



SEPTEMBER, 2026

Jane Schmidt, Governor
Marguerite Fehseke, Secretary Treasurer



IOWA DISTRICT OPTIMISTS

CULTIVATE OPTIMISM



A job well done – feeding families across Iowa!

Message from Governor Jane

Where do I begin to summarize one very amazing year of cultivating optimism across Iowa? I have enjoyed my visits with clubs across Iowa – seeing in action how clubs across Iowa are bringing out the best in youth and their communities. As I look at this photo I can only smile – what better way to celebrate this year than to be gathered with so many like-minded people focused on doing something great in communities across Iowa – meeting the food scarcity issue in our own special way.

There are so many great memories captured on our Iowa District Optimist Facebook page. Erin Houseton has done an amazing job of putting together several videos found on our Iowa Optimist District YouTube Channel. The social media posts show how we came together and celebrated who we are as optimists. We honored those Optimists who have served in the military, those who have been nominated for the 2026 Iowa Optimist of the Year Award, Tom Greenawait – an Optimist for over 70 years, this year's district team, and welcomed next year's team. See this newsletter and page 7 for more convention details.

Our service never ends – our legacy lives on. Let's continue **being the change** as we **cultivate optimism across Iowa!** It has been my honor to serve!

Governor Jane

MEMBERSHIP NEWS



Running through the tape not to the tape......these were the words of encouragement my husband Brian gave to me about finishing this Optimist year. And now I also encourage you to -

RUN THROUGH the tape not TO the tape!

This is the last month of our Optimist year & it is important we do what we can to be back in balance (0 or + by the end of the month) with membership. Our Iowa District is amazing and I want us all to encourage membership growth so as a district we provide positive opportunities for members to make a difference. Our district can achieve the title of DISTINGUISHED with more growth. At this time, we need to add 13 new members. But I believe we can add even more than that. To be first in Optimist International, we would need to end the year at +70. I like a good challenge - I hope you do as well. How do we reach such a high goal? We can achieve this lofty goal if every club is BACK IN BALANCE by Sept. 30. By clubs in the + area, if you each added 1 or 2 more members, that would put us near the top as well. I know this is the time of year when we begin seeing people who do not plan to return as members. Just keep in mind - if you drop one - add one. That will assure us that we can be at the top in the OI organization.

CONGRATS to those Clubs currently **In Balance and at 0:**
Griswold, CORBRA-Council Bluffs, Walnut, Perry, Boone,
Newton, Oskaloosa, Knoxville, Peosta, Davenport Noon,
Burlington-West Burlington, Washington Township, Optimist
Club of Henry County

Those clubs needing to add just **+1 to be Back in Balance:**
Winterset, Ankeny, Marshalltown, Wayne-Corydon, Lamoni,
Cedar Rapids, Coralville, Dubuque Eve, River Valley, Kalona

Our Iowa District is GROWING!

CONGRATULATIONS to the following clubs who are showing growth:

SIouxLAND +1

RIVERSIDE +6 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

COUNCIL BLUFFS (HONOR CLUB) +6 AMAZING GROWTH!!!

KIMBALLTON-ELKHORN +1

UNDERWOOD +5 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

MANNA CARES +3 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

RED OAK +8 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

DES MOINES - WESTERN DES MOINES +6 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

URBANDALE +5 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

AMES +1

WATERLOO +2

GRINNELL +1

IOWA CITY +1

OLON +1



MAQUOKETA +9 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

DUBUQUE MORNING +4 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

NORTH SCOTT +1

BETTENDORF +6 (HONOR CLUB) AMAZING GROWTH!!!

Keep up the great work! K

It will take all of our clubs working together for our district to be distinguished. We can do this, Team!

"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

— Mother Teresa

SPECIAL THANK YOU

I cannot express enough my appreciation for two very amazing leaders,

Marguerite Fehseke and Sandi Schmidt.

Both these ladies supported and guided me throughout this Optimist year. Marguerite was an amazing secretary/treasurer who continually made me marvel by her commitment to being her best in a challenging position. Sandi served as my advisor and DFR for the District. She was there with a listening ear and wise answers for my endless questions. These ladies are amazing examples of leadership in our district and both I am proud to call FRIEND.

Which club will be the largest in the IA District?



Clubs with 50+ members

Maquoketa – 61

Council Bluffs – 59

Dubuque Noon – 59

Davenport Noon – 58

QC Morning – 57

Manna Cares – 52

North Liberty – 52

It's a race to the finish line – SEPT. 30....

Who will finish on top and be keeper of the trophy?????

Our Amazing OI World Oratorical Champion

Jordyn Velitchkov gave an inspiring speech at the IA District Convention during our Model Club Luncheon. She gave the background of her journey towards world champion over the past 5 years of competing in the Iowa Oratorical competitions and included excerpts from her 5 years of speeches. Such a poised young lady certainly represents what is best about our Iowa youth!

Jordyn's competition speech:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zzf5wE1lf9t7NPz6igj0KPFMiMJzCYRC/view?usp=sharing>

Jordyn's recent interview at her high school (thanks to Jeff Schmatt):

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1DKJJzMp5A/>



From your District A and A Chairperson Sharon Phillips

Thank you to the 15 clubs who submitted 3rd d Quarter A and A reports. Their names were entered into a random drawing and the recipient of the \$75 is the Underwood Club.

I highly encourage 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 **report for the 4th Quarter is due on October 10** and can provide a comprehensive picture of the health of your club over the entire year. 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 one last opportunity to win **\$75**?

If you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me at:
IowaOptimistAandA@gmail.com.



Thank you to the following Clubs who supported our MEALS from the HEARTLAND project:

Council Bluffs \$1300	Underwood \$200
DesMoines–Western Noon \$1000	Ames \$200
Ankeny \$1000	Griswold \$200
Fort Madison \$1000	Winterset \$200
Dubuque Noon \$1000	Mediapolis \$200
Davenport Noon \$1000	Solon \$200
Riverside \$500	Shenandoah \$145
Dubuque AM \$500	Newton \$100
Urbandale \$400	Oskaloosa \$100
Maquoketa \$350	Wayne–Corydon \$100
Bettendorf \$300	Washington \$100
DesMoines \$300	North Liberty \$100
Peosta \$250	Coralville \$100

GRAND TOTAL: \$10,845!!!!





2026 Hunger Fight Impact Report



64
volunteers
engaged



37,396
meals
packaged



143
children fed for
an entire year

Iowa District Optimist
has packaged

37,396
meals to date!

Thank you for supporting our mission to feed hungry children!

Our 2026 IA District Convention

I can honestly say I am completely satisfied with how successful the 2026 Iowa District Convention was. Why wouldn't it be with people like Dubuque AM club members Mary Beth Ferring, Jacque Engling, & Barb Perleth, along with Past Governor Marge Hopkins organizing the facilities. Also thank you to the Optimist clubs for their sponsorship: Dubuque AM, Dubuque, Maquoketa, and Peosta.

It all started Friday night with the lovely setting at the Dubuque Arboretum providing a natural backdrop for walks and eating catered by Kalmes. Founder of Project Rooted, , described her program followed by Music BINGO where we raised over \$500 for her program. The rest of the weekend, Grand Harbor proved to be both beautiful and spacious.

We were honored to have our International President Tom and First Lady Jennifer Kendo join us for the weekend. Great Plains Governor Thomas Lloyd joined via zoom after having triple bypass surgery a week ago. International President Tom Kendo provided a motivating welcome speech, we honored those who have served in the military and those 9 people nominated for the 2026 Optimist of the Year. We also presented a special award to Tom Greenwait, a 70+ year Optimist member from Dubuque Noon. On Saturday workshops presented by Governor Designee Joleen Jorgensen, Secretary/Treasurer Designee Geri Barnett, Ron Slechta, Sandi Schmidt, and Marguerite Fehseke all provided ideas on how to continue our Optimist success. We were inspired by our OI World Oratorical Champion Jordyn Velitchkov who presented at the Model Club Luncheon conducted by Julie Weirup and the Maquoketa Optimist Club. First Lady Jennifer Kendo and Sandi Schmidt (Foundation District Chair) presented awards - two of which were to Mike & Rebecca Butler Mona and Geri Barnett for a lifetime of giving to the Foundation. Such generosity makes our signature programs possible. Mike Stines provided insight on Prairie Fire Foundation, a program committed to providing clean water to underdeveloped countries. We packaged food with Meals from the Heartland to help meet the food scarcity issues for our Iowa families. Throughout Friday and Saturday, the special events committee sold ducks to chuck with the final competition and awards given at the evening banquet. With that event, nearly \$500 was raised for the Dubuque Schools Two by Two Character Development Program. The Governor's Banquet was a time of celebrating our Iowa Optimist year - recognizing the outgoing and the incoming district teams, induction of Joleen Jorgensen as Governor Designee by President Kendo, presenting Builder of Excellence Awards to Mark Feilmann, Rich May, Jane Schmidt, and Sue Wunsch who built the Newton Optimist Club in September 2025. Finally, we were entertained by entrepreneur Sam Schmidt as he presented on "Foolish Optimism."

On Sunday we were inspired by Danielle from the St. Mark's Enrichment Center with a message expressing appreciation for monetary support but most importantly Optimists working alongside their students. A Memorial Service was held in memory of those Optimists who left us this past year. The rest of the Am was time to transition from "Cultivating Optimism" to "Tune Into Optimism" along with the swearing in of Theresa Dunkin as Governor Elect. We ended with our First Sergeant of Arms Elizabeth Wold asking people to donate a buck in the Duck Hat to offer a positive brag in our lives. A wonderful way to end a very special weekend!

The entire weekend was an amazing time of **ELI** (our grandson's name) - **E**ngaging and **E**ncouraging, **L**earning, and being **I**nspired! My heart is full!





Reps from the clubs who helped raise money for Meals from the Heartland

Thank you International President Tom Kendo and Jennifer for making our convention extra special with your presence.



I cannot thank my Lt. Governors & District Leadership Team enough for making this year a special one for our district!



Governor-Designate Joleen Jorgensen; Governor Jane Schmidt, & Governor-Elect Theresa Dunkin – leading our District in ***cultivating optimism*** as we ***tune in to optimism*** and pay attention to our ***roots of optimism***.
Good times ahead for our Iowa District!

2025–2026 Optimists of the Year Nominees

Congratulations for your legacy of service!

Kurt Beenen, Optimist Club of Cedar Rapids
Dan Crouse, Red Oak Optimist Club
Mary Beth Ferring, Dubuque AM
Rick Leinen, Optimist Club of Red Oak
Doc McCaulley, Optimist Club of Perry
Gordon D. Olberding, Optimist Club of Washington
Bob Miller, Optimist Club of Kalona
Dave Roberts, Optimist Club of North Liberty Dale
Robertson, Optimist Club of Underwood



We held a Memorial Service for those Optimists who passed during this Optimist year



In Memory of:

John Fry, Wayne of Corydon
Larry Geno, Kalona
JP (Joseph) Golinvaux, Des Moines
Beverly Guinn, Bloomfield
Henrietta "Dee" Gutttau, Treynor
Jonas Hochstedler, Washington Township
Kirk Johnson, Council Bluffs
David Jorth, Davenport–Quad Cities–Morning
Craig Kelley, Knoxville
Howard Lewis, Coralville
William "Bill" Mitchell, Dubuque Noon
John Morrow, Quad Cities Morning
Nancy Jo Odefey, Dubuque Noon
Tom Oertel, North Liberty
David Patton, Dubuque Noon
Fred Pilecki, Red Oak
Beverly Rebarcak, Davenport
Jim Robinson, Marshalltown
Emil Schlabaugh, Kalona
Marvin Wilson, Council Bluffs



"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal. Love leaves a memory no one can steal."

Optimists who have served in the Military:

Jake Bickford	Army – Reserves Maquoketa
Bob Bortz	Army – CR Tuesday Noon
Mel Cooper	Army – Wayne of Corydon
Colleen Duenas	Navy – Bettendorf
Rick Even	Army – Dubuque Noon
Mark Feilmann	Navy – Ankeny
Cindy Fitzgerald	National Guard – Maquoketa
Dean Fry	Army – CR Tuesday Noon
Gary Geise	Army – Underwood
Mike Good	Navy – DeWitt
Tom Greenawait	Army – Dubuque Noon
David Hayes	Marines – Maquoketa
Ron Henderson	Army – Underwood
Mike Knaak	Army – Wayne of Corydon
Cody Krapfl	Marines – Peosta
Bryan Lloyd	Army/Army Reserves – Des Moines
Larry Lockwood	Army – North Liberty
John Markham	Army – Dubuque Noon
John McFarland	Army – Solon
Robert McLachlan	Navy – Coralville
Dennis McGregor	Air Force – Ft Madison Area
Steve Menzner	Army – CR Tuesday Noon
Jimmie Miller	Army/National Guard – North Liberty
Chris Mottinger	Marines – Solon
Dave Phillips	Army Reserves – Bettendorf
Dave Roberts	National Guard – North Liberty
Wayne Schneckloth	Coast Guard – Bettendorf
Bill Schoon	Navy – CR Tuesday Noon
Todd Stecklein	Marines – Peosta
Mark Tedesco	Army – Underwood
Doug Thompson	Army – Solon
Elizabeth Wold	National Guard – Maquoketa
Tom Woodruff	Army – North Liberty



(Our apologies if some were missed – club secretaries were asked to provide the names.)

Celebrating Iowa's Generosity to the Optimist International Foundation!

Thank you, Iowa Optimists! Your generosity to the Optimist International Foundation (OIF) was evident at our recent District Convention – you donated over \$4,300 dollars to the OIF and over \$600 to the Childhood Cancer and Childhood Health & Wellness initiatives during the weekend. WOW! Your OIF donations provide funds the Foundation uses to help Optimists help kids. That includes the Optimist scholarship contests, JOI, Jr. Golf, OIF grants, as well as funding to support many other programs our Optimist Clubs and Districts participate in. They couldn't do it without you!

OIF Board member (and OI first lady) Jennifer Kendo attended our Convention and participated in all our Foundation-related activities through the weekend. She told me she had never seen a speed auction, and she plans to carry that idea to other Districts for them to use in OIF fund-raising. Rebecca Butler Mona and Mike Mona were recognized as Diamond Benefactors of the Optimist International Foundation. That represents lifetime giving of over \$75,000 to the OIF. Gerri Barnett was recognized as a Benefactor of the Optimist International Foundation for lifetime giving of over \$5,000 to the OIF. Thank you to each of them for their outstanding and ongoing commitment to the Optimist International Foundation!

If you or your club have not yet donated to the Optimist International Foundation in this Optimist year, TODAY would be a great day to make your donation. Every donation matters. I encourage members to donate at the Dime-A-Day level (\$36.50). For Optimist Clubs, your \$100 donation to OIF is one of the requirements to be recognized as a merit, honor or distinguished club for 2025-26, and you'll be awarded a special banner patch if your donation is \$365 or more.

You can donate online at **<https://www.oifoundation.org/us-canada-donate.cfm>**. If you'd prefer to pay by check, you can download these forms and mail them with your check to OIF at the address shown on the Form:

☒ Dime-A-Day: **<https://oifoundation.org/individuals/dime-a-day-form.pdf>**

☒ \$365 Club (for your club): **<https://oifoundation.org/downloads/365-club-form.pdf>**

Questions? Reach out to me at 309-236-1342 or schmidtsandi@gmail.com and I'll be glad to help you. Thank you, Iowa Optimists, for your amazing support of the Optimist International Foundation! You truly make a difference in the lives of youth and your communities through your generosity.

Sandi Schmidt

District Foundation Rep 2025-26