$75.**

**Instructions for filling out the form can be found on [iowaoptimist.org](http://iowaoptimist.org) by selecting Achievements and Awards Program under the Programs heading. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to download the form.**

**This form is to be mailed or e-mailed (preferred) to the A&A District Chair:  
Sharon Phillips, 4075 Aspen Hills Drive, Bettendorf, IA 52722  
e-mail: [iowaOptimistAandA@gmail.com](mailto:iowaOptimistAandA@gmail.com)**

### **REMEMBER: The Club Pride Report Has Changed!**

**Hopefully, you begun filling it out!**

**The Club Project Impact Report — completed each time your club finishes a service project.**

**The Club Project Impact Report is ready for you to start inputting your club's projects today!**

### **REMEMBER: How to Submit a Project:**

- **Log into Optimist Leaders — submissions must be entered by a Club Officer (President, Secretary, or Treasurer).**
- **Click on “Club Impact Report.”**
- **Select one of Optimist International's Signature Programs (such as Oratorical, Essay, CCDHH, JOI, Junior Golf) or choose a Community Project your club has completed.**
- **Enter the project details and submit!**

**At the end of the year, your club will be able to reflect on the incredible difference you've made — a true celebration of optimism in service!**

#### **UPCOMING WEBINARS from OI:**

**(Let me know if you need assistance in registering for any of these.)**

**Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 6 PM – Grant webinar (learn about CHW grants and Club grants)**

**Tuesday, Jan. 27 or Monday, Feb. 9 at 6 PM – Junior Golf**

# The Beauty of Optimism



**Installation of officers, holiday parties, selling Christmas trees, Toys for Tots, intallation of new members, feeding the homeless, donations to food pantries, fun with archery, donations to schools, honoring a TEEN of the MONTH**



# Bringing out the Best

## Looking for ideas on how to grow your club?

Here are a few more ideas:

- encourage people to join with a friend - there is joy in sharing service with friends
- locate retired teacher groups and encourage them to join
- find enthusiastic teachers who want to serve the community
- invite potential members to one of your activities so they can see what a fun group you are and the meaningful things you do for youth and your community

**CONGRATULATIONS to the following clubs who have shown growth so far this year:**

**RIVERSIDE +5**

**COUNCIL BLUFFS +1**

**UNDERWOOD +2**

**RED OAK +2**

**WINTERSET +1**

**OSKALOOSA +1**

**DUBUQUE MORNING +1**

**DAVENPORT NOON +2**

**BETTENDORF +4**



## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Cultivating Optimism Across Iowa**

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

- **Second Quarter Conference:** January 31, 2026
  - Zone Meetings or Zoom meetings
  - 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 28-30, 2026
  - Location: Dubuque, IA
  - THEME: Bringing out the Best



# Signature Projects of Optimist Clubs: Scholarship Contests

## ESSAY CONTEST:

**THEME - “How my Acts of Service Help Me Understand What my Community Means to Me”**



Clubs should consider sponsoring an essay contest with monetary awards and medals. Winning essays from each club are to be submitted to: **Judy Boyd**

EMAIL: boydjudy@gmail.com

SNAIL MAIL: 4512 80<sup>th</sup> Place Urbandale, IA  
50322

**DUE DATE:** February 28

## ORATORICAL CONTEST:

**THEME - “The Moment I Realized I Belonged - My Definition of Community”**

Clubs should consider sponsoring an oratorical contest with monetary awards and medals. If your club plans on participating contact:

**Jeff Schmatt**

EMAIL: jschmatt@gmail.com

SNAIL MAIL: 1401 Holman’s Rd. Mt Vernon, IA 52314

## **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

Club Contests - February/March

Zone Contest - on or before March 28

Regional Contests - on or before April 4

Final District Competition - April 18 at 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter  
Conference

