



JULY, 2026

Jane Schmidt, Governor  
Marguerite Fehseke, Secretary Treasurer



IOWA DISTRICT OPTIMISTS

# CULTIVATE OPTIMISM



Great Iowa  
District  
turnout for  
the  
International  
Optimist  
Convention  
June 30 –  
July 2 in  
Jacksonville,  
Florida

## Message from Governor Jane

Recently, I turned to my husband and asked, “Am I crazy for doing all of this?” It has been a whirlwind as I visit clubs and attend events around Iowa. Sometimes I really wonder about my sanity. For those who know Brian, he is a man of wisdom so he quietly stated, “I am going to give you the advice my track coach gave me – don’t just run to the tape but run through the tape.” His words have encouraged me to finish this Optimist year with all the enthusiasm and energy I can muster.

I share this same wisdom with you. We have not met our goal to be a Distinguished District but it is still doable as we grow in membership. Our goal is to be “back in balance” which means each club should strive to be back at the number of members they were on October 1, 2025. Continue to grow your membership. Your Lt. Governor and I are willing to conduct a CARES program with your club, attend a NOW (New Optimists Welcome) event, help with a social media campaign, or provide guidance on establishing a club within a club. If you are seeking ways to grow, all of these are ways your club can expand its outreach..

I am happy to announce we will be chartering a new club on Monday, July 27 at 6:00 PM at the DeWitt Library. The Bettendorf and Davenport Noon Clubs are sponsoring this club and the group is excited to begin planning on ways to bring out the best in the DeWitt community. Please send emails or cards of encouragement to me, and I will make sure they are read during their chartering night. All are welcome to attend in person, and I will work on a zoom link if you want to join us virtually. Let’s provide a warm welcome to a new club of Optimists.

Keep **being the change** as we **cultivate optimism across Iowa!**

Governor Jane

# YOU DID IT!

Last newsletter I told about our hope to have a food packaging program through Meals from the Heartland at the Iowa District Optimist State Convention. I am jumping for joy as I report to you we not only met the goal of raising \$6300 but are now at over \$9000. This means that we will be able to package more than 30,000 meals on Saturday, Aug. 29 at the Grand Harbor Convention Center.

For those clubs who pledged a donation, checks can be made out to MEALS FROM THE HEARTLAND and sent immediately to:

**Marguerite Fehseke, IA District Secretary/Treasurer**  
**145 Crestview Dr. Burlington, IA 52601**

It is important we have many members there on Saturday afternoon to accomplish this huge undertaking. Please consider taking part in this district service project during the state convention.

(See the following page for more detail.)



## Update on "Cultivating Optimism" in the Iowa District

Dave Phillips, Iowa Membership Engagement Chair

Reflecting back on my Governor-Elect training in St. Louis in 2015, it was emphasized that the number #1 goal for an incoming Governor is for his/her respective District to be Distinguished. Achieving this goal would ensure that membership across Optimist International would grow in existing clubs and new clubs would be chartered; both resulting in our organization having a positive impact on the lives of more youth.

As of the end of the 3rd Quarter of this Program Year, based on Optimist International's Scoreboard report, it appears that only 3 or 4 of the 40+ Districts are trending toward attaining this goal. I am truly Optimistic that our District can reach this goal by focusing on the following: (a) charter 3 new clubs; in addition to receiving credit for the Newton Club that was chartered last year, several club-building projects are on-going (DeWitt and Clinton efforts are progressing well); (b) retain members on club rosters (i.e., those whom are controllable-excluding members who move or pass on; (c) each Club President accept the challenge of having at least a net plus 1 membership growth during the 4th Quarter; and (d) with the start of fall classes at the University of Iowa, increase membership in the Hawkeye Optimist Club. Let's do it for the youth in our respective communities.

### Incentive Award Winners for the 3rd Quarter:

Club having the largest membership growth- Manna Cares Optimist Club (will receive a \$200 check)

Individual Winner - Bryan Lloyd (name randomly selected from the sponsors of 40 new members during the 3rd Quarter) (will receive a \$100 check)

Hand-crafted (by Carl McCarthy) OI pens - An additional ten Optimists will receive a pen for recruiting at least 2 new members this Program Year

**MORE DETAILS: Meals from the Heartland at Iowa Convention**  
**Optimists helping feed 30,000+ hungry Iowans with donations**  
**Rebecca Butler Mona, CHW chair**

We have an exciting opportunity as Optimists to make a significant, positive impact on food insecurity in Iowa when we gather at our Iowa District Optimist Convention in Dubuque on August 29. Governor Jane had a vision to provide meals for hungry families with Meals from the Heartland and challenged me as Childhood Health and Wellness Chair to see what might be possible. One in 8 Iowans suffer from food insecurity, and 1 in 3 of those are children. Meals from the Heartland provided 2M meals in Iowa last year of 21M total worldwide, and their goal is to increase that to 25M meals in 2026.

As Jane and I have shared, we have support from Meals from the Heartland to do a "mobile" meal packing event in Dubuque if we can commit to raise at least \$6,300 for 20,000 meals (at 29 cents per meal) plus \$500 to cover transportation costs. Typical of Iowa Optimists, you have risen to the challenge! In fact, we have exceeded our original goal by about \$2,000 to date -- and our NEW goal was to raise at least \$8,700 to provide 30,000 meals! We have met and exceeded that goal. Meals from the Heartland will waive the transportation fee, and every \$ will go toward providing meals. With at least 100 attendees expected, we can pack 30,000 meals in about an hour. Let's do this!

We will be packing "Taco Mac" as that is a popular meal here in Iowa (while the "Hearty Pack" meals are provided across the country and around the world). You can learn more about Meals from the Heartland and these meals on their website here:

**<https://mealsfromtheheartland.org/about/our-meals>**

We will work with Meals from the Heartland to direct our meals to regions of Iowa aligned with donations. We have sizable contributions from Optimist Clubs in the Des Moines metro and surrounding towns which are served directly by Meals from the Heartland's West Des Moines location. There is also a Food Bank for the Heartland based in Omaha which serves 16 counties in western Iowa. We plan for meals to be directed to Riverbend supporting the Quad Cities and are exploring others in eastern Iowa.

If any Optimist Club which supported the project would like to bring a box (or more) to your own local food pantry, we can arrange that. However, **please inform Rebecca Butler Mona as soon as possible of your interest in doing so**, and make sure you have contacted your food pantry in advance. Boxes hold 36 bags serving 6 people each and we will only provide fully packed boxes and will manage them in increments of \$100 donations for simplicity. Meals from the Heartland has significant warehouse capacity with pallets of 66 boxes each. We should fill about 2 pallets at our commitment level!

Thank you to Iowa Optimists for stepping up to combat hunger in this meaningful way!



***"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."***  
**— Mother Teresa**

***Thank you to the following clubs for their generous donations to  
Meals from the Heartland:***

**Council Bluffs \$1300.00**

**Des Moines-Western Noon \$1000.00**

**Dubuque Noon \$1000.00**

**Ankeny \$1000.00**

**Fort Madison \$1000.00**

**Dubuque AM \$ 500.00**

**Riverside \$ 500.00**

**Urbandale \$ 400.00**

**Maquoketa \$ 350.00**

**Bettendorf \$ 300.00**

**Des Moines \$ 300.00**

**Peosta \$ 250.00**

**Ames \$ 200.00**

**Griswold \$ 200.00**

**Mediapolis \$ 200.00**

**Underwood \$ 200.00**

**Winterset \$ 200.00**

**Shenandoah \$ 145.00**

**Newton \$ 100.00**

**Oskaloosa \$ 100.00**

**Wayne-Corydon \$ 100.00**

**Washington \$ 100.00**



**We are still accepting donations! Contact Jane Schmidt if interested.**



Congratulations to Sandi Schmidt as she completes her service on the OI Board of Directors. She represented our IA District so well!

Rich May served as a Sergeant of Arms at the OI Convention in Florida! Thanks, Rich!



## **Let's Keep Growing!**

**CONGRATULATIONS** to the following clubs who have shown growth:

**SIOUXLAND +1**

**RIVERSIDE +6 (HONOR CLUB)**

**COUNCIL BLUFFS +2**

**KIMBALLTON-ELKHORN +1**

**UNDERWOOD +3 (HONOR CLUB)**

**RED OAK +1**

**URBANDALE +3 (HONOR CLUB)**

**MANNA CARES +3 (HONOR CLUB)**

**RED OAK +3 (HONOR CLUB)**

**DES MOINES - WESTERN DES MOINES +5 (HONOR CLUB)**

**URBANDALE +5 (HONOR CLUB)**

**AMES +1**

**WATERLOO +2**

**GRINNELL +1**

**IOWA CITY +1**

**OLON +1**

**MAQUOKETA +7 (HONOR CLUB)**

**DUBUQUE MORNING +2**

**NORTH SCOTT +1**

**BETTENDORF +5 (HONOR CLUB)**



## **OPTIMIST OF THE YEAR - It's not too late!**

I am inviting each club to **nominate 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 was sent to each club member via email along with the June newsletter.

## **A & A Report**

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's contact information is in the District Directory.

## ***Optimist International World Oratorical Contest July 17-18 in St. Louis***

***The IA District will be represented by:***

***Jordyn Velitchkov – 1st Place Winner***

*Sophomore at Cedar Rapids Kennedy, her 2nd time going to Internationals and sponsored by CR Thursday.*

*Jeff Schmatt (District Oratorical Chair) along with Brian and Jane Schmidt will attend the championship contest to support Jordyn as she represents our amazing district. All the best to Jordyn!*

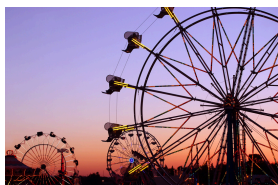


Our Iowa District Oratorical finalists from Third Quarter Conference; Jordyn is second from the left,

# IOWA STATE FAIR

The Iowa District Optimists have a presence every year at the Iowa State Fair. We have an entry in the parade on Wednesday, Aug. 12. Put on your Optimist gear and come be a part of the fair parade! (Entry #40)

**For the Optimist table in the air-conditioned Varied Industry's Building, we have the following shifts still available:**



Saturday, 8/15 - 1-5pm & 5-8pm  
Sunday, 8/16 - 9am-1pm & 1-5pm  
Wednesday, 8/19 - 1-5pm & 5-8pm  
Thursday, 8/20 - 9am-1pm & 1-5pm  
Friday, 8/21 - 5-8pm  
Saturday, 8/22 - 9am-1pm & 1-5pm & 5-8pm  
Sunday, 8/23 - 9am-1pm & 1-5pm

State Fair link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080E48AEAA2DA4F58-63165469-2026>

## OI Dues Increase – October 1, 2026

(From Sandi Schmidt, OI Board member)



In their June 27 meeting, the Optimist International Board of Directors approved a dues increase of 2.7%, as detailed in the OI Bylaws, which allow an increase in keeping with the December 2025 yearly Consumer Price Index-Cost of Living (limited to 4%).

The new OI dues, effective October 1, 2026, are:

Regular members \$93.85 (+\$2.47)

College members \$32.59 (+\$0.86)

Life members \$46.92 (+\$1.23)

This information will be published on the OI website when the Master Schedule of Dues and Fees is updated. It is being provided here to support your club as you prepare your budget for the 2026-27 Optimist year.



Iowa District dues will remain unchanged at \$15.00 per member.

# Childhood Health and Wellness Grants

## A message from our CHW Chair: Rebecca Butler Mona

Final opportunity this Optimist year: August 21, 2026 Grant Deadline

Thank you to Optimist Clubs across Iowa for your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of young people in our communities. 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](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.



# OIF News

Every dollar matters when we donate to the Optimist International Foundation! What does OIF do for us?

1. Scholarships – Oratorical, Essay, Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. This includes the District Scholarships and the Regional and World Championship Scholarships for the Oratorical Contest.
2. Junior Golf
3. Junior Optimist International
4. Support for many programs and activities of Optimist International and our members

If your club participates in any of these activities, you should definitely donate to OIF! **Your unrestricted donation of \$100 or more meets one of the requirements for your club to be recognized as a Merit, Honor or Distinguished Club for the 2025-26 Optimist year.** Your donation of \$365 or more earns you this year's banner patch acknowledging that donation. Send your donation to OIF today!

Have you signed up to be a Dime-A-Day member yet this year? For just \$36.50, you provide valuable support to the Optimist International Foundation AND you'll be able to wear your Dime-A-Day pin proudly. You can make your donation in one of these ways:

1. **Donate online - <https://www.oifoundation.org/us-canada-donate.cfm>. Be sure to note that you are an Iowa Optimist in the comment field.**
2. **Print this form - <https://www.oifoundation.org/individuals/dime-a-day-form.pdf> and mail it with your payment to OIF at the address shown on the form.**
3. **Attend our District Convention on August 28-30 in Dubuque and be part of the OIF fun(d) raising activities there.**

Last year, we had 152 Dime-A-Day members in the Iowa District. My goal for this year is to beat that number. As of May 31, we have 132 Dime-A-Day members so far this year. Make your donation now to help me meet my Dime-A-Day goal!

**Silent Auction Raffle Basket Theme:** The District Convention will be here before we know it. Our theme for the silent auction at Convention is **“Fun and Games”**. As we slide into the end of summer and start looking ahead to fall, think about these ideas for your donations to the silent auction: the last barbeque of summer, tailgating, board games and puzzles, movie nights, wine and cheese, or anything that lets us enjoy the time we spend with those we love. Start planning now to bring an amazing item or basket, so we can raise a lot of money for OIF!

**Thank you all for your support of the Optimist International Foundation! Together we truly make a difference in the lives of the youth in our communities!**

**Sandi Schmidt**  
District Foundation Rep  
[schmidtsandi@gmail.com](mailto:schmidtsandi@gmail.com)  
309-236-1342



# ☀️ 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!

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### 17 When & Where

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

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 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*



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### 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!*

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### 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!