



MAY, 2026

Jane Schmidt, Governor
Marguerite Fehseke, Secretary Treasurer



IOWA DISTRICT OPTIMISTS

CULTIVATE OPTIMISM



Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) - OIF provides monetary awards for the high school competitions and the Council Bluffs Optimist Club provides the monetary awards for the middle school contest



LeMars Optimist Club helped pack backpacks weekly for students in the area



Message from Governor Jane

Where we ended with the third quarter conference:

- 95 in attendance plus many visitors for the Oratorical Contest so well over 115
- 5 First Timers
- 5 entries in the dessert bar contest but raised over \$400 with sampling
- Raised \$3533.50 for OIF
- We are currently at -28 on Optimist Leaders Online (as of May 8, 2026)

The absolutely best part of being governor is connecting with clubs through visits. When I was younger, I was a cheerleader and sometimes you just don't outgrow some things. As Governor, it has been a pleasure to cheer on the amazing things our clubs are accomplishing in their communities while making a significant difference for youth. It was a joy to watch our regional qualifiers compete. It was amazing to see the CCDHH competition as youth explained how their community and sense of belonging was changed by entering the School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Putting together backpacks in LeMars for students with food scarcity challenges, learning about the Chrysalis Foundation providing opportunities for girls in West Des Moines, becoming part of a photo op for the Red Oak club who made a new backstop possible at the ball field, hearing about the railroad museum updates in Council Bluffs, watching the sense of pride displayed by family and students honored as Teens of the Month in Bloomfield. It has been a honor and a privilege to celebrate excellence in our Iowa Optimist Clubs as they make a difference in their communities. Let's keep **being the change** as we **cultivate optimism across Iowa!**

Governor Jane

HELP US HELP OTHERS

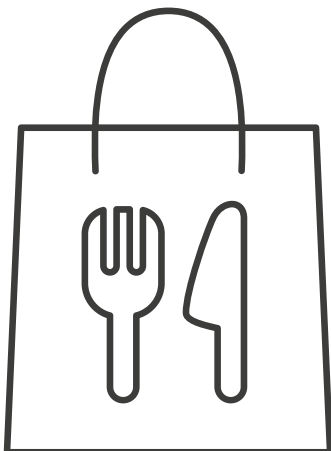
We are hoping to have a food packaging program through Meals from the Heartland at the Iowa District Optimist State Convention. This will only be possible if clubs are willing to donate to make this happen. The **Noon Club of Western DesMoines** has agreed to donate **\$1000** towards this project. Please consider a donation through your club so we can feed those facing food scarcity challenges in Iowa. The more money we raise, the more meals we can package. All meals packaged will stay in our state. **Call or email me by May 31** if your club is willing to participate through a donation. Together, we can make this happen!

Check out their website at <https://mealsfromtheheartland.org/>
(Jane Schmidt, phone 563-249-2536 or janeschmidt5@gmail.com)



The Bettendorf Optimists participated in a food packaging program with Kids Against Hunger. The Noon Club of Western DesMoines also assisted with food packaging from Meals from the Heartland. This is what our project might look like at the state convention.

Let's see if we can make it happen!



QUARTERS FOR 3rd QUARTER along with TOILETRIES!

Thank you to everyone who brought quarters to donate for families to use in the vending machines at the Ronald McDonald House in Iowa City. It was great to see how we filled the glass jar and filled a car with toiletries for this amazing service for families facing challenges.



3rd Quarter Dessert Bar Contest Results

The winner for both the best dessert bar and Fan Favorite was **Emily Johnson from the Optimist Club of Maquoketa**. She received two candy jars labeled with her award. Her recipe was Smore Bars and they were DELICIOUS!!!



From One Idea Great Things Can Happen!



In March I received a call from **Jon Eggert from the Kalona Club**. He wondered if there was anything we could do for the Nebraska farmers who lost over 900,000 acres of farmland to fires, making it very difficult to feed their livestock. It was decided that the funds raised from sampling items in the Dessert Bar Contest would go towards this effort. Between the free will donations to the contest and a generous donation of \$800 by **Mike Mona of the Noon Optimist Club of Western Des Moines**, the Iowa District Optimists sent a check to the Clinton County Cattlemen to help fill a semi sent to the farmers with feed for their livestock. The Iowa Optimists are generous and brought out the best in our community by supporting this endeavor.

Let's Keep Growing!

CONGRATULATIONS to the following clubs who have shown growth:

SIOUXLAND +1

RIVERSIDE +5 (HONOR CLUB)

COUNCIL BLUFFS +1

KIMBALLTON-ELKHORN +1

UNDERWOOD +3 (HONOR CLUB)

RED OAK +1

URBANDALE +3 (HONOR CLUB)

MANNA CARES +3 (HONOR CLUB)

RED OAK +2

DES MOINES - WESTERN DES MOINES +4 (HONOR CLUB)

URBANDALE +5 (HONOR CLUB)

AMES +1

IOWA CITY +1

SOLON +1

MAQUOKETA +5 (HONOR CLUB)

DUBUQUE MORNING +2

NORTH SCOTT +1

BETTENDORF +5 (HONOR CLUB)



A Message from our Club Building Chair: Marge Hopkins

Hello, my name is Marge Hopkins, and I serve as the New Club Building Chair for the Cultivating Optimism team. This year, we have initiated several projects aimed at establishing new clubs, and our progress has been significant. You might wonder about the value of building a new club. It is well-established that one Optimist member can serve up to 35 youth. Therefore, by forming a standard club with 15 members, you could positively impact 525 young people within your community.

You may also ask whether anyone can build a club. The answer is yes. Whether your club is interested in establishing a Club within a Club, a JOI club, or a Traditional club, these opportunities are available. There are numerous individuals within the District who can provide support throughout this process. It is essential to emphasize that ongoing support is crucial after a new club is established. Building the club is just the beginning; consistent guidance and encouragement are necessary to help it mature into a strong, thriving organization.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Governor Jane. Additionally, if you have specific interests related to club development, kindly inform us.

A & A Report

Thank you to the 11 clubs who submitted their 2 nd Quarter A and A reports. The names were entered into a random drawing with the winner being selected at the 3 rd Quarter Conference. **The club receiving the \$75 check is...drum roll please...Optimist Club of Kalona in Zone 10!**

It is highly encouraged for all clubs to complete the A and A Report. It provides a means of reflecting on what your club has done, highlighting your achievements and revealing areas where you may be able to improve.

The A and A report for 3rd Quarter is due on **July 10th** and can be submitted to IowaOptimistAandA@gmail.com. A copy of the report can be downloaded from the Iowa District Optimist website. It can be found, along with instructions for filling it out, under the Programs heading.

Why not give your club the opportunity to win \$75 next quarter? If you have any questions, Sharon Phillip's contact information is in the District Directory.

Optimist Oratorical Contest Results:

Jordyn Velitchkov - 1st Place Winner

Sophomore at Cedar Rapids Kennedy, her 2nd time going to Internationals

Sponsored by CR Thursday. Prize - \$2500

Cassi Peterson - 2nd Place Winner

Senior at Riverside

Sponsored by Riverside. Prize - \$1500

Kaley Swanson - 3rd Place Winner

Senior at Ankeny High School.

Sponsored by Ankeny. Prize - \$1000

Alex Nye - Honorable Mention

8th Grader from Underwood Middle School

Sponsored by Underwood.



International Oratorical Contest Championships will be held July 17-18th in St. Louis. Wishing all the best to Jordyn as she represents the Iowa District.

Sponsors of Two or More Members

This year those who sponsor 2 or more members receive a beautiful engraved pen created by **Carl McCarthy of Dubuque Eve Optimist Club.**

Let's keep Carl busy crafting his beautiful pens!

Those who earned a pen so far include:

Debbie Keast - Riverside

Mike Hoy - Council Bluffs

Dale Robertson - Underwood

Daniel Crouse - Red Oak

Becky Butler-Mona - Des Moines-Western Noon

Jim Boyd - Urbandale

Joleen Jorgensen - Newton

Jolynne Houck-Davis - Bloomfield

RD Keep - Oskaloosa

Shawn Conley - Iowa City

Theresa Dunkin - North Liberty

Brian Schmidt - Maquoketa

Jane Schmidt - Maquoketa

Rueben Moore, Jr. - QC Morning

Scott Bengfort - QC Morning/Bettendorf

Dave Phillips - Bettendorf

Braelynn Bertocchi - Hawkeye Optimist Club

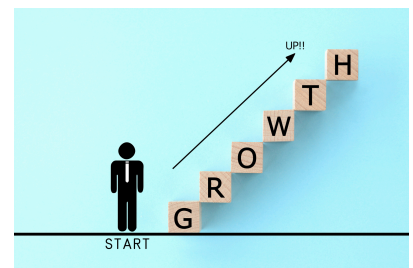


LET'S GROW!

Currently, there are 23 clubs that show negative growth from October 1. Please set a goal to return where you were on October 1, 2026. We would love to be a Distinguished District, but we need your help!

Contact your Lt. Governor, Secretary-Treasurer Marguerite Fehseke, or me if you need ideas on how to make this happen.

We would love to assist you!



Childhood Health and Wellness Grants

A message from our CHW Chair: Rebecca Butler Mona

Empowering Iowa Clubs to Champion Children's Well-being, Optimist Clubs throughout Iowa have long been passionate advocates for youth, and Optimist International's Childhood Health and Wellness initiative offers a unique opportunity to build on that legacy. By supporting projects that nurture children's physical, mental, and emotional well-being, Iowa Optimist Clubs can help create a brighter, healthier future for young people in their communities.

The Optimist International Foundation provides matching grants for up to \$1,000 to help Optimist Clubs expand their impact for meaningful projects that fit into one or more of these categories:

Four Core Categories of Childhood Health and Wellness:

- Healthy Lifestyles (Child Obesity, Healthy Eating, Physical Fitness, Happy Heart Advice, March of Dimes)
- Chronic Diseases (Childhood Cancer, Juvenile Diabetes, HIV, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Sickle Cell Anemia)
- Mental Health (Depression, Bullying, Abuse)
- Disabilities – Physical, Intellectual & Developmental (Autism, Special Olympics)

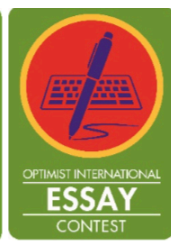
Application guidelines with a fillable form can be found at this link:

https://www.oifoundation.org/downloads/Childhood_Health_Wellness_Grant_Application_Fillable.pdf

Please note, the next deadline for grant submissions is August 21, 2026.

By applying for a Childhood Health and Wellness grant, your Optimist Club can expand your lasting impact, strengthening the foundation for our children's health and happiness.





A message from our IOF Chair: Sandi Schmidt

What do all these things have in common?

If you said “they are all supported by the Optimist International Foundation(OIF)”, you are absolutely correct! And OIF can provide that support due to the donations from Optimist members and Optimist clubs.

Thanks to the generosity of many of you amazing Iowa Optimists and your Optimist clubs, we donated over **\$3,500 to OIF and \$300 to Childhood Health & Wellness through OIF at our third quarter conference.** That is great!

When your Optimist club participates in any of these youth programs, you provide wonderful opportunities for the youth of your community, and you benefit from the support of the Optimist International Foundation. I encourage EVERY Iowa Optimist Club to donate \$100 or more to OIF. That donation provides support for all these programs AND it meets one of the requirements for your club to be recognized as a **Merit, Honor or Distinguished Club** this year.

Members, you can show your support for OIF through the Dime-A-Day program – a donation of \$36.50 or more to OIF means so much! And you’ll get this year’s Dime-A-Day pin to wear proudly.

Donations to OIF can be made at <https://www.oifoundation.org/us-canada-donate.cfm>. You can also reach out to me at schmidtsandi@gmail.com or **309-236-1342** for more information on how to donate. Every donation matters, and together we can do so much to make a difference in the lives of the youth in our communities.

Congratulations to the **Quad City Morning Optimist Club** and **Club Foundation Rep (CFR) Pam Essner** for winning the award for the largest percentage of members in the Dime-D-Day Club as of March 31 - 37.29% of their members! Pam assures me she is continuing to encourage their members to support OIF through the Dime-A-Day program. I’ll be visiting their club on May 12 to celebrate their accomplishment! Congratulations also to the **Council Bluffs Optimist Club** and **CFR Leonard Wright**, with 32.08% of their members as Dime-A-Day donors as of March 31.

CHANGES TO DISTRICT POLICIES

The Policies for our district are being uploaded on our Iowa Optimist District website for those who have not received a directory to review. If you have suggested policy changes, **please submit them to one of the Policy Committee members by June 1: Cynthia Barber** (clbarbOPT@outlook.com), **Judy Boyd** (boydjudya@gmail.com), or Sandi Schmidt (. Changes will be voted on at the State Convention in Dubuque, IA, August 28-30.

ZOOM IN JUNE

On Saturday, June 13, all members across Iowa are welcome to join our **Zoom In June** meeting with the topic: **FUNDraising and Raising FUN**. You will learn about fundraising ideas and how to have fun with your fellow club members. Please join us from 9:30-10:45 AM.



CLUB IMPACT REPORT

This year the **Club Impact Report** replaces the Club Pride Report. Links to this report have been sent to the club presidents and secretaries and can be found on the Optimist Leaders Online website. It is a place to record each of your club events as they happen instead of waiting until September to report them. It is fun to see how many hours clubs are serving and how many people they are impacting. Please check out OI's website for details on completing this report.



OPTIMIST OF THE YEAR

I am inviting each club to **nominate one member as their Optimist of the Year 2025-2026** - someone who has served above and beyond during this Optimist year, a person who has lived the Optimist Creed and brought out the best in youth, the community, and other club members. **Nominations should be submitted to me by July 15.** Those nominations will be listed at the State Convention and the **Optimist of the Year** will be selected and honored at the First Quarter Conference in October. The nomination form is being sent to each club member via email along with this newsletter.

**THE NEXT PAGE IS A FLYER YOU CAN USE TO ADVERTISE OUR STATE CONVENTION IN AUGUST.
REGISTER AS SOON AS YOU CAN....**

☀️ Optimists: Bridging the Future Together By Cultivating Optimism! ☀️ Iowa District Optimist State Convention 2026

Join us for a weekend of inspiration, fellowship, and service on the scenic banks of the Mississippi River. Let's celebrate our impact and recharge our mission for the youth of Iowa!

📅 When & Where

- **Dates:** August 28–30, 2026
- **Location:** Grand Harbor Convention Center
- **City:** Dubuque, IA



🗨️ Event Highlights Being Scheduled

- **Inspirational Keynote Speakers:** Get ready to be motivated by a powerful message on leadership, resilience, and the "Power of Optimism."
- **Service in Action:** Join our **Food Packaging Program** as we work together to combat hunger in our local communities. (Can only be done with monetary support from clubs!)
- **Music Bingo:** Put your ears to the test! A high-energy evening of hits, prizes, and rhythmic competition. *Donations support the Project Rooted Program*
- **"Chuck a Duck" Contest:** Aim for the prize! Participate in our signature fundraiser—who knew rubber ducks could be so competitive? *Donations support the 2X2 Program*

🏠 Accommodations

The **Grand Harbor Resort & Waterpark** offers stunning river views and top-tier amenities.

- *Discounted room blocks are available for registered attendees and include waterpark passes.*
- *Bring the family—the waterpark is just steps away!*

📝 Registration Details

Plan an end-of-summer vacation! Don't miss out on the premier Iowa District event of the year!

- **Registration before:** July 28
- **Contact:** Visit the Iowa District website or use the forms in May's |newsletter to register

Bringing Out the Best in Youth, in our Communities, and in Ourselves. See you in Dubuque!



2025-2026 Iowa District Optimist Convention

REGISTRATION FORM

August 28 - 30, 2026

Grand Harbor Resort at 350 Bell Street in Dubuque, IA 52001 PHONE: 563-690-4000

Rooms \$159 (plus taxes/fees), Room Block expires July 28, 2026
Price includes full breakfast and access to the water park.

Full Registration (if registered by July 28, 2026) Includes: \$135

General Sessions, Training, Model Club Luncheon, Friday Fun Night, Governor's Banquet & All-Optimist Breakfast

AFTER JULY 28 - PRICE IS \$175

Prices below are single event registration amounts

Friday, August 28, 2026

Friday Fun Night (included in full registration) \$30 _____ AFTER JULY 28 -
PRICE IS \$50

Saturday, August 29, 2026

Model Club Luncheon (included in full registration) \$45 _____ AFTER JULY 28 -
PRICE IS \$65

Governor's Banquet & Entertainment (in the beautiful River Room - looking out over the Mississippi River)

(included in full registration) \$55 _____ AFTER JULY 28 -
PRICE IS \$75

Sunday, August 30, 2026

All Optimist Breakfast (included in full registration) \$35 _____ AFTER JULY 28 -
PRICE IS \$45

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Make check payable to:

**Iowa District Optimist Convention 2026
Attn: Barb Perleth
2455 Rolling Creek Lane, Dubuque, IA 52003**

NOTE: One form per person please

Name: _____

Club Name, Number, Club Position:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Special Food Needs: _____

E-Mail: _____

