



Optimist International WINUM DISTRICT

First Quarter
October 2025

Newsletter

Governor Vanessa's Message

Vanessa Rueth — 2025-26 WINUM Governor

🌻 Theme: "Stand Tall, Face the Sun"

As we step into a new Optimist year, I invite each of you to *stand tall* in your purpose and *face the sun* with renewed hope. Being part of **Optimist International** and the **WINUM District** is something we should all be proud of. We are united by our belief in the power of optimism—and our commitment to making a difference in the lives of youth and our communities.



2025-26 Governor
Vanessa Rueth

This year's theme is more than a motto—it's a mindset. It reminds us to rise with courage, lean into growth, and let our light shine even when challenges arise. Whether you're leading a club, mentoring a child, or simply offering a kind word, your presence matters.

🌻 Gratitude First

I want to extend heartfelt thanks to those who have stepped up to serve on our district team. Your dedication, creativity, and compassion are the heartbeat of our mission. I'm also deeply grateful for the words of encouragement I've received—they've lifted me, and I carry them with me as we move forward together.

📌 District Goals for 2025–2026

Together, we will:

- Achieve a **net membership increase of +5** by September 30, 2026
- **Add 2 new clubs** and continue welcoming new members throughout the year
- Ensure **accurate contact information** (emails, addresses, phone numbers) so every member stays informed and connected.
- Encourage increased use of the **Optimist Institute** by Club and District leaders to strengthen leadership and engagement.

🌻 Upcoming Events – Let's Connect!

Our **1st Quarter Conference** will be held at **Les & Jim's Lincoln Lanes in Merrill** on **November 14–15**. I'm especially excited for our Friday evening visit to the **Merrill Historical Society**, followed by fellowship in our **hospitality room** back at the hotel. These moments of connection are what make our Optimist family so special. On Saturday morning, we'll begin with a **Past Governors' Breakfast** at the hotel before the conference kicks off. And for those attending their **first-ever conference**, we'll host a **First Timers Meeting at 8:00 AM** at Les & Jim's—an uplifting way to start the day and feel welcomed.

Currently, we have two conferences scheduled (November and April), but we're exploring an additional gathering in **late February or early March** to keep our momentum strong.

📧 Invite Me to Your Club Events

If your club is planning a special event, celebration, or service project, I'd love to be *Cont. on Page 2*




Inside this Issue

- Changes in Conferences.....2
- Stand Tall and Face the Sun - Be the Change.....2
- Service Project.....2
- Conference Registration.....3
- Conference Agenda.....4
- DREAM: District Resources.....5
- Use OI Website for Marketing and Recruiting.....5
- Thank You!.....5
- Optimist Foundation Grants Available.....6
- FUN at 4th Quarter Convention.....7
- Leadership Development.....8
- Plant Seeds Now for New Members.....8
- Mark Your Calendars.....8
- Oratorical Contest Details.....9
- Consider an Essay Contest.....9
- Save the Date.....9
- Growth Chair.....9
- Zone Reports.....10-15
- 2025-26 Leadership Team.....16
- Optimist Creed & Resources.....16

Changes in Conferences this Optimist Year

Laurel Schirmer — 2025-26 Conferences & Convention Chair

With the start of the 2025-2026 “Stand Tall – Face the Sun” Optimist year comes a small change that I want to call to your attention.

As much as we all enjoy coming together to share ideas, renew friendships, and generate renewed enthusiasm for what we do in our communities, it comes at a cost. Renting a space for a conference (whether it be at a hotel or another venue) isn’t typically free. The cost ranges anywhere from \$100-\$300 *per room*! While we’ve been concentrating on smaller venues in recent years, our costs are still increasing. And the price increases that we’ve all seen for food items are not unique to your kitchen – they impact hotels and caterers too.

In light of that, at its last meeting, the Executive Board approved that **the registration fee for WINUM District meetings will increase from \$50 to \$60 starting with the 1st Quarter Conference.** The conference/convention team will continue to seek out the most economic, yet convenient and comfortable venues we can find. If you have suggestions, please let us know!

The team is also announcing our plans for a **2nd Quarter Condensed Conference** to be held in February or early March. (Date/time/place to be announced, as we haven’t booked a venue yet.)

We listened to the discussion at the 4th quarter convention’s Town Hall meeting – members miss the camaraderie and Optimism that a district meeting offers – yet understand the need for the district to limit expenses. Conferences are to be “break even” functions per our policies. Registration fees cover the cost of food and venue, but not overnight stays (those are billed to other accounts within the district’s budget). So, the conference/convention team is anticipating a 10 am-3 pm schedule for this 2nd quarter condensed conference - no overnight stays are required!

Governor Vanessa will be revealing our training and general session agendas in January, and we’ll also celebrate the 2024-2025 Optimist year with Immediate Past Governor Angie’s awards program. Stay tuned to this newsletter and our webpage for registration details.

See you all in Merrill in November!

CONFERENCES/CONVENTION QUESTIONS? Contact Laurel Schirmer at schirmerlaurel@gmail.com.



Laurel Schirmer



SERVICE PROJECT

Our 1st quarter conference speaker on November 15 will be Elsa Duranceau of the Child Care Coalition of WI (3CWI).

We will be collecting:
Baby wipes and Diapers
Cleaning Supplies
Toilet Paper
Books

These items will go to the Dream Up Lincoln County as our 1st quarter WINUM service project.

Stand Tall and Face the Sun - Be the Change

Tammy Koehler — 2025-26 Governor’s Assistant

Wow! What a complete honor to serve WINUM Governor Vanessa Rueth! Vanessa’s enthusiasm is contagious! Seek her help. Work through issues. Stand Tall. Face the Sun. Be the Change. Together we make our Optimist Clubs great! If you have never been to a WINUM Conference I HIGHLY encourage you to join us in November. The TRAINING! The Networking! The FUN! Your voice matters! Did you know the Board of Directors includes your club president? Without your presence or someone you send in their place, your club’s voice may not be heard at the district level.

Please Stand Tall, Face the Sun and welcome Vanessa Rueth to the WINUM Governorship!



Tammy Koehler

Governor’s Message

Cont. from Page 1

part of it! Please feel free to reach out to me at vanessar.optimist@gmail.com. I’m here to support, celebrate, and serve alongside you.

Let’s make this year one of connection, growth, and joyful service. Let’s *Stand Tall and Face the Sun*—together.

With optimism and gratitude,
Governor Vanessa Rueth
vanessar.optimist@gmail.com 715-218-8608

WINUM 1st Quarter Conference

November 14-15, 2025

Rooms: AmericInn, 3300 E Main St, Merrill WI

715-536-7979

Meeting: Lincoln Lanes, 1208 N Center Ave, Merrill WI

715-536-9405



Optimist
INTERNATIONAL



Name _____ Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

E-mail address _____ Phone _____
Is this your first conference? _____

Club Name _____ Zone # _____ Your 2025-26 office (if any) _____

REGISTRATION INFO

	Advance	On Site	Number	Total \$
	(by Nov 8th)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Registration & Saturday Lunch <i>Menu: Hot pulled chicken or pork sandwich, cheesy hash browns, coleslaw and dessert (all menus are subject to change)</i>	\$60.00	\$65.00	_____	_____

<u>Spouse/Guest/Child (non-members)</u>	Name(s):			
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Lunch <i>Menu: Hot pulled chicken or pork sandwich, cheesy hash browns, coleslaw and dessert (all menus are subject to change)</i>	_____	\$30.00	\$35.00	_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED (Make checks payable to WINUM District) \$ _____

THREE WAYS TO REGISTER:

1. Register on-line at www.WinumOptimists.org. Pay with a credit card thru PayPal.
2. Register on-line at www.WinumOptimists.org and indicate that you'll pay onsite. Then bring cash/check to the meeting!
3. Snail mail your check & this form to: WINUM Conference Chair Laurel Schirmer, 1807 North 6 Street, Sheboygan, WI 53081

If you would like to request a special meal *due to specific food allergies* please indicate: YES _____ NO _____
Type of meal required: _____. Every effort will be made to accommodate special needs.

If you have any questions, please call Laurel at 920-946-7246 or e-mail: schirmerlaurel@gmail.com

ROOM RESERVATIONS: Call the AmericInn (715) 536-7979 and ask for the WINUM Optimist group block. Rate is \$130+ tax. **Rooms "unblock" October 14, 2025!**

November 14-15, 2025
AmericInn
3300 E. Main St Merrill, WI 54452 (715) 254-1778
Les & Jim's Lincoln Lanes
1208 N Center Ave Merrill, WI 54452 (715) 536-9405

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

Friday, November 14, 2025

5:30–7:00 pm – Night at the Museum, Merrill Historical Society 100 E 3rd St, Merrill

7:00–10:00 pm – Hospitality with appetizers, AmericInn

Saturday, November 15, 2025

7:45–8:45 am – Past Governor's Breakfast at the hotel (all past governors, governor-elect and OI guest)

8:00 am – First Timers Meeting at Les and Jim's Bowling Alley. If this is your first conference, we have a gift for you!

8:00 am – Registration and conference check in at Les and Jim's Bowling Alley

9:00 am – Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance and First Timers Introductions

9:20 am – A word from Great Plains Vice President Tom Lloyd

10:00 am – Break

10:15 am – Something fun!

10:30 am - General Session: Leadership Reports

Followed by Board of Directors Meeting: All members of the District Executive Board and all Club Presidents (or their representatives) are voting members of the board and should be present to conduct any business of the district.

11:45 am Purchase Raffle Tickets

Noon –1:00 pm - Lunch & Optimist Foundation Raffle Baskets

1:00 pm – Speaker: Elsa Duranceau, Child Care Coalition of WI (3CWI)

2:00 pm – Break

2:15 pm – Training: DREAM Part 1 with Jodi Arriola

3:15 pm – TOWN HALL meeting

3:30 pm - Optimist Creed & Farewell

DREAM: District Resources for the Enrichment and Advancement of Members

Jodi Arriola — 2025-26 Leadership Development Chair

The Wisconsin North-Upper Michigan (WINUM) District has been selected to participate in the soft launch of the DREAM program. This is a program developed to identify emerging leaders for our clubs, District, and Optimist International and provide information, support and resources to encourage the leadership potential of our members.



Jodi Arriola

The DREAM program was developed by the Optimist International Leadership Committee over the last two Optimist years with the vision to identify, support, and educate members on leadership competencies and capabilities to encourage personal and professional leadership growth among Optimist members.

The DREAM curriculum has been developed into 4 modules that are less than one hour in length presented in a variety of ways to Districts, clubs, or interested members. WINUM District's initial presentation of this program will be one topic at each of the quarterly conferences and convention during the 2025-2026 Optimist year.

The 4-one-hour topics include:

- Know Yourself
- Leadership Nuts & Bolts
- Encouraging the Heart
- Encouraging Others

Since this is a soft launch and feedback will be strongly encouraged from all members in attendance at each presentation, we need WINUM membership: current leaders, emerging leaders (club, District, and Optimist International), and new members to attend and participate in the DREAM program. Please consider and invite your membership by telling emerging leaders what you see in them and what you have gained in leadership by being a member of your club, District and/or Optimist International.

Use OI Website for Marketing and Recruiting

Tammy Koehler, 2025-26 External Marketing Chair

Welcome to the new Optimist year! We are gaining momentum in the marketing area. See some great details from the Optimist International Marketing Committee [under Member Resources on the OI website](#). Don't know where to start with your social media? Start small. Reach out to me for help. Post content regularly. Or if you are too busy for regular content, post when you are looking for volunteers... but give them enough notice.

Looking for new members? Use the marketing images created by OI to gain interest and then give the details...yes, all the details on your NOW/WOW meeting. I was SHOCKED at the results! When you invite people, even on social media, they show up if they are interested in you and your mission.

EXTERNAL MARKETING QUESTIONS? Contact Tammy Koehler at tammy@theitdeptllc.com

THANK YOU!



It has been an amazing experience to serve as your 2024-25 Governor. Thank you to everyone who was on our WINUM team and offered me support in many different ways.

It was great getting to know so many of our members, and I really enjoyed visiting different clubs throughout the year. The friends that I have made will last a lifetime. Best wishes to Vanessa as she leads our District forward as we Stand Tall and Face the Sun.

2024-25 Governor Angie Riemer



Tammy Koehler

Optimist Foundation Grants Available

Troy Dostal — 2025-26 OI Foundation Representative

Hello WINUM Optimist,

September was Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Since we just finished September, I want to spend some time and highlight the Optimist International Foundation (OIF) childhood health and wellness program.

In 1990 U.S. President George H.W. Bush proclaimed September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month to show he supported the efforts of parents, advocates, and medical professionals to create more visibility for children with cancer. September became a month dedicated to raising awareness, inspiring action, and supporting families with children facing childhood cancer.



Troy Dostal



Each year an estimated 280,000 children and adolescents worldwide receive a cancer diagnosis. Even with medicine, it is still the leading cause of death by disease among children across the globe. With research the 5-year survival rate for pediatric cancer has improved, increasing from around 58-68% in the 1970s to 83-88% in recent years. Even though the survival rates are improving, the statistics are alarming at how many children are diagnosed each year.

This is where you can partner with the OIF and apply for a childhood health and wellness grant! You can help spread the word or create healthy lifestyles and routines for our youth.

There are 4 major areas for the grant:

1. Healthy Lifestyles (child obesity, healthy eating, physical fitness, etc.)
2. Chronic Diseases (childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes, etc.)
3. Mental Health (depression, bullying, abuse)
4. Disabilities: Physical, intellectual & developmental (autism, Special Olympics)

The grant has two cycles: the first one ends at the end of January and the 2nd in August (exact dates TBD, check website). I bring this up early so that you can start talking to your clubs about applying for a grant to help with some projects that you might already have in place. You can do a matching grant from \$250-\$1,000. You can visit <https://www.oifoundation.org/club-grant.html> for additional information on the childhood health and wellness grants as well as deadlines. The application will be updated shortly to reflect the 2025-2026 Optimist year and include when the deadlines are in 2026. As Lance Armstrong said, "We have two options, medically and emotionally: give up or fight like hell. TOGETHER NOBODY FIGHTS ALONE." Let's continue to fight for cancer research, especially for our children.

I also want to highlight the club grant as well. This is for a "NEW" club project and is also between \$250-\$1,000. That deadline is in March 2026. More information can be found at <https://www.oifoundation.org/club-grant.html>.

I have two final asks. The first is that you talk to your clubs about giving an unrestricted donation to OIF. They support our essay and oratorical winners each year. These scholarships help the outstanding youth in bettering their future. The last ask is to donate to the Dime-A-Day program. For only \$.10/day you can help OIF raise money to continue to support the scholarships for our youth. I challenge everybody to donate to this great program.

I am happy to come speak at your club or provide more information about any of the programs that OIF has to offer. Please feel free to reach out to me via email or phone.

Oh, and **remember to bring a raffle basket to the November conference as that benefits OI Foundation as well.**

OI FOUNDATION QUESTIONS? Contact Troy Dostal at dostalt@live.com or 715-531-5085.

Sculpture Hunt, OI Foundation President, Stepping Stones Speaker, Officer Installation & Lots of FUN at 4th Quarter Convention



Aug. 15-16, 2025
Hampton Inn &
Off Broadway
Menomonie



Leadership Development Report

Jodi Arriola — 2025-26 Leadership Development Chair

Great Leaders can see the greatness in others when they can't see it themselves and lead them to their highest potential they don't even know. Roy Bennett

I am excited and honored to work in collaboration with Governor Vanessa as the Wisconsin North-Upper Michigan District Leadership Development Chair. As a District, Vanessa has engaged great leaders to serve in the role of District Secretary, Treasurer, Lt. Governors, and committee chairs. Many WINUM leaders participated in a Leadership Retreat held at the end of July to learn Optimist International President Tom Kendo and Governor Vanessa's vision for the 2025-2026 Optimist year. In late September and early October, club leaders participated in an update on what is new within Optimist International leadership and began preparing for their 2025-2026 club leadership roles and responsibilities.



Jodi Arriola

One requirement for Club Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers and Foundation representatives is to complete the leadership training for their position in Optimist Institute. Optimist Institute provides a great format to engage in leadership training from a variety of different courses. This training is open to all Optimists regardless of club role/responsibility, length of membership, or personal/professional goals. To register or re-register annually for the Optimist Institute, [go the Optimist Institute webpage](#), the password for this Optimist year is member2526.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you at the 1st quarter WINUM conference in Merrill on November 14-15. The DREAM project— District Resources for the Enrichment and Advancement of Members-- will be offered as a one-hour training at each of the conferences/conventions. Please encourage new members and emerging leaders in your club to attend and continue their journey in leadership. A personal invitation of encouragement and recognizing the talents/potential seen in them can spark a new leader to greatness.

LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS? Contact Jodi Arriola at arrioljm@uwec.edu



Plant Seeds Now for New Members

Ann Sheahan, 2025-26 Membership Chair

Farewell to our "Just Ducky" year, and welcome to "Stand Tall and Face the Sun." Over the past Optimist year, we saw some of our veteran ducks migrating out of our great WINUM District. We also welcomed 131 new fledglings to our group. Remember, these new fledglings have all their feathers, but may not have mastered the strong flight of a great Optimist. Keep them close and mentor them to be the best resource in your club!



Ann Sheahan

So, about our Sunflowers! We start by getting a seed, finding someone new to ask to join, and then planting that seed in a cup with some encouraging words and guidance. Pretty soon, we'll have sunflowers following the sun, or as we say in our Optimist Creed – Promise Yourself! Let's all get out there, find some seeds, and plant them to grow strong in Optimism so we can serve the youth and our community well.

MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONS? Contact Ann Sheahan at gsheahan@charter.net

MARK YOUR CALENDARS 2025-26 Conferences & Convention WINUM District

November 14-15, 2025 (1st Quarter Conference)

Hotel: AmericInn, 3300 East Main St, Merrill

Conference: Les & Jim's Lincoln Lanes

1208 N Center Avenue, Merrill

First Quarter Newsletter Articles Due: Oct. 1, 2025

Second Quarter Mini Conference TBD

Second Quarter Newsletter Articles Due:

Jan. 5, 2026

April 24-25, 2026 (3rd Quarter Conference)

Comfort Suites/Rock Garden, 1951 Bond St,

Green Bay

Third Quarter Newsletter Articles Due:

March 9, 2026

August 21-22, 2026 (4th Quarter Convention)

Hotel: Comfort Inn & Suites, 5810 Schofield Avenue, Weston

Conference: Dale's Weston Lane (next door to hotel), Weston

Fourth Quarter Newsletter Articles Due:

June 22, 2026

Oratorical Contest Details

Chuck Erickson -- 2025-26 Oratorical Contest Chair

The Topic for the OI Oratorical Contest this year is: **“The Moment I Realized I Belonged — My Definition of Community”**.

If your club is planning to host an Oratorical Contest, email Chuck at chuck@collegeconnectors.com before Dec. 1. The 3rd Quarter WINUM conference will host the 2026 District Oratorical Contest in Green Bay on Saturday, April 25, in the morning. Click here for more information: <https://www.optimist.org/member/scholarships4.cfm>

The Purpose: The contest is designed to provide youth with the opportunity to gain experience in public speaking, perfect self-expression, build self-assurance, improve communication skills, and compete for a college scholarship.

Funding: The Optimist Oratorical Scholarships are funded by member donations to the Optimist International Foundation. It is important that all members understand the significance of supporting the Foundation in order to continue funding the contest.

Who: The contest is open to contestants under 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1 – September 30) who have not yet completed high school. There is no minimum age.

Club Contests: A club may be represented at the District by no more than two qualified contestants. There is no minimum required number of participants for club contests. Here is the Oratorical Contest - Club Planning Guide: [https://www.optimist.org/Documents/2025/programs/25-26 Oratorical Club Planning Guide.pdf](https://www.optimist.org/Documents/2025/programs/25-26%20Oratorical%20Club%20Planning%20Guide.pdf)

District Contests: Each winner of the District level contest will receive a scholarship for use at a college, university, or trade school only. There will be three winners awarded scholarships of \$2,500, \$1,500, and \$1,000, respectively, for first, second, and third place. District contests must have at least three participants. The winner will repeat their oratorical speech during the conference lunch, with the 1st place winner attending the World Championship in St. Louis.

ORATORICAL QUESTIONS? Contact Chuck Erickson at chuck@collegeconnectors.com.



Chuck Erickson

Save the Date!

108th Optimist International Convention
Jacksonville, Florida
Hyatt Regency Jacksonville
June 28-July 2, 2026

Don't miss this opportunity to hear motivational speakers, attend workshops, speak your mind at the town hall and business meeting, and meet, network, and socialize with Optimists from around the world!
[Visit the OI website for more details.](#)

Growth Chair

Hi All - I will be the Growth Chair for WINUM for 2025-26. I am looking for some volunteers to help me identify areas of growth: be it a new club, club within a club, or a sports club. Please leave me a message by e-mail or a text or contact Governor Vanessa Rueth, and she will be able to put you in contact with me.



Dan O'Leary

GROWTH QUESTIONS? Contact Dan O'Leary at danoleary51@yahoo.com Or 920-619-5460.

Consider Having an Essay Contest

Shannon Dalton — 2025-26 Essay Contest Chair

Hello Fellow Optimists,

Please consider running an essay contest for your club. It can help out your local youth with scholarships from your club and or from our district. At the club level, your judges can be club members, which makes it easy.

At my club, we give scholarships to the top five essays but then #1 moves on to the district level.

It can be a good reminder that our youth are thinking about the world, and they come up with great essays.

Here is a link to the Essay Club Planning Guide:
[https://www.optimist.org/Documents/2026/programs/25-26 Essay Club Planning Guide.pdf](https://www.optimist.org/Documents/2026/programs/25-26%20Essay%20Club%20Planning%20Guide.pdf)

ESSAY CONTEST QUESTIONS? Contact Shannon Dalton at shannon@wickershamjewelry.com.



Shannon Dalton

Zone Reports

2025-2026 Zones:

Zone 1: Hallie, Chippewa Falls, Superior, Bloomer, UW-Eau Claire, Neillsville

Zone 2: Wausau Noon, Merrill, DC Everest Area, Wausau Breakfast, Antigo, Stevens Point, Mosinee

Zone 3: Green Bay, Howard Suamico, Green Bay- Bellevue, Green Bay - Allouez, Green Bay-Preble, Green Bay Breakfast, De Pere, Pulaski Krakow, Shawano, Sturgeon Bay

Zone 4: Hilbert-Potter, Kewaunee, Kiel, New Holstein, Two Rivers

Zone 5: Greenleaf-Wrightstown, Sherwood Area, Appleton, Oshkosh, Chilton, Brillion

Zone 6: Fond Du Lac, Fond Du Lac-Noon, North Fond Du Lac, Plymouth, Sheboygan

ZONE 1 Lt. Governor: Deb Braden

The Chippewa Falls Club has been busy raising funds for all of the organizations that they donate to by running their food stand. They were open during the Northern Wisconsin State Fair in July, the Indianhead Car Show in August and Oktoberfest in September.



Oktoberfest volunteers

The stand serves their award-winning cheese curds, brats, hotdogs, and french-fries. They also served pancakes and sausages at the car show and German potato salad at Oktoberfest.



Lt. Gov. Deb Braden

The club held their awards banquet on September 23 with Governor Angie Riemer installing new officers and board members as well as installing two new members. Outgoing president Marty Tlachac passed the gavel on to incoming president Vicki Wilson at his last meeting as president on Sept. 24.



Vicki Wilson and Marty Tlachac

Upcoming events include the dictionary project and Trunk or Treat, and the club will be recognizing Youth of the Month and their International Students attending the two Chippewa Falls High Schools.

The Hallie Optimist Club continues to participate in the childhood health and wellness program by funding families struck by childhood cancer and other chronic health issues. These activities are funded through the club's aluminum can collection spearheaded by President Daryl Dehnke.

Joshua's Camp, a local nonprofit serving families with children suffering with cancer, received a \$3,000 gift from the club in August. The club also provided monetary gifts to other families to offset their travel expenses during medical travels. A kindergar-

ten-age boy fighting brain tumors, an 8-year-old girl that sustained severe head injuries at an athletic event and had to be airlifted to the Mayo Clinic, and a teenage boy born with a genetic condition all recently received support from the Hallie Optimists.

Governor Angie Riemer visited the Hallie Optimist's evening meeting in September to install two new club members, sponsored by Gale Haas, as pictured on right.



2024-25 Lt. Governor Louise Bentley contributed to this report.

ZONE 2 Lt. Governor Mary Sue Edens Pfantz

The Antigo Optimist Club participates in "Music in the Park", which is a fundraiser that goes on every week through the summer. They serve a delicious menu with steak sandwiches and cheese curds. There is also a fantastic array of desserts available.



Mary Sue Edens Pfantz

The club also held their annual banquet on September 13th at Northcentral Banquet Hall. They presented some awards and donations. One was for \$600 to Jason Hohensee of the Antigo Wrestling Club.

Antigo also joined in with the Community Health Fair to hold a bike rally August 7. They gave away 11 new bikes that day in conjunction with Charlie's Bike Shop.

The Everest Area Optimists have been busy with their fall fundraisers. Cheese curds, burgers and brats are their specialty. They have one more on October 10 in conjunction with the police and fire departments for a Halloween event called The Monster Bash.

Everest recently had their installation banquet and got a couple new people on the board.

Zone Reports

Cont. from Page 10

One of their other favorites is the bi-monthly guests that they have at their meetings throughout the school year when Students of the Month come in and tell them about their accomplishments and future goals.

Merrill Optimist Club had a fantastic end to summer, blessed with beautiful weather for the Lincoln County Fair where the cheese curds fried up golden and delicious. Volunteers enjoyed their shifts at both the fair and the Labor Day Car Show, sharing smiles and sunshine with the community.

In partnership with the Junior Optimist Club, Merrill also launched what they hope will become a cherished annual tradition: their first-ever golf outing. While the weather didn't quite match the fair's sunny skies, the event was a success in spirit and turnout, proving that optimism plays through rain or shine.

The **Mosinee Optimist Club** president this new Optimist year continues to be Kenneth Muelling. The club meets at the Mosinee Café located at 313 Main Street, Mosinee. Currently meetings are held every 2nd and 4th Tuesday at 7:00 a.m. with 17 members. Mosinee was chartered as a club in 2006. As of October 1, 2025 the Mosinee Club has been assigned to Zone 2.

During last quarter, the Mosinee Optimist Club had a food stand at the annual Mosinee Log Jam held August 8-10. It was busy three days serving fried cheese curds, burgers, brats etc. Saturday of the event was slow due to rain. The club had some food items left, which they donated to their local food pantry, the Community Center of Hope.

On September 20, the club had a year-end celebration at the Hammer Down Bar. Many members were able to gather to celebrate accomplishments for the year and discuss ideas for the coming year.

In August, **Stevens Point Club** had a summer outing at Stevens Point Brewery Taproom. The club held a picnic in their outdoor beer garden.

On September 20, Stevens Point held Cardboard City in Piffner Park. They built a log cabin out of cardboard carpet rolls, and set up a cardboard city from refrigerator boxes. The children of the community painted the city. This is one of their favorite community activities. The rain held off until clean-up; then everyone was soaked.

On October 1, the club had their first business meeting of the new Optimist year, and approved goals for the coming year. Mary Grace Keene is the new president, and meetings are held at the Legacy Family Restaurant every Wednesday at 12:00 noon. On October 8, they will have their Installation of Officers Banquet at Amber Grill, 1001 Amber Ave., Stevens Point, located

in the Holiday Inn of Stevens Point Convention Center.

Stevens Point Noon will be accepting applications for its 2026 scholarship program, with up to \$3,000 in awards available in January. Scholarship recipients will be announced in April. To qualify, applicants must be graduating high school seniors living in Portage County and must be accepted as full-time students at an accredited higher education institution. The Noon Optimist Club, has been awarding scholarships since 2000 as part of its Scholarship Program.

Wausau Breakfast Club's food stand at the Wisconsin Valley Fair was extremely successful, and the most successful in recent years in terms of revenue for the club.

The club held their 4 Kids Golf Outing in August, which brought out 28 foursomes to golf and raise money for the club.

Wausau Breakfast's annual raffle ticket event is coming up in October. Their installation banquet for new club positions will be held later this month.

Wausau Noon Optimist (WNO) Club held their installation banquet on September 28. The club's incoming president is Jonnee Bauer. Congratulations to her.

Rainbows End Camp is an event the WNO participates in by supplying volunteers and a bounce house as well as medals to all the participants. They also provide an informal dinner/social for participants and their families as well as volunteers. That is held at Camp Phillips for individuals with developmental disabilities, and is one of club's most special projects.

Wausau Noon also helps with an event called Sporting Heritage Youth Day, see photo on



left, held Aug. 23. They manage the registration through their website thanks to Andrew Schlagel. This event gets youth involved in the outdoors and learning

different skills.

The club had a great fair with wonderful weather. They have completed a new elephant ear stand, see photo on right. According to Romey "Right Ear" Wagner, "The new elephant ear stand has passed the test and lives up to our dreams!"

2024-25 Lt. Governor Shannon Dalton contributed to this report.



Cont. on Page 12

Zone Reports

Cont. from Page 11

ZONE 3 Lt. Governor: Ben Elsner

De Pere Optimist Club held Hands Across De Pere on August 24. This is a fundraiser to support the youth of De Pere, see photo below. Music, raffles, silent auction items all went to a great cause.



Lt. Gov. Ben Elsner



The Fall Festival will be held November 7 from 6-8p.m. at the Swan Club. It includes appetizers, carved turkey and prime rib, along with samples of craft beer, fine wines,

and artisan cheeses. Enjoy basket raffles and a silent auction. \$30/ticket or \$50/2 tickets when purchased in advance, \$40 at the door.



Green Bay Club: The Back to School event, pictured above, was held on September 4. In partnership with Green Bay Howe Elementary Community School, the Green Bay Optimist Club has been donating school pride shirts for the last 8 years. These shirts are then worn by students, faculty, and teachers every Wednesday of the school year. These shirts feature paraphrasing of the Optimist Creed on the back "Do your best! Be your best!"

Green Bay-Preble: Green Bay-Preble held Respect for Law on September 17. The club recognized, pictured on right, Officer Jedd Bradley (De Pere Police Dept), Officer Jose



Deras (Oneida Police Dept), Deputy John Kowalski (Brown County Sheriff's Office), Officer Sarah Manning (Hobart Police Dept), and Officer Michael Stuedemann (Green Bay Police Dept). Additionally, Officer Jerry Johnson (Green Bay Police Dept) was recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

On August 12, the club had the Cops & Bobbers fishing event (as pictured on right). This event brings officers and children together for a day of fishing, community pride, food, and prizes at the Izaak Walton Pond. This program helps kids view officers as approachable and someone they can turn to for help.



Howard Suamico Club: In September, members had the opportunity to sell tables for Daddy D Productions dinner/musical event. The club was donated \$5.00 per person along with the 50/50 raffle and bucket raffle monies.

The 4th annual Hit the Trails for Health & Happiness walk/run was held at the NEW Zoo, and raised money for their educational/youth programs, see photo on right. There were over 20 volunteers along with Lt. Governor Ben & Kelsey Elsner.

In July and August, the club put up a food tent at the Howard Commons Activity Complex (multiple dates). Members sold brats and burgers. There was



lots of good entertainment for the community. The Bay Port Cheer Team, pictured on right, and family members supported the July event and members along with Lt. Governor Ben Elsner volunteered all day for the August event. The Club donated \$1,000 to the Bay Port Cheer Team for their partnership!



Fore the Kids Golf Classic took place in June. It was a great start to what the club hopes to be an annual fundraiser. Save the Date for next year: June 16, 2026 (a Tuesday).

Zone Report

Cont. from Page 12

Shawano Optimist Club: On August 7, Shawano Club held a NOW (New Optimist Welcome) meeting. They welcomed potential new members and swore in new member Adam Gast.

The club held Tri-Star Punt, Pass, Kick on September 5. Youth competed in punting, passing, and kicking drills (along with the windy conditions) to help develop their skills and build a sense of community, *see photo on right.*



In November is the Holiday Stroll, an event held during the local Shawano tree lighting held at Franklin Park. The club partners with Toys for Tots and give toys to those youth in attendance. Last year, they gave out 400 toys and goodie bags!

November 19 is Rose Day - they sell dozens of roses that will help support activities throughout their community.

ZONE 4 Lt. Governor: Roger Phillippi

For the **New Holstein Optimist Club**, this summer was a busy time as fundraising continues for the club's playground project: lots of brat fries and pork sandwich sales. With the closing of their second matching grant opportunity from local businessman and Optimist Member Phil Kubichka coming at the end of September, they are close to their half way point.



Lt. Gov. Roger Phillippi

As the new Optimist year begins, New Holstein looks forward to the start of the middle school Husky Hangouts and Country Christmas activities including lots of cookie baking. And as always, it's all for the kids of all ages!

Two Rivers Optimist Club: As a new Optimist year begins, the Two Rivers Club reflects on a successful past year. Fundraising was successful on all levels, as the club pulls together for events and fundraising.

A new fundraiser that Two Rivers added was a Night of Remembrance. The club sold luminary bags and lights, placed them in the cemetery and held a short memorial service. They sold 300 bags for their first year! If you are interested in offering something like this to your community, let them know and they will share their story with you.

Also new this year: the Parks and Recreation Department was in need of someone to serve breakfast sandwiches at a beach campout over Labor Day weekend. This was not a fund raiser for the club, but a community service event, and they made 300+ breakfast sandwiches.

Two Rivers continues to support scholarships for both high school and continuing education levels as well as community events and other community needs. Their High School Octagon Club (JOI Club) is an amazing group of young people. They can hardly wait to see what excitement lies ahead for that group.

Outgoing president Judy Goodchild said, "While I enjoyed my year as president, I am greatly looking forward to handing the gavel over to incoming president Dawn Hilliker. She brings enthusiasm and a love for Optimism and the community. We are fortunate to have Dawn as the President of the Two Rivers Optimist Club."

2024-25 Lt. Governor Colleen Sheahan contributed to Zone 4 and Zone 5 reports.

ZONE 5 Lt. Governor: Chuck Erickson



Lt. Gov. Chuck Erickson

The **Brillion Club** kicked off the new year with a BBQ /N.O.W. (New Optimists Welcome) meeting at the local Nature Center club house in September.

Their upcoming calendar schedule runs from October thru May, and includes meetings at these times: Eight at Noon,



Brillion Club BBQ and N.O.W. meeting

one breakfast, and one evening social/fun night (N.O.W.)

Brillion is making plans for the 10th annual Walk Through Brillion tasting event on October 25. There will be over 20 stops throughout the city offering samples of wine, beer, non-alcoholic options, along with food, games, live music and a Halloween costume contest. It will also feature their Mega Raffle with lots of great prizes. The club is selling 50-50 raffle tickets (\$10 each) until the drawing at 9 p.m. Event tickets are \$40 (in advance) and \$50 at the door, and available for purchase on their website. For more details, go to www.brillionoptimists.org.

The next fundraiser will be the annual Pizza Make on February 14, where the club hopes to fill orders for over 3,500 fresh pizzas - will share more details in the next newsletter, but if anyone has questions, contact them on their [website](#).

Zone Reports

Cont. from Page 13

The **Chilton Optimist Club** participated in Calumet County National Night Out that was held at the Calumet County Sheriff's Department parking lot on July 28. City patrol officers from all over the county participated along with K9 officers, Dive Team, Crime Stoppers, the local fire department that demonstrated the Jaws of Life, Harbor House, Theda Star Helicopter and a Black Hawk Helicopter. Chilton club did Respect for Law and Bike Rodeo at the event. Even though the temps that night were in the 90s, they had a great turnout, and gave out around 90 helmets.

The club sold 440 tickets in the Football Frenzy Fundraiser, and had a great group of members that sold for the club.

Chilton just participated in Chilton's Crafty Applefest. They sold brats and burgers. The day started out cool, but they managed to sell a good amount of food.

Next up is the club's biggest fundraiser of the year, Friend of Youth Raffle. It will be held on October 22 at Neighborhood Pub and Grill. Tickets are \$50 each, and the grand prize is \$5,000, plus many more cash prizes. They have many other prizes throughout the night including an Aaron Rogers autographed football, a Blackstone Grill, luggage, Ring doorbell, other electronics, tons of other gifts and plenty of chances to win cash.

Greenleaf

Wrightstown held its annual Optimist Youth Day at the Park on Sept. 6 at Fireman's Park. They had 187 kids who registered.



The following is from the Manitowoc Sunrise Optimist Club:

Thank you to all who supported the **Manitowoc Sunrise Optimists** over the years. Whether you supported our brat fries, rummage sales or bought football sweepstakes tickets, we appreciate your help. All proceeds went to local organizations that support youth. Sadly, we disbanded our club because our numbers were dwindling, and we couldn't keep up the projects we had been doing.

We disbursed the money we had to the YMCA, Grow it Forward, Incourage, Hope House, Manitowoc Public Library, Salvation Army and Boys and Girls Club (photo above).



ZONE 6 Co-Lt. Governors:

John Leonhard and Lori VanNatta



Lt. Gov. John Leonhard



Lt. Gov. Lori VanNatta

The **Fond du Lac Evening Optimist Club** completed their biggest fundraiser of the year, which was the running of their food and beverage stand at the Fond du Lac County Fair from July 15-20. This year the club made several changes to the menu to try to increase food sales. They are happy to report these changes, which included adding a "big" walking taco, pulled pork sandwich, and a kid's meal were a rousing success and drastically increased food sales. A Fair Appreciation Picnic was held for all their volunteers on August 23. The club also wants to give a shout out to 2024-2025 Lt. Governor Ann Sheahan for helping at their fair stand.

Work continues on the FDL Evening Optimist School Cares Project. As reported last quarter, the club received a \$1,000 matching grant from the Optimist International Foundation for this project, which entails the club creating school care packages containing basic hygiene and essential clothing items. They will be wrapping up this project and delivering these care packages to the schools in the month of October. The club invested \$3,000 in this project for a total commitment of \$4,000 being used to help Fond du Lac school children.

On August 5, FDL Evening participated in the Fond du Lac National Night Out. The club is a strong supporter of National Night Out as it provides a great opportunity for local youth to interact with local first responders in a fun, positive manner. FDL Evening Optimist sponsors the volunteer T-shirts for this event, and sets up a booth to interact with the community (and to provide some goodies for the kids that attend).

On August 13, the club held a special meeting at the Gottfried Prairie & Arboretum, which is an arboretum and restored native prairie adjacent to the former UW-Fond du Lac campus. The meeting was led by the Friends of the Gottfried Prairie & Arboretum, which is the group that not only manages and preserves the arboretum, but they also offer free environmental educational classes for the public. This group also holds Prairie Fest annually on the first Saturday of every August. The FDL Evening Optimist sponsored the books given to all youth that attended Prairie Fest



Zone Report

Cont. from Page 14

this year.

The FDL Evening Optimist Club made several other donations to local organizations during this quarter. Fond du Lac Fire/Rescue was given \$1,000 to be used towards their car seat program. A \$500 donation was given to Back to School FDL, an organization that provides school supplies and backpacks to over 2,500 school children in the FDL area. The Boys & Girls Club of Fond du Lac was given \$500 worth of supplies needed for their summer program. The Salvation Army of Fond du Lac was given \$460 worth of paper products, diapers, and other personal items needed to run their community support operations. A \$1,000 donation was given to the Fond du Lac chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, which they will use to purchase mattresses for their program. A \$1,000 donation was given to Fondy Food Pantry's Food for Thought program. The Food for Thought program provides nutritious and child-friendly nonperishable foods for financially challenged elementary and middle school youth on weekends and holidays during the school year. Food for Thought distributes nearly 950 bags of items per week. Many other donations have been given by FDL Evening club in recent months, including a \$295 donation to the Optimist International Foundation, and a \$100 donation to the Optimist Childhood Cancer Campaign.

On September 24, the FDL Evening Optimist held their Installation Dinner for the 2025-2026 board at Blanck's Supper Club. Outgoing Lt. Governor Ann Sheahan handled the installation.

Fond du Lac Noon Optimist Club recently donated \$5,000 to the Fondy Food Pantry (see photo on right). The funds are earmarked for the Food Pantry's Birthday Bag Program. When families visit the Food Pantry, they are always asked if any of the children in the family have a birthday that month. Youth ages 12 and under, receive a Birthday Bag, which includes a cake pan, cake mix, frosting, candles, decorations, a birthday card, and a small toy. An example is pictured on right. Each year, about 650 children receive birthday bags through the program. The Noon Club's donation will pay for one year's worth of bags.



Fond du Lac Noon is in the midst of planning to be part of Downtown Fond du Lac's Monster March for the second year in a row. Monster March coincides with the last Saturday of Fond du Lac's Farmers' Market, which is Saturday, October 25. Children don their Halloween costumes and walk up and down Main Street stopping at Farmers' Market stands and other stands, such as the Optimists' booth to do some trick or treating. All children stopping by the Optimists' booth will receive candy and a Halloween Safety Activity Book. Last year, approximately 600 children visited with the Optimists during the event!

North Fond du Lac Optimist Club held its 2025 Punt, Pass, Kick Contest on Saturday, September 20 at NFDL Oriole Football Field. The Football Skills Competition is open to boys and girls ages 6-12 years old.



The North Fond du Lac Club recently donated to the Children's Museum of Fond du Lac to help make the interactive children's museum available to youth in the Fond du Lac County region. A photo is shown above.



John Leonhard, pictured on right, Co-Lt Governor for the new Zone 6, installed the NFDL Optimist Club officers and board members at a dinner and ceremony as members and guests gathered at Blanck's Supper Club in Johnsburg.

Optimist Club of Sheboygan is in the midst of extending the play area at Optimist Park on Carmen Avenue in Sheboygan. Working in conjunction with the City of Sheboygan Parks Department, the playground will feature new swings, a new climbing structure, and a zip line. The Optimist Club of Sheboygan donated \$25,000 to fund the enhancements!

The Club recently worked with the Sheridan Elementary School to provide a book vending machine for the school. School staff can award tokens to students for any number of positive behaviors. The tokens are then used to "purchase" books from the vending machine.



Pictured on right: Club President Scott Stangel (left) and Treasurer Mark Sprangers (right) recently met with school counselor Jeanna Gumtow and Secretary Rachel Ramos to present a check to make the book vending machine a reality.

2025-26 Leadership Team

Optimist International (OI) Leadership Team

Optimist International President:

[Thomas Kendo](#)

Great Plains Regional Vice President:

[Thomas Lloyd](#)

WINUM Executive Committee

Governor: [Vanessa Rueth](#)

Governor Elect: [Louise Bentley](#)

Immediate Past Governor:

[Angie Riemer](#)

Past Governor: [Chuck Erickson](#)

District Treasurer [Mark Sprangers](#)

District Secretary: [Roni Kaczor-Smith](#)

Governor's Assistant: [Tammy Koehler](#)

Lt. Governors

Zone 1: [Deb Braden](#)

Zone 2: [Mary Sue Edens Pfantz](#)

Zone 3: [Ben Elsner](#)

Zone 4: [Roger Philippi](#)

Zone 5: [Chuck Erickson](#)

Zone 6: (Co-Lt. Governors)

[Lori VanNatta](#)

[John Leonhard](#)

Committee Chairs

Communications-External Marketing:

Tammy Koehler

Communications-Internal/Newsletter:

[Louise Bentley](#)

Conferences & Convention Chair:

[Laurel Schirmer](#)

Essay: [Shannon Dalton](#)

Finance Chair: [Tammy Koehler](#)

First timers: (Co-chairs)

[Lori VanNatta](#) and [Trina DeLasky](#)

Growth Chair: [Dan O'Leary](#)

Hospitality: [John Leonhard](#)

Junior Golf Chair: [Ben Elsner](#)

Junior Optimists (JOI) Clubs:

[Bonnie Dahnke](#) and [Dawn Cherek](#)

Leadership Chair: [Jodi Arriola](#)

Membership Chair: [Ann Sheahan](#)

OI Convention Ambassador:

[Angie Riemer](#)

OI District Foundation Rep: [Troy Dostal](#)

Oratorical Chair: [Chuck Erickson](#)

Photographer: [Mary Joan O'Leary](#)

Technology: [Gary Sheahan](#)

Website Advisor: [Tammy Koehler](#)

The Optimist Creed

Promise Yourself

To be **SO STRONG** that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk **health, happiness and prosperity**
to every person you meet.

To make all your friends **feel that there is something in them.**

To look at the **sunny side of everything**
and make your optimism come true.

To **think** only of the best, to **work** only for the best and to
expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the **SUCCESS** of others
as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the
GREATER ACHIEVEMENTS of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance **AT ALL TIMES** and give
every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have
NO TIME to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear,
and **too happy** to permit the presence of trouble.



Looking for Optimist Resources?

- * Check out the [WINUM website](#).
- * Like Us on [WINUM Facebook page](#).
- * Go to the [Optimist International website](#) and Click on [Member Resources](#).
- * Like the [Optimist International Facebook page](#).
- * Contact a District Leader listed on left.