



# THE SPARK



Iowa District Optimist Newsletter - Vol.4. Page 1

June/Sept 2025

## Governor's Corner

Welcome to the final edition of this year's INSPIRE & IGNITE newsletter about the Iowa District Optimist and the members of this great organization! I have been blessed to be your Governor, and have been honored to represent our district with other Governors, other Regions, and at Optimist International this past year. There have been opportunities to promote our organization, add new members, add new clubs and get the word out about our community commitments to young people as well as other members of society in those communities that need our help in ways that are meaningful, educational and supportive.

**Optimist International's Purpose:** To develop optimism as a philosophy of life utilizing the tenets of the Optimist Creed, to promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs, to inspire respect for the laws, to promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people, to aid and encourage the development of youth in the belief that giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life and the world.

**Optimist International's Mission Statement:** By providing hope and positive vision, Optimist bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves.

In addition to these important statements, our District developed another purpose for our members during the 2024-2025 Governor's Retreat that states:

**District Purpose:** To EMPOWER our members to be SELF-CONFIDENT to step into LEADERSHIP with OPPORTUNITIES to promote OPTIMISM to IMPACT our COMMUNITIES.

This particular statement was developed by our leadership to empower ALL members of our District to take the opportunities to grow in your Optimist convictions and gain the confidence to step into leadership roles such as Club Presidents, Club Secretaries/Treasurers, Club Foundation Representatives, Club Committee Chairs, District Lt. Governors/Governor Assistants, District Committee Chairs, District Foundation Representatives and the list is endless. These roles and/or positions can be absolutely transformative for anyone, including you, that may be seeking a deeper understanding of Optimist International's and the Iowa District Optimist's outreach of service to those who need us. Without great leadership, we fail to meet the needs of our most vulnerable. What would our world look like without our community service? What would the world look like without your input, your knowledge, skills, compassion for others?

Consider expanding your world view and step into a leadership role for your club or the Iowa District Optimist. Consider attending one, two or all four (4) District quarterly meetings and Convention that are purposely planned to make it convenient for you to attend at least one if not all. Contrary to what you may think, YES, we as a District, try to accommodate all our members so they can attend conferences. It can be disappointing that conferences or conventions are not always in your neighborhood but, keep in mind, our District covers the entire state of Iowa, and you can't live everywhere, right?

So read the Iowa District Purpose statement again. Consider taking the step to lead. Consider attending a District conference. Consider expanding your knowledge and deepen your conviction that Optimist International and the Iowa District Optimist are dedicated to bring impactful services for the needs of our communities. – Governor Sue

Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid of standing still.

– Chinese Proverb



# THE SPARK



Iowa District Optimist Newsletter Vol.4. Page 2

June/Sept 2025

## Announcements



Join me in welcoming Jane Schmidt as our 2025-2026 Iowa District Governor! Her theme this year is “Cultivate Optimism Across Iowa”. Jane is a member of the Maquoketa Optimist Club, 52 members strong, and has been an Optimist since 2013. Congratulations, Jane, **Your year will be fabulous!!**

## Important Dates to Remember

Quarterly Conference #1: October 17-18 at The Courtyard by the Marriott in Ankeny, IA

Quarterly Conference #2: Zoom by Zoon – January 31 from 9:30 – 11:30am

Quarterly Conference #3: April 17-18 at Hotel Millwright at the Amana Colonies, Amana, IA

District Convention: August 28-30 at the Grand Harbor in Dubuque, IA

## INSPIRE & IGNITE TEAM NOTES

My Inspire & Ignite team EXCEEDED my expectations this year in providing thoughtful and insightful meaning to carry out the quarterly themes of: Kindle the Spark, Fan the Flames, Light My Fire, and Burn Baby Burn! I could not have had a more supportive team to carry on the mission of finding our voices and communicating to the masses the world of Optimism! I would like to invite you to thank my team when you meet them next time: Cyndi Barber, Dis. Sec/Trea. Without her by my side, I would certainly be lost! Governor’s Advisor: Marguerite Fehseke, Audit & Finance: Chair, Judy Boyd, CQI: Chair, Don Pfeiffer, CCDHH: Chair, Leonard Wright, CHW: Chair, Lynnae Hillyer, Convention: Co-Chairs, Kelli Baumbach, Susie Enewold, Essay: Chair, Ann Feilmann, Foundation Rep: Chair, Mark Feilmann, Growth Team: Mike Sullivan, Mark Feilmann, Rich May, Theresa Dunkin, Historian: Dennis McGregor, Junior Golf: Chair, John Danielson, JOI: Chair, Gerri Barnett, Leadership & Development: Co-Chairs, Jane Schmidt, Lynnae Hillyer, OI Youth Activities: Chair, Janet Lloyd, Oratorical: Chair, Jeff Schmatt, Sergeant-At-Arms: Darlene Smith, Webmaster/Marketing/Social Media: Co-Chairs, Erin Houseton, Zeke Potter, OI Ambassador: Judy Boyd.



Governor’s Retreat August 24, 2024 – Newton Arboretum, Newton, IA



# THE SPARK



Iowa District Optimist Newsletter Vol.4. Page 3

June/Sept 2025

## In Case You Missed IT...

### Oratorical Winner: Advik Bajpal



RD Keep, Advik Bajpal and his mom

### Essay Winner: Adonawit Meshesha



Judy Boyd, Adonawit Meshesha, Noah Jackson

## INTRODUCING THE "NEW" NEWTON OPTIMIST CLUB!!



**The Newton Optimist Club** was officially organized August 25, 2025. Mark Feilmann, Rich May, Jane Schmidt were instrumental in the recruitment and organization of this club. We, and our new members, were all able to make this a win-win for the Newton community... determination, perseverance and all things Optimist! Welcome to the Optimist Family! L to R standing: Jane Schmidt-Gov, Mark Feilmann-Growth, Becky Lee, Mark Cahill, Pam Hackathorn, Megan Garrett, me. Seated: Jane Johnson, Board Member, Cookie Fuzell, Club Sec., Sue Nolin, Club Pres., Jamie Bennett, Club Trea., John Lee, Board Member. The club plans to meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month beginning Oct 8, 2025 at First Interstate Bank.



# THE SPARK



Iowa District Optimist Newsletter Vol.4. Page 4

June/Sept 2025

## Other Endeavors

One of the contracts that Optimist International proposed was for outgoing Governors during their last quarter and incoming Governors during their first quarter to coordinate efforts in club building, giving credit to both Governors for new clubs. Jane and I were presented at the Optimist International Convention in St. Louis with a contract that we actually signed and filed with Optimist International that we will do what it takes to assist in building new clubs throughout the state of Iowa. Newton was the first club to come in during the last quarter of 2024-2025, however, exciting news has come to the District that great strides have been made to form new clubs in Keokuk and Waukee! Isn't that wonderful?! Our District has the opportunity to build upon the OI Mission Statement, and the District Purpose to organize an Optimist Club so they can do good works for their community!! Other areas of new club building mentioned are Clinton, Creston, Greenfield, or do you have a suggestion? Is there a need for a service organization such as ours in a neighboring town? Is there a place for an additional club in a large metropolitan area? Can you think of a friend or colleague, business or another organization that would definitely benefit by becoming Optimists or assist in forming a new club? Let us know if there is...we would love the chance to make that happen!!

**Inspire & Ignite Growth Team 2024-2025:** Mark Feilmann, Rich May, Sue Wunsch, and Jane Schmidt

**Cultivate Optimism Across Iowa Growth Team 2025-2026:** Dave Phillips, Marge Hopkins, Sue Wunsch, and Jane Schmidt

I want to encourage you to move forward with the idea of New Club development and want to remind you that help is available every step of the way during your project. Use the phone numbers on the cover page to ask questions. An email will also do the trick to [newclub@optimist.org](mailto:newclub@optimist.org) or [membership@optimist.org](mailto:membership@optimist.org). The staff at Optimist International is ready to assist you throughout the New Club development process. Kindly note the appendix notes at the end of the guide for additional information

So take some time to review this guide and if it produces any questions, just ask. Good luck on your project and thank you for spreading the mission of Optimist International to a new community.

Director of New Club Development and Growth  
Optimist International

\*A snippet from the OI New Club Building Guide available on [www.optimist.org](http://www.optimist.org)  
New Club: 314-881-1327  
Membership: 314-881-1326



# THE SPARK



## Iowa District Optimist – State of the Union – September 30, 2025 (preliminary)

Here is where we stand with the District as of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025:

### T-Shot Report ran 10/01/2025:

Zone: 0	Club	Status	Oct 1 2024	Sep 1 2025	Sep 30 2025	+	Month -	MTD Net	+	Year -	YTD Net	Ctr	LM	Colg	Friend	
40999	DISTRICT #40, IOWA (IA)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
40FOB	FRIEND OF OPTIMIST BUNDLE #40		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
40FOO	FRIEND OF OPTIMIST #40		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Zone Total Active Clubs:			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
District Total Active Clubs:			55	1585	1479	1468	25	36	-11	130	247	-117	190	255	14	57

As you can see, we have 1468 active clubs, 130 Adds of new members, and a change (add and deletes) of 247 members, with a net standing at -117 members (less). The newly formed Newton Optimist Club has not been included in this report. Their new club information is still going through the OI systems and processes. Therefore, we can add their roster count of 17 new members to this total making the net standing at -100.

This is the Scoreboard Report from OI that looks at the Iowa District membership trends per Zone. I have included the last four (4) years so you can see the trend of the District membership levels.

### Year: 2024-2025-

District	Dist Rank	Clubs					Membership								Financial			
		Begin Clubs	New Clubs	NC Credit	Dsbd Rvkd	Curr Clubs	Begin Mbrs	Mbrs Add	Mbrs Del	New Friend Add	Friend total	Curr Mbrs	Net	Mbrs % Attained	Mbrs % Retention	Clubs 61-90	Clubs 91-120	Clubs 120+
40-IA	29	54	1	2	0	55	1,585	130	247	12	57	1,468	-117	92.62	84.54	0	1	2
Zone: 0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zone: 1		2	0	0	0	2	40	3	2	0	0	41	1	102.50	95.00	0	1	1
Zone: 2		9	0	0	0	9	292	14	26	0	0	280	-12	95.89	91.10	0	0	0
Zone: 3		4	0	0	0	4	115	4	9	0	1	110	-5	95.65	92.17	0	0	0
Zone: 4		7	0	1	0	7	122	19	30	1	7	111	-11	90.98	75.41	0	0	0
Zone: 5		3	1	1	0	4	50	20	2	0	0	68	18	136.00	96.00	0	0	0
Zone: 6		5	0	0	0	5	132	12	23	1	4	121	-11	91.67	82.58	0	0	0
Zone: 7		6	0	0	0	6	207	8	20	0	0	195	-12	94.20	90.34	0	0	0
Zone: 8		5	0	0	0	5	184	17	28	9	13	173	-11	94.02	85.33	0	0	0
Zone: 9		5	0	0	0	5	221	19	57	1	12	183	-38	82.81	74.66	0	0	0
Zone: 10		7	0	0	0	7	192	8	28	0	20	172	-20	89.58	85.42	0	0	0
Zone: 13		1	0	0	0	1	30	6	22	0	0	14	-16	46.67	26.67	0	0	1

### Year: 2023-2024-

District	Dist Rank	Clubs					Membership								Financial			
		Begin Clubs	New Clubs	NC Credit	Dsbd Rvkd	Curr Clubs	Begin Mbrs	Mbrs Add	Mbrs Del	New Friend Add	Friend total	Curr Mbrs	Net	Mbrs % Attained	Mbrs % Retention	Clubs 61-90	Clubs 91-120	Clubs 120+
40-IA	6	54	1	2	1	54	1,562	246	223	36	72	1,585	23	101.47	86.17	0	1	0
Zone: 0		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	-1	0.00	0.00	0	0	0
Zone: 1		3	0	0	1	2	59	4	23	0	0	40	-19	67.80	61.02	0	0	0
Zone: 2		9	0	0	0	9	273	34	15	0	0	292	19	106.96	94.87	0	0	0
Zone: 3		4	0	0	0	4	119	13	17	2	2	115	-4	96.64	85.71	0	0	0
Zone: 4		7	0	0	0	7	112	32	22	4	9	122	10	108.93	83.04	0	0	0
Zone: 5		3	0	0	0	3	65	3	18	0	1	50	-15	76.92	72.31	0	0	0
Zone: 6		5	0	1	0	5	123	20	11	4	8	132	9	107.32	91.06	0	0	0
Zone: 7		6	0	0	0	6	219	14	26	0	1	207	-12	94.52	88.13	0	0	0
Zone: 8		5	0	0	0	5	168	32	17	5	7	183	15	108.93	89.88	0	1	0
Zone: 9		5	0	0	0	5	232	21	32	9	16	221	-11	95.26	86.21	0	0	0
Zone: 10		6	1	1	0	7	164	51	22	12	28	193	29	117.68	87.80	0	0	0
Zone: 13		1	0	0	0	1	27	22	19	0	0	30	3	111.11	33.33	0	0	0



# THE SPARK



Iowa District Optimist – State of the Union – September 30, 2025 (preliminary) continued

Year 2022-2023-

District	Dist Rank	Clubs					Membership								Financial			
		Begin Clubs	New Clubs	NC Credit	Dsbd Rvkd	Curr Clubs	Begin Mbrs	Mbrs Add	Mbrs Del	New Friend Add	Friend total	Curr Mbrs	Net	Mbrs % Attained	Mbrs % Retention	Clubs 61-90	Clubs 91-120	Clubs 120+
40-IA																		
Zone: 0		0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	1	1	-1	50.00	0.00	0	0	0
Zone: 1		3	0	0	0	3	60	1	2	0	0	59	-1	98.33	98.33	0	1	0
Zone: 2		5	0	0	1	4	143	16	32	0	1	127	-16	88.81	77.62	0	0	0
Zone: 3		6	0	0	0	6	175	7	20	0	2	162	-13	92.57	88.57	0	0	0
Zone: 4		2	0	0	0	2	55	8	6	0	0	57	2	103.64	89.09	0	0	0
Zone: 5		2	0	0	0	2	56	8	3	0	2	61	5	108.93	94.64	0	0	0
Zone: 6		8	0	0	1	7	155	11	54	5	9	112	-43	72.26	65.81	0	0	0
Zone: 7		3	0	0	0	3	81	3	19	1	2	65	-16	80.25	76.54	0	0	0
Zone: 8		4	0	0	0	4	130	5	27	3	10	108	-22	83.08	79.23	0	0	0
Zone: 9		2	0	0	0	2	77	8	12	0	0	73	-4	94.81	84.42	0	0	0
Zone: 10		10	0	0	0	10	409	42	50	5	19	401	-8	98.04	88.02	0	1	0
Zone: 11		4	0	0	0	4	162	4	20	0	1	146	-16	90.12	87.65	0	0	0
Zone: 12		6	0	0	0	6	189	14	39	1	22	164	-25	86.77	81.48	0	0	0
Zone: 13		1	0	0	0	1	28	25	26	0	0	27	-1	96.43	32.14	0	0	0
40-IA	38	56	0	0	2	54	1,722	153	312	16	69	1,563	-159	90.77	82.69	0	2	0

Year 2021-2022-

District	Dist Rank	Clubs					Membership								Financial			
		Begin Clubs	New Clubs	NC Credit	Dsbd Rvkd	Curr Clubs	Begin Mbrs	Mbrs Add	Mbrs Del	New Friend Add	Friend total	Curr Mbrs	Net	Mbrs % Attained	Mbrs % Retention	Clubs 61-90	Clubs 91-120	Clubs 120+
40-IA																		
Zone: 0		0	0	0	0	0	6	1	5	0	2	2	-4	33.33	16.67	0	0	0
Zone: 1		3	0	0	0	3	66	0	6	0	1	60	-6	90.91	90.91	0	0	0
Zone: 2		5	0	0	0	5	131	29	17	8	8	143	12	109.16	87.02	0	0	0
Zone: 3		6	0	1	0	6	173	22	20	3	9	175	2	101.16	88.44	0	0	0
Zone: 4		3	0	0	1	2	74	3	22	0	0	55	-19	74.32	71.62	0	0	0
Zone: 5		2	0	0	0	2	57	7	8	2	2	56	-1	98.25	85.96	0	0	0
Zone: 6		8	0	1	0	8	153	30	28	2	11	155	2	101.31	82.35	0	0	0
Zone: 7		3	0	0	0	3	85	3	7	0	2	81	-4	95.29	91.76	0	0	0
Zone: 8		4	0	0	0	4	130	15	15	3	11	130	0	100.00	89.23	0	0	0
Zone: 9		2	0	0	0	2	81	8	11	0	0	78	-3	96.30	86.42	0	0	0
Zone: 10		10	0	1	0	10	395	67	52	9	27	410	15	103.80	87.85	0	0	0
Zone: 11		4	0	0	0	4	154	13	5	1	1	162	8	105.19	96.75	0	0	0
Zone: 12		6	0	0	0	6	198	16	24	6	28	190	-8	95.96	87.88	0	0	0
Zone: 13		2	0	0	1	1	46	18	36	0	0	28	-18	60.87	21.74	0	0	0
40-IA	9	58	0	3	2	56	1,749	232	256	34	102	1,725	-24	98.63	85.76	0	0	0

And Optimist International’s overall total membership changes (preliminary) as of September 2025

International Totals	Clubs					Membership								Financial			
	Begin Clubs	New Clubs	NC Credit	Dsbd Rvkd	Curr Clubs	Begin Mbrs	Mbrs Add	Mbrs Del	New Friend Add	Friend total	Curr Mbrs	Net	Mbrs % Attained	Mbrs % Retention	Clubs 61-90	Clubs 91-120	Clubs 120+
International Totals	1641	30	36	89	1582	41,256	4,867	6,874	69	362	39,249	-2007	95.14	84.37	22	169	105

What does all this mean and why am I sharing this with you? It means the trend of membership and growth within the Iowa District Optimist has been on a decline with exception of one year. You have heard in past years that our organization, as well as, all service organizations across all areas of services, have seen this trend in membership for the past several years. The good news is that Optimist International has been trending loss of membership at a lesser rate therefore, the whole organizational membership has retained our members more effectively. Currently, the Iowa District is at 84.54% retention of members, which falls within the average trend we have been experiencing in the past 4 years of the data I have provided. You can also see that these prior year’s retention % has held steady and that we are above the international level of 84.37%. I encouraged all the clubs to clean up their rosters, and you didn’t disappoint! Good Job!!



# THE SPARK



Iowa District Optimist Newsletter Vol.4. Page 7

June/Sept 2025

## Final Notes from Governor Sue

This a bittersweet moment for me as your Governor. There was tons of stuff to do and not enough time to do all of it! I attended lots of club events, District events, and Optimist International events this past year! I made some long-lasting friendships, learned a lot about Optimist International, learned a lot about our District and know that we are resilient to the trends that are happening with other service organizations. I know I missed lots of other events and didn't do everything I had planned for the year. That's why the bittersweet! I want to thank the Governor's Assistants that were at those clubs and talked with club members, attended their meetings and events and gained lots of friends along the way. I want to thank my team of INSPIRE & IGNITE, who came with me in full support of this adventure, and gave me the opportunity to be a leader, and confirm my commitment that the Iowa District Optimist is commendable in all their good works we do for our youth and our communities. Keep up the good works, get involved and help grow our membership, one person or club at a time. Remember your Elevator Speech and use it whenever you have an encounter with someone. Wear your Optimist shirts and jackets at every opportunity and engage with those who may be curious of the logo or a message or the Creed that's printed on the back. Get the word out. We have resources at hand to help with new members or clubs. Use them.

### Promise Yourself...

As you know, I like to use one of the tenets of the Creed and reflect on a personal experience that correlates with one of them. Here goes... **"To be so strong, that nothing can disturb your peace of mind"**

I live with my dad, Bob, on the same property I grew up on. He's 92 years old, going on 4. Not really, his birthday is coming up later this month and he will be 93. He was born in 1932, just after the Depression. You may or may not know this, but a lot of those who are this age cannot let go of material things very easily. They grew up "repurposing" everything that had some value to it, and maybe used it in other ways. They never threw anything away and were frugal with their money. To add to this, my dad grew up on a farm. You can probably imagine the kinds of stuff farmers can recycle or repurpose! Several years ago, Dad decided to sell off 60-ish acres of his 80-acre tract to some developers, who sold that ground in 3-5 acre plots. Over time, all of the lots were sold and some very nice houses were built, 13 homes. I can see this development from the kitchen window and reminisce of the fields of oats, corn and alfalfa we grew on that land. I used to walk those fields of oats when they turned golden and run my hands across the tops of the oats...I digress. Anyway, surveyors came to mark the "sold" ground and the developers came to talk about what their plans were. One of their plans was to rip out all the fences and dispose of the posts and fencing. You can imagine the reaction from my dad. Absolutely not! Dad decided to rip out all the fences that he and my grandpa built from 1962. So, he did. By himself. He pulled the fence posts, unhooked the fencing and rolled it all up. Since he was ripping up those fences, he decided to rip up all the other fences he built on his property. He had sold all the livestock, so there really was no purpose for a fence. Now the issue was what to do with all this stuff. Did I tell you we have several outbuildings? You can probably guess what happened! Piles. Piles of wooden posts, steel posts, rolls of fencing, buckets of extra wire, pieces of wire, chains, fasteners, gates, hinges, and whatever else he used to build fences. He kept it all. Fast forward to present day. I asked dad what he planned to do with all the fencing stuff. His response was, "Well, I'm not giving it away...I paid good money for all that!" Are you going to put up some fencing somewhere? "No, I'm done building fences". Do you think we can sell some of it? "Naw, I won't get my money out of it." So, you are just going to keep storing it? "It's alright where it's at." Ok, Dad. It's kind of comical that he would hold onto something (lots of somethings) that he will never use. He's ok with it, and I had to learn to make peace with him over it. He remembers what it took to build them. He was proud of those fences, like I'm so proud of all of you and the Iowa District Optimist.



-Governor Sue