



MARCH, 2026

Jane Schmidt, Governor
Marguerite Fehseke, Secretary Treasurer



IOWA DISTRICT OPTIMISTS

CULTIVATE OPTIMISM



Des Moines Metro Area Optimists Annual Youth
Appreciation Week Celebration

REMINDER for the 3rd QUARTER CONFERENCE:

- Hotel RSVPs for Third Quarter Conference must be made by March 13 to secure the Iowa District Discount! (If you book 2 nights, the discount is accepted.)
- Bring dessert bars for the contest! And money to vote on winners!
- Bring quarters and toiletries for the Ronald McDonald House! (WISH LIST ON Pg.7)
- Bring a laptop and a team to work on Facebook Marketing during our afternoon workshop.
- Bring a basket for the OIF auction!

REMEMBER...

Message from Governor Jane

"No one stands so tall as when they stoop to help another." A message so true especially for us who belong to Optimists Clubs. I has been such a privilege to visit clubs across Iowa and see the projects you are doing to bring out the best.

Recently, I had the honor to facilitate the CARES program for Underwood. (Celebrate-Address-Recognize-Excel) The members of a club are sent a 4-question survey and return them to the facilitator. I took the answers and bulleted them under each question with no names attached. That input was discussed by the club providing a foundation upon which to build and perhaps make changes to their work. The questions are simple:

1. What do you feel went well with the Club this year? – this tells us our strengths as a club.
2. What do you feel the Club needs to work on? – this tells us our weaknesses
3. What makes you happy to be a Member of your Optimist Club?
4. Do you have a new idea for the Club as a Community Service Project/Youth Activity/Fundraiser? Describe? – tells us what direction our club should go in, but there is no pressure to bring it up. It also allows members to introduce a new idea or one they have introduced in the past and not have to stand up in front of the group if they don't want to. It also allows someone else to bring up the idea who is not tied to the club directly. You might consider holding a CARES program for your club as we seek to enhance what we do in our communities. Don't forget to celebrate your successes and your club members – cake is always nice!

We are still looking for ways to grow our clubs. Let's keep **being the change** as we **cultivate optimism across Iowa!**

Governor Jane

A MESSAGE FROM OUR A&A CHAIR: Sharon Phillips

Congratulations to the **Optimist Club of Red Oak** who was selected by random drawing to receive \$75 for submitting the A and A report for the 1 st Quarter! Thank you to the 21 clubs who submitted reports. If only 6 additional clubs submit reports for the 2 nd quarter, the district will have 50% participation. Let's go for it!



Following are some tips on filling out the form:

- Remember to add club name, club number and zone number at the top of the form.
- Report only on what was accomplished in the current reporting quarter.
- Activities that are performed more than once during the quarter can be indicated by recording more than one X or by inserting the number of occurrences on the one line instead of recording each on a separate line.
- If needed, additional rows can be inserted in the document under the "OI Signature Programs", "Club Projects" and "Club Fundraisers" categories.
-



The A and A report for 2 nd Quarter is due on April 10 th . Another \$75 will be randomly awarded. I encourage all clubs to submit a report to **IowaOptimistAandA@gmail.com**. If you have any questions, Sharon's contact information is in the District Directory.

Optimist Oratorical Contest

Zone contests are held if there are more than 2 participants who have won at the club level, otherwise, the 2 will be sent to regional competition.

EAST REGION - contest April 4, Lisbon Library

CENTRAL REGION - tentatively 11 - organized by Noah Jackson and other Lt. Governors

WEST REGION - organized by George Volz



Baskets for Third Quarter Conference



Start getting those baskets ready for the Optimist International Foundation auction! The theme for third quarter will be: ***Spring into Optimism*** - focus on planting and growing things, as well as enjoying all the fun spring and summer have to offer.

Looking for ideas on how to grow your club?

Here are even more ideas:

- Consider holding a CARES program
- Continue to build your presence on social media - let your community know what you are doing
- Consider asking the following to join: retired teachers, retired social workers, stay-at-home parents, retired nurses, empty nesters

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

SIouxLAND +1

RIVERSIDE +4

COUNCIL BLUFFS +1

KIMBALLTON-ELKHORN +1

UNDERWOOD +3

RED OAK +2

URBANDALE +6

OSKALOOSA +1

IOWA CITY +1

MAQUOKETA +2

DUBUQUE MORNING +1

DAVENPORT NOON +2

BETTENDORF +5



KEEP GROWING!



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:

- **Third Quarter Conference:** April 17-18, 2026
 - Location: Amana Colonies, IA (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 **PLEASE COME!!!!!!**
 - Location: Dubuque, IA
 - THEME: Bringing out the Best



QUARTERS FOR 3rd QUARTER along with TOILETRIES!

At the Ronald McDonald House, the vending machines in the basement are the only items for which the families pay. Your quarters will be provided for families facing health challenges to purchase drinks from the vending machines. Let's see how many quarters we can collect for these families! You will deposit your quarters in a glass jar at the conference. They are also in need of toiletries so bring them along! (Wish list on pg. 7 of the newsletter.) We will present everything to our RMH speaker at our conference.

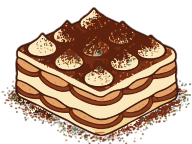


GUEST SPEAKERS:

- Oratorical contestants
- 2025 Iowa Teacher of the Year
- Ronald McDonald House of Iowa City Volunteer Manager



REMINDER: 3rd Quarter Dessert Bar Contest



We have already determined the best cookie bakers in the IA District Optimist Clubs - Chosen by JOI members - **Janet Lloyd** (Des Moines) with Fan Favorite - chosen by attendees - **Emily Johnson** (Maquoketa). Now it is time to determine the **best dessert bar maker** in our Optimist Clubs. Bring your pans of bars to third quarter. The bars should not need refrigeration and may be your special brownie recipe. Judges will sample and vote for the best dessert bar. Attendees are invited to bring money to sample the bars and vote for a fan favorite. Let's see how many entries we can receive. Remaining bars will be delivered to the local police departments.

Optimist International Foundation News

Iowa Optimists, you are AMAZING! At the end of January, our District was #2 of all Districts in donations to the Optimist International Foundation (OIF) this Optimist year. Thank you for your support of the OIF! Our goal for OIF donations for the 2025-26 Optimist year is \$26,500, as set by the OIF Board of Directors. We are well on our way, and together we can meet (or exceed) that goal.

Dime-A-Day Competition

Let's go all out with Dime-A-Day donations. When you donate \$36.50 or more to OIF, you'll receive this great pin as a thank you for your support. And to add a little fun, we're having a couple of contests! **Every Optimist member** who becomes a Dime-A-Day member by March 31 will have their name added to a drawing for a fun gift basket (all members who've already made that \$36.50 or greater donation are already included in the drawing. The **Optimist Club** with the greatest percentage of their members as Dime-A-Day members by March 31 will receive a fun prize. Both prizes will be presented at our 3rd quarter conference on April 18.

From the last report I received, these are the top two clubs in our Dime-A-Day contest:

- Wayne-Corydon – 18.6%
- Quad City Morning – 16.95%

I'm sure the competition will heat up through the rest of March! I'm looking forward to seeing some solid participation from each of your clubs.

3rd Quarter Conference Foundation Fun(d)-raising

At each conference, we hold a silent auction to raise funds for the Optimist International Foundation. The theme for 3rd Quarter is **Spring into Optimism** – plan your item for the silent auction to think about growing things (gardening, plants, etc.) and fun activities to be enjoyed during the spring and summer. I can't wait to see what kind of creative ideas you come up with!

Be sure you come prepared to bid on all the great offerings. Remember, it's not about getting the best bargain – it's about raising money to support the Optimist International Foundation and all they do to support our clubs, members and Optimist International.



We're having a raffle to award this OIF print! **A Legacy of Giving for the Children** is the theme OIF President Fatima Plater has chosen for this year.

You'll be able to buy tickets for a chance to win this framed print for just \$10 each. You can buy as many chances as you'd like to increase your chances of "winning" this print.

The raffle tickets will be available at our 3rd Quarter Conference and our District Convention in August. The winner will be announced at the District Convention.

Club Grant Applications

Last call to submit your Club Grant applications to the Optimist International Foundation. The deadline for these grant applications to arrive at the OIF office is March 20, 2026. Club grants are matching grants in the amount of \$250-\$1000 for a NEW project. The application and all the information are at <https://www.oifoundation.org/club-grant.html>.

Thank you for your support of the Optimist International Foundation! Let me know if you have any questions or want any additional information.

Sandi Schmidt, District Foundation Rep, schmidtsandi@gmail.com, 309-236-1342

Membership Growth Goals for this Program Year:

1) Attain a net +50 in membership.

Based on OI's projection that each new member provides the opportunity to have a positive impact on additional 35 youth, attaining this goal would result in, potentially, making a positive impact on 1,750 additional youth.

2) Charter three Optimist clubs.

Attaining this goal would result in the opportunity to have a positive impact on a significant number of youth in three additional communities. How Awesome is that!

3) Every club a Merit or Honor Club - Merit means you maintain you membership # from Oct. 1 and Honor means you grow by +3 members.

I trust that all of us receive much joy and satisfaction in making a positive impact on the youth in our respective communities. Wouldn't it be gratifying to introduce this opportunity to others? (to include individuals and businesses whom can't make the time commitment to be a regular member but would like to support the positive impact our respective clubs are making in our communities by being a Friend of Optimists).

An Optimistic View. Through the end of February, only 40 of our 1,436 members have recruited at least one new member. If just an additional 7% of our existing members would recruit just one member, an additional 103 members would be added to our membership rolls; increasing the percentage to 15% would add 215 members. Let's see how we can grow!



Dave Phillips
District Membership Engagement Chair

When you drop one, add one! Let's keep growing as we cultivate Optimism across Iowa!

OPPORTUNITY TO WORK AS A CLUB TEAM

At the 3rd quarter conference, there will be a workshop in the afternoon designed for you club members to work on creating ads and other promotional ideas to market your club. Make sure at least one of those in attendance from your club has a laptop for this very valuable and hands on learning time. The workshops will be presented by Erin Houston, our District Social Media Chair, and Bob Dunkin. Lt. Governor for Zones 7 & 13 and also a digital creator.

CREATING DOOR DECORATIONS

We will be creating door decorations for the Ronald McDonald House at 3rd quarter conference. All materials will be provided.



RONALD MCDONALD WISH LIST ***(Please bring items to 3rd Quarter)***

- *Laundry detergent (Scent and dye-free)*
- *Dishwasher liquid or pods*
- *Clorox wipes*
- *Sponges/Magic Erasers*
- *Postage stamps*
- *Durable paper plates & bowls*
- *Toilet paper*
- *Paper towels*
- *Cleaning supplies (Pledge, toilet cleaner, etc.)*
- *Deodorant*
- *Contact lens solution—travel size*
- *Full size & travel size body lotion*
- *Full size & travel size shampoo and conditioner*
- *Deodorant*
- *Grooming items (hairbrushes, razors, etc.)*
- *Batteries (all sizes)*



A NOTE ABOUT THE FORMATION OF YOUNG ADULT OPTIMIST CLUBS

Hello Club Presidents

The school year is nearing its close (hard to believe there's about 2 1/2 months left in the academic year). And with it our high school JOI Clubs will graduate their seniors. For some of these students it will be a bittersweet time as they leave the fun and the friends they made through JOI. One other loss will be the service and volunteerism that their JOI Club instilled in them. But, must that happen? As these young people pursue individual pathways, what if their Optimism could be sustained and go with them?

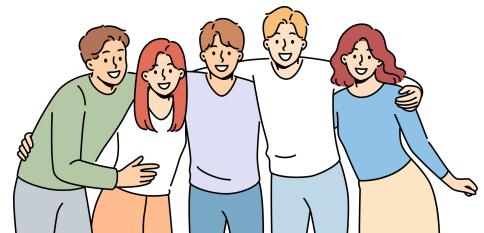
For those clubs who sponsor a high school JOI club, I would like to keep you, as President, in the loop. I will be contacting your club's JOI Advisor sharing a letter of information from Optimist International for their graduates to consider the opportunity of being a part of a **Young Adult Optimist Club**.

An excerpt from the OI letter states: "Young Adult Clubs are designed for members ages 18 to 25 and offer a meaningful way for graduates to remain connected—to the organization, to the friendships they have built, and to new relationships that will enrich their personal and professional lives. These clubs may meet in person or virtually, depending on where members live, making participation both flexible and accessible.

One of the most empowering aspects of a Young Adult Optimist Club is that members choose their own service projects. This allows them to focus on causes that matter most to them while continuing to live out the Optimist mission in ways that are relevant to their stage of life."

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. Many thanks to you and your club for providing the youth of your community the experience of the joy of JOI!

~gerri barnett, IA District JOI chair



REMINDER OF GOALS FOR 3rd Quarter Conference

- 120 in attendance
- 10 First Timers
- 10 entries in the dessert bar contest
- Raise \$5000 for OIF
- Be at 0 or + for our district membership (We are currently at -36!)

Let's see how we do!

A Request from Iowa's Jr. Optimist Governor Ella Pruitt



Coming soon, on **Saturday, March 29**, our JOI clubs will hold a Summit at the **West Des Moines Public Library**. Part of this will be a service project to help the Youth and Shelter Services (YSS) Lighthouse Program which helps families facing homelessness. The service project will be creating bags with items that the kids in the families need.

These items are needed:

Diapers (any size), Baby Wipes, Soap, Shampoo, Conditioner, Body Wash (full sizes best), Laundry Supplies, Clorox Wipes, Household Cleaning Items. No toothbrushes needed, but toothpaste donations would be great!!!!

On behalf of our JOI Clubs, I am asking the Iowa Optimists if they would help with donations of any of the above items. JOI members come from all over Iowa. If you would contact the IA JOI Chair Gerri Barnett (319-470-0417 or jooiful@gmail.com), she will make arrangements for collecting your donations.

Thank you so very much for helping us and supporting JOI!

OPTIMIST CLUB OF NORTH LIBERTY

PAN CAKE FEST

MARCH 14

7:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.
NORTH LIBERTY REC. CENTER

PANCAKES
RUZICKA SAUSAGE
EGGS

More Info: go to optimistnl.org



Upcoming Events

Free Free Free Free Free

March 21, Saturday
9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Underwood Middle School
Rain or Shine!



Build & Fly Kites

For Kids to Build & Fly with their Families
For Kids of all ages

- **Free Kites**
- We help kids Build their kite.
- Kids decorate their kite with provided color markers.
- Will Fly outside behind M.S. (weather permitting).
- Take your Kites home.
- Omaha Kite Club will fly their huge kites south of M.S.

Sponsored by: Underwood Optimist Club



Bike Helmet and Fitting
Ages 1 to 14

Free Bike Helmet for each kid ages 1 to 14.

- Helmets will be fitted to current safety standards.
- Please don't bring bikes.

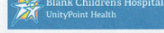
Bikes Give-a-way:

- 2 bikes given away (1 boys and 1 girls)
- Drawing at 10:45
- Kids enter free but must register in M.S. when building a kite or fitted with helmet.

Co-Sponsored by:



State Farm
Derek Kinder, Agency



Blank Children's Hospital
UnityPoint Health



Sugar Mountain
Truck will be there!
Vendor charges

By Underwood High School J.O.I. Optimist Club

Thanks to the Underwood Schools for allowing use of the facilities.

Coordinated by the Underwood Optimist Club

Volunteers:

- Underwood Optimist Club
- Underwood High School J.O.I. Optimist Club
- Underwood Middle School J.O.I. Optimist Club



2026

Chicken Dinner



Sunday
April 12

U.M.B.A. Hall
Underwood, IA

Dinner Served
11:00–1:00 pm

Menu includes:

- 2 pieces of Fried Chicken
- Cheesy Hashbrowns
- Green Beans – Ice Cream – Drink

\$15 / Dinner
\$8 / ages 5 – 10
4 & under Free
Take Outs Welcome!

Live Auction
12:00 Live Auction begins
Scholarship Winners following
50/50 Raffle
Silent Auction
12:45 Silent Auction Closes

Proceeds to help fund college scholarships to Underwood students.

Fundraiser by:



Donations to: Underwood Dollars for Scholars, PO Box 113, Underwood, IA 51576.
Or Venmo@UnderwoodDollarsforScholars, note "Chicken Dinner".

Auction Donations: contact Sandy Redshaw 712-310-2151

Volunteers: contact Heather Davis 402-659-6848

Questions: contact Event Chairs Dale or Barb Robertson 402-650-2422