



Optimist International

Third Quarter
March 2026

WINUM DISTRICT

Newsletter

Governor Vanessa's Message

Vanessa Rueth — 2025-26 WINUM Governor
"Be the Change" • "Stand Tall, Face the Sun"



The WINUM District truly shined at our 2nd Quarter Conference on February 28, and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us. The room was filled with color, laughter, and connection as we embraced our Mardi Gras theme—and what a celebration it turned out to be!

Two beautiful king cakes made the day even sweeter, and in true Mardi Gras fashion, we crowned a King and Queen for the Day.



Congratulations to John Van Beek of the Hallie Optimist Club and Anne Heggelund of the Wausau Noon Optimist Club, who found the babies and wore their crowns with pride and good humor. Their smiles captured exactly what our district is all about: joy, fellowship, and optimism in action.

I am deeply grateful for the thoughtful participation during our Town Hall discussion. Your insights, ideas, and honest reflections help guide the direction of our district. We received excellent feedback, and we are already working on several of the items you raised. Your voices matter, and your commitment to strengthening our clubs and communities inspires me every day.

As we move into the third quarter, I am filled with optimism for what lies ahead. Our district is vibrant, creative, and full of leaders who care deeply about making a difference. And as we continue our work, I encourage each of us to Stand Tall and Face the Sun—to look toward the light, choose hope, and lead with the confidence that brighter days are always ahead.

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I'm also excited to share that our 3rd Quarter Conference will be held in Green Bay on April 24 and 25. More details will be included later in this newsletter.

Thank you for bringing your energy, your ideas, and your optimism to every gathering. Together, we continue to build a WINUM District that lifts others, celebrates each other, and leads with purpose.

Let's carry that Mardi Gras spirit forward—bright, bold, and full of hope.



Optimist Day Highlights

On Optimist Day, many clubs and districts across Optimist International celebrated the spirit of optimism in their communities. Attached are a few photos showcasing some of the activities that took place throughout the day.

One highlight was the presentation of a \$250 check to the Ronald McDonald House of Marshfield by WINUM leadership: Louise Bentley, Governor-Elect; Angie Riemer, Immediate Past Governor; Mary Sue Pfantz, Lt. Governor; and Vanessa Rueth, Governor and Ronald McDonald House Executive Director John Bauer.

The additional photos feature members of the Hallie Optimist Club (right center) and the Chippewa Falls Optimist Club (bottom) showing their Optimist Day spirit. Their celebration added wonderful energy to the day and highlighted the enthusiasm shared across the WINUM District.



Visit from the SWIS District VP

We were pleased to welcome a visitor from the SWIS District of Optimist International. Howard Crofoot, the Vice President-Elect for the Great Plains Region for the 2026–2027 Optimist Year, joined us for our gathering.

It was wonderful having Howard with us, and we are confident we'll be seeing him again this fall as we continue building strong connections across our districts

WINUM 3rd Quarter Conference

April 24-25, 2026

Comfort Suites/Rock Garden,
1951 Bond Street, Green Bay WI 54313



Name Address City, State, Zip

E-mail address Phone

Club Name Zone # Your 2025-26 office (if any) Is this your 1st conference?

REGISTRATION INFO *(Fees are discounted for this condensed conference only)*

	Advance (by Apr 19th)	On Site	Number	Total \$
Members				
Registration & Saturday Lunch	\$60.00	\$65.00	_____	_____
<i>Menu: tba</i> (all menus are subject to change)				

Spouse/Guest/Child (non-members)

Name(s):

<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Lunch	\$25.00	\$30.00	_____	_____
<i>Menu: tba</i> (all menus are subject to change)				

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; you don't need a PayPal account—just enter your credit card.
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 Comfort Suites (920) 499-7449 and ask for the WINUM Optimist group block. Rate is \$139+ tax. **Rooms "unblock" March 26, 2026!**

3rd Quarter Conference – Tentative Agenda
April 25, 2026
Comfort Suites/Rock Garden, 1951 Bond St, Green Bay, WI
920-499-7449

Rooted in Optimism, Growing in Impact — celebrating how every club's service takes root and grows into meaningful results across WINUM.

Friday, April 24

7:00 pm Hospitality - Settle in for a relaxed night of conversation, laughter, and low-key fun. We're staying in on Friday—no outing this time—so bring a favorite game to share if you'd like. Cribbage, bingo, cards, or whatever makes you smile... it's all fair game!

Saturday, April 25

7:30 am Past Governor's Breakfast

8:00 am – Check-in

8:30 am – First Timers Meeting We have a gift for you!

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

9:30 Oratorical Presentations

This year's Oratorical Contest uses a new format where all attendees can watch the presentations, with winners announced immediately after judging.

10:45 Break

11:00 Announce Winners Essay and Oratorical

11:15 am - General Session: Leadership Reports

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 pm – Lunch, Optimist Foundation Raffle Baskets, Mini Skit: "Shining in Real Time"

1:00 pm – Break

1:10 pm – Belong Wisconsin Speakers: Eshalon Mayer and Nicki Damrow of Belong Wisconsin

Belong Wisconsin supports children experiencing sibling separation by helping them stay connected through programs like Sibling Camp and year-round family connection events.

2:00 pm – Training: DREAM – Session 3 "" with Jodi Arriola

2:50 pm – Round Table: **Building Stronger Clubs Together** - Engaging conversations led by district leaders on practical topics that help clubs grow—Club Impact Report, Optimist Institute, social media strategies, officer training, and supporting smaller clubs. Final topics will be set once facilitators are confirmed

4:00 pm - Optimist Creed & Farewell

Donations Needed for 3rd Quarter Convention:

Supporting Belong Wisconsin

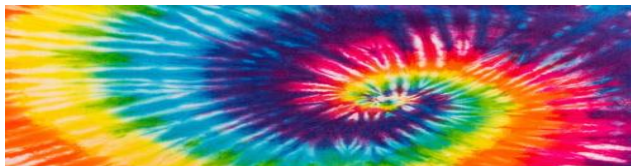
Vanessa Rueth — 2025-26 Governor

At our 3rd Quarter Convention in April, we are collecting new, 100% cotton items to support the tie-dye projects at Belong Wisconsin's summer camp. These projects give youth a creative, confidence-building experience—and your donations make it possible.

We are requesting new cotton items in any size, from youth through adult. Ideal items include:

- T-shirts
- Socks
- Pillowcases
- Other dye-friendly cotton pieces

Every contribution helps ensure campers have a colorful, joy-filled experience. Thank you for helping us spread optimism in such a hands-on, meaningful way.



Ready to Grow Your Optimist Leadership?

Nominations for Lt. Governor for the 2026–2027 Optimist year and Governor-Elect for 2027–2028 will be accepted during our 3rd Quarter Conference — and we'd love to see some new faces step forward. If you've ever felt that little nudge to lead, inspire, or sprinkle a bit more Optimism across our district, this might be your moment. Consider tossing your hat in the ring... or at least giving it a cheerful spin.

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

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2025-26 Conferences & Convention WINUM District Optimist International

April 24-25, 2026 (3rd Quarter Conference) Comfort Suites/Rock Garden, 1951 Bond St, Green Bay

June 28-July 2, 2026

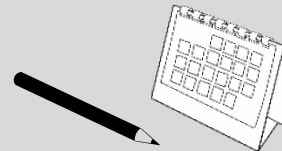
108th Optimist International Convention

Jacksonville, Florida Hyatt Regency Jacksonville
Don't miss this opportunity to hear motivational speakers, attend workshops, speak 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.](#)

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

4th Quarter Newsletter Articles Due: June 22, 2026





ZONE 1

Lt. Governor: Deb Braden

Chippewa Falls Club: The Chippewa Falls Club recently served at Agnes' Table, whose mission is to provide nutritious meals, hospitality, and advocacy for community members facing challenges. The club contributed both funding and volunteers to support the meal.



The club also participated in the Essay Contest, and the top three winners are pictured:

- Maura Bright – 1st place
- Zoey Eckwright – 2nd place
- Lauren Buescher – 3rd place

In addition, members are preparing to host a graduation dance for 8th graders in May as students celebrate the end of Middle School and transition to High School.

Looking ahead, the club is excited to open their stand this summer during the Northern Wisconsin State Fair and to host 500 Hog Riders with a brat fry in June.

Hallie Club: The Hallie Optimist Club's Essay Contest wrapped up in February. Fifteen students wrote on the topic "How My Acts of Service Help Me Understand What My Community Means to Me." The top three winners are pictured.



Esther Spate's first-place essay was submitted to the District competition, where the winner will receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

Hallie Optimist Club Essay Contest winners (left to right):

- Schneider Polzin, Cadott – 2nd place
- Nathaniel Vizer, Boyd – 3rd place
- Esther Spate, Lake Hallie – 1st place

All three contestants attend Liberty Christian School.

The Hallie Optimist is also busy working on their Breakfast with Easter Bunny on April 4th at the Hallie Town Hall. They will be serving from 8am to 11am. Easter Bunny will be available for pictures.

Superior Club: The Superior Optimist Club is currently planning a **75th Anniversary celebration**, recognizing 75 years of Optimism in Superior. More details will be shared soon.

Happy Anniversary!

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL HALLIE OPTIMIST CLUB Childhood Cancer Campaign

PANCAKE BREAKFAST WITH THE EASTER BUNNY

SATURDAY
APRIL 4, 2026
8:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

Lake Hallie Town Hall
13033 30th Ave
Lake Hallie, WI

CHILDREN 12 & UNDER: **FREE**
ADULTS: \$7.00

Thank you to our Sponsors:

Kwik Trip **The Plus** **Linde**

BRING YOUR CAMERA AND TAKE PICTURES WITH THE EASTER BUNNY!
QUESTIONS: 715-271-1844 OR 715-559-5597



ZONE 2

Lt. Governor Mary Sue Edens Pfantz

Wausau Breakfast Optimist Club

The Wausau Breakfast Optimist Club welcomed guest speakers from **Wausau Sluggers** and **Wausau Youth Baseball**, with **Monk Botanical Gardens** is scheduled to present in the coming weeks. Members also gathered for their quarterly **“Smoker” business meeting**.

Submitted by: Ethan Buechel

Wausau Noon Optimist Club

The Wausau Noon Optimist Club began 2026 with strong momentum, focusing on youth programs, scholarships, fundraising events, and meaningful community support. One of our largest efforts this quarter was the 2026 Boys Basketball Tournament, held January 31–February 1, which welcomed 97 teams for a competitive and well-organized weekend of youth athletics. The tournament continues to be one of our primary fundraisers, providing essential funding for the many youth-focused initiatives we support throughout the year.

Scholarship and academic opportunities remained a priority this quarter through our Essay and Oratorical Contests. These contests provide students with the opportunity to develop their communication skills while competing for scholarship awards. Encouraging young people to reflect on service, belonging, and community continues to be an important part of our mission.

Our fundraising efforts directly translated into financial support for youth-serving organizations. This quarter we were proud to provide the following donations:

- \$1,000 to Stable Hands to support therapeutic programming for youth

- \$500 to the Wausau West Master Singers toward the purchase of a new piano
- \$2,065 in food and cash donations to The Neighbor’s Place through our holiday food drive
- An additional \$1,000 to Monk Botanical Gardens’ Sprouts Program to expand youth access to nature-based education

We also increased our support of Bowl for Kids’ Sake to allow greater member participation and continued planning for our Teen Bowling and Pizza Party, a free event designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for middle and high school students. Preparations were underway for our signature St. Patty’s Day Raffle, one of our most important annual fundraisers supporting scholarships and youth programming throughout the year.

Our membership remains strong at approximately 93–94 active members this quarter, all committed to advancing our mission of supporting youth in the areas of welfare, fitness, and education. Through service, leadership, and responsible stewardship of funds, the Wausau Noon Optimist Club continues to bring out the best in our community’s youth and represent the WINUM District with pride.

Submitted by: Andrew N. Schlager, WNO Club Secretary

Stevens Point Noon Optimist Club

The Stevens Point Noon Optimist Club had a full and productive quarter.

January was spent preparing for the **Freshman Formal**, held February 14. About **300 students** attended the event, which included a DJ, candy bar, and refreshments. The combined formal for both junior high schools has become a successful annual fundraiser.



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The **William and Mary Podoll Youth Recognition award** was presented to five sixth grade students selected by staff from the district's twelve elementary schools. The staff select the students that show optimism at school, home and in the community. Each honoree received:

- A plaque
- A framed copy of the Optimist Creed
- \$50 in Portage County gift certificates

Photos were shared on the club's Facebook page.

Community Engagement

- A local Boy Scout presented his Eagle Scout project—an outdoor classroom for his elementary school. The club pledged \$1,000 in support.
- The Stevens Point Children's Museum shared updates on renovations and requested funding for a spiral wishing well, which the club agreed to support.

Ongoing Projects

Scholarship applications are open, the Spring Flower Sale is underway, and the club welcomed two new members this quarter.



Antigo Optimist Club

- **January 13, 2026:** Sponsored the Annual **Christmas Tree Burn**, supporting the Antigo Area Food Pantry and serving hot dogs and hot chocolate.
- **February 15, 2026:** Hosted a **free community movie night** featuring GOAT (2026) at McKenzie Palace Theatre. The event collected **394 lbs of donations** for the Antigo Community Food Pantry.
- **March 9, 2026:** Presented **\$750** to the Antigo Bowling Club, supporting over 70 youth bowlers, two varsity teams, and five middle school teams.
- **March 11, 2026:** Donated **\$500** to Antigo Visual Arts (AVA) for the **Tiny Artists** program.

Merrill Optimist Club

- **Youth Optimist of the Month (January):**
- **Hannah Klinger**, daughter of Kris and Carrie Klinger. Hannah plans to attend UW-La Crosse or Carthage College to pursue occupational therapy.

January 25, 2026: Merrill Junior Optimists volunteered at the **Eagles Pancake Breakfast**, raising funds for the Merrill School District's **Blue Jay NEST Program**.

Mosinee Area Optimists

On March 6, the Mosinee Area Optimists distributed dictionaries to **122 third-grade students** at Mosinee Public School.

Submitted by: Ken Muelling

Everest Area Optimists

Membership & Activities

- Hosted **two New Member Activities** (January 22 and March 3) with free pizza and soda.
- Held a **Red Robin fundraiser** on March 11, with 20% of food sales donated back to the club.
- Celebrated **Optimist Day** during a regular lunch meeting.

Youth Contests

- **Essay Contest:** 4 entries for 6 scholarships—each student will receive one.
- **Oratorical Contest:** 6 contestants.
- **Anna Jacobson** won both contests and will represent the club at the **WINUM District Contest** on April 25, 2026, in Green Bay.

Community Support

- Recognized 12 Everest Junior High students during History Day with certificates and Target gift cards.
- Preparing for Egg My House on April 4 (25 candy- and toy-filled eggs for \$20).
- Planning for Spring Fest at Ace Hardware on May 1–3.

Submitted by: Lyn Arnhart



ZONE 3

Lt. Governor: Ben Elsner

23008 - **GREEN BAY-BELLEVUE-EAST TOWN** - No Update

23141 - **PULASKI-KRAKOW, WI** - No Update

23178 - **STURGEON BAY, WI** - No Update

23140 - **GREEN BAY-PREBLE, WI** - No Update

23045 - DE PERE

Past Events

● February 22nd: The De Pere Optimists held their annual meat raffle at Sidekicks which raised \$4,200!

23075 - GREEN BAY

Upcoming Events

· June & July: The 2026 Optimist Softball League has wrapped up registration and has ~250 girls signed up from grades 4K-7th grade.

· April 15th: The Optimist Club of Green Bay will be hosting their Oratorical contest at Notre Dame Academy. Some students will be coming to the April 8th meeting to practice their speeches.

Past Events

● February 19th: The Optimist Club of Green Bay partnered with the Green Bay Curling club and provided sweatshirts for the Junior Curling League. The league is free for kids and meets on Saturdays.

● January 16th: The annual curling event happened between the Optimist Club of Green Bay & the Allouez Optimist Club was held at the Green Bay Curling Club. The winning club was the Optimist Club of Green Bay but it was a great event for both clubs to come together, share conversations, and enjoy a night of true togetherness.

Past Events

● March 11th: The 40th Annual Optimist Club Scholastic Awards Banquet honoring Shawano High School students who have achieved academic success. 22 students received a special plaque for receiving scholastic awards 4 years in a row!

● February 28th: The 33rd Annual Boys Basketball Tournament was held with a great turnout

● January 31st: The Girls Basketball Tournament was held with a great turnout and full brackets with teams coming from all around the area.

23077 - HOWARD SUAMICO

Upcoming Events

● June 15th: Fore the Kids Golf Classic will be held at Mid Vallee Golf Course. Every paid golfer is automatically entered into the Grand Prize Drawing for a \$1,000 Island Resort & Casino golf getaway! Reach out to hsoptimist.info@hsoptimistclub.org.

● May 13th: The Howard Suamico Optimist Club will be holding their Culvers Dinner Event where they help the local Culvers, share about the Optimist, and in turn raise funds that will help their community. The time is from 5-8p at the Culvers on 11820 Velp Ave, Green Bay WI

● April 15th: Daddy D's Presents 50's Show. Doors open at 5pm with dinner starting around 6pm at the Riverside Ballroom. There will be a 50's themed show that starts around 7pm. Tickets are \$55 per person which includes dinner. If interested, contact Darold at 920-530-0387

Past Events

● March 10th: Whitetails Unlimited Banquet

23020 - GREEN BAY-BFT

Past Events

● January 14th: Boys & Girls Club event was held during the Boys & Girls Club open house where the Green Bay Breakfast Optimists served dinner to those families that came in. Once done with dinner, Ben Perkovich (Sr. Director of Operations) took the club around the facility and shared more about the Boys & Girls Club.

23159 - Shawano

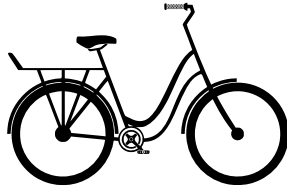
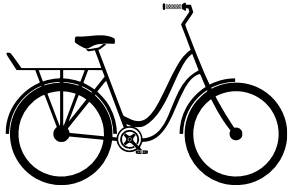
Upcoming Events

● October 10th: Shawano Optimist Club 50th Anniversary Banquet

● June 5th & 6th: The Shawano Optimist Club will be helping with the beverage stand during Sun Drop Dayz along with helping on the Sun Drop Dayz run the morning of June 6th.

● May 20th: The Shawano Optimist Club will be holding the annual Respect for Law Steak Fry

● May 9th: Bike Rodeo will be held at Zion Lutheran where kids will go through skills contest and win prizes, receive free helmets, get their bike registered, and a lot more fun. In addition, one of highlights of this annual event is the giving away of brand-new bikes.



a collaborative effort of service groups, area churches, and the school district to identify and help families struggling to feed themselves.

They are gearing up for a busy spring with their pending Easter Egg Hunt, which draws hundreds of kids for the elusive prize eggs; and their unique “In Remembrance Night”, where they place pre-purchased luminaries at loved one’s gravestones to remember those no longer with us. Happy Spring Everyone!!



ZONE 4

Lt. Governor: Roger Phillippi

NEW HOLSTEIN

The New Holstein Optimist Club continues to work hard on the funding portion of their Playground Project. They have now passed the 90% point. Donations from around the community continue to come in, as well as the support they receive at their Bingo/Lunch events, the next one being March 22.

Husky Hangouts for 6, 7, & 8th grade kids have been well received this year, with 50 kids coming out for most of them. One more hangout later in March. Tri-Star Basketball is set for Saturday, March 21.

TWO RIVERS

The Two Rivers Club started 2026 with their special guest Lt Gov Roger Phillippi joining them for breakfast! Their Jr. Optimist Club hosted a Winter Dance and they also celebrated 31 years of being an Optimist Club and serving the Youth of Two Rivers! This quarter also allowed them time to target special interest groups with donations, including Wreaths Across America, Big Brothers Big Sisters and an area Youth Trap Shooting Club. They also hosted a successful Essay Contest and sent their 1st Place finisher to the District Competition. They continue to be active with a Hunger Task Force which is



ZONE 5

Lt. Governor: Chuck Erickson

Brillion Optimist Club

The Brillion Optimist Club had a successful February with our annual pizza fundraiser. Club members worked hard to produce about **2,400 fresh pizzas**, making it another great year for this popular event.

March will be a busy month for the club. We’ll host our **Tri-Star Basketball Competition**, giving local youth the opportunity to showcase their basketball skills. We also have a **N.O.W. (New Optimists Welcome) meeting** scheduled for **Thursday, March 19 from 5:30–7:30 PM** at a local pizzeria. Members and guests will enjoy a pizza buffet along with some friendly bingo fun.

Looking ahead to May, the club will award our **\$1,000 Optimist Club Volunteer Scholarship**. This scholarship is unique because recipients are selected based on their **commitment to volunteering in their school and community**, rather than academic achievements.

Our annual **Electric Parade** will take place on **Friday, June 12, beginning at 8:30 PM**, lighting up the community with festive displays.

The club's regular **noon meetings will take a summer break in June, July, and August**, resuming again in October. In September, we'll hold our **second N.O.W. meeting** at the local Nature Center, where members and guests will gather around the grills to cook their own steaks or chicken breasts and enjoy an evening of fellowship.

Chilton Optimist Club

The Chilton Optimist Club has been relatively quiet since the start of the new year, but several youth programs have kept members involved. In early March, the club hosted its **Tri-Star Basketball** event, where a great group of youngsters came out to compete and show off their basketball skills.

Denise Stoker chaired the club's **Art, Essay, and Oratorical contests**. This year, the club received two art submissions and three essays from local high school students. Members are looking forward to attending the **Third Quarter Conference** to hear not only their local contestants but also many other talented participants.

The club is also preparing for its much-anticipated **Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 4**. When the noon whistle sounds in the City of Chilton, several hundred children will rush into their age-group areas to search for candy and prizes. Three lucky participants—one from each age group—will also win a bicycle. Volunteers spend more than an hour spreading candy throughout the park, but it usually takes only about five minutes for the children to gather it all up and leave the park empty of treats!

Appleton Noon Optimist Club

The Appleton Noon Optimist Club will once again host **Optimist Night at the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers** this summer. Games will take place on **Tuesday, June 23** and **Tuesday, August 18**.

These events are open to all Optimist members across the **WINUM District**, as well as spouses and children. It's a great opportunity for fellowship, baseball, and fun with fellow Optimists.

For ticket information, contact **Jamie Voster** at jsvoster@gmail.com.

Greenleaf-Wrightstown Optimist Club

The Greenleaf-Wrightstown Optimist Club will host its 35th Annual Easter Egg Hunt and Jr. Optimist Bake Sale on Saturday, April 4 at 10:00 AM at Wrightstown Middle School.

Children are encouraged to dress for the weather and bring their own Easter baskets. Each colored egg collected wins a prize, and there will also be goodie bags and giveaways. Families will also have the chance to get their picture taken with the **Optimist Easter Bunny**.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a **non-perishable food item** to donate to the **Wrightstown Food Pantry**, helping support local families in need.

ZONE 6

Co-Lt. Governors:
John Leonhard
Lori VanNatta



North Fond du Lac club

The North Fond du Lac club started out the second quarter with the tear down of the club's lighting decorations, which were initially put up for the annual holiday Light Up the Park event at the local Optimist Park.

Members facilitated the local Tri-Star basketball competition with over sixty youth participating. Awards were later distributed at a High School basketball game.

As a NOW event, the club hosted its annual chili night, an opportunity for members to introduce prospective new members to the club.

The club distributed funds to the local school district in support of their post prom activities, trap shooting club, and drone program. The latter program provided an opportunity for local students to
(cont. page 13)

participate in a competition in Indiana. They also provided financial support to the local cub scout group that the club charters, the NFDL police department's K9 program, improvements to the baseball fields at the Village Park, and a scholarship for a local high school student's participation in the 2026 Wisconsin Leadership Seminar. The club also supported Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a program which strives to ensure that no child sleeps on the floor and Backpack Buddies, an effort in the local school district that provides food for students facing hunger.

On March 14, two club members, four youth, and three parents from the local scout group helped a local Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapter remove wreaths initially placed at a local cemetery for the annual Wreaths Across America project in honor of fallen service members.

Fond du Lac Noon Optimist

On Saturday, March 14th, the Fond du Lac Noon Optimist Club partnered with Sleep in Heavenly Peace and Nemesis Metals to build 75 beds for youth in need in Fond du Lac County.

Fond du Lac Evening Optimist Club

The Fond du Lac Evening Optimist Club completed two service projects by donating and serving a meal in both January and March at the FDL Holy Family Warming Shelter, which provides safety and respite for up to 35 people experiencing homelessness in Fond du Lac. Club members provide all meal items (such as making homemade chili, soups, casseroles, etc.) and several members then serve those meal items.

On February 7th, the club held their first fundraiser of the year by serving beverages and selling pull-tab tickets at the annual FDL Festivals Bags Fest cornhole tournament. This year was the most successful of the four years the club has participated in Bags Fest.

The Fond du Lac Evening Optimist also made several donations to local organizations during this quarter. A \$500.00 donation was given to the Children's Museum of Fond du Lac. A \$500.00 donation was

also given to Badgerland Youth for Christ, which is a faith-based youth organization striving to help develop the lives of students in the Fond du Lac Area, through mentoring, programming, and with a commitment to social involvement. A \$250.00 donation was given to Celebrate CommUNITY, an event held by United for Diversity, a local nonprofit organization that educates and advocates for diversity and inclusion in the Fond du Lac area.

The Fond du Lac Evening Optimist club also has been busy planning one of our biggest fundraisers of the year, which is our annual car and truck show. The 49th Annual Evening Optimist Father's Day Car & Truck Show is being held at the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds on Sunday, June 21st, from 8:00am-2:30pm. This annual event attracts cars and trucks from all over the state and is truly a family-oriented event.

The club is gearing up for its busiest months of the year.

The club will sponsor the Kids Area at the Tri-County Home & Outdoor Show on Sunday, March 29th. One room of the Exhibition Hall will have Bounce Houses and other fun activities for children. It will be called the Fond du Lac Noon Optimists Children's Fun Zone.

The Noon Club annually sponsors a Skate with the Bunny event for participants from the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, as well as youth from the Boys and Girls Club. The event will be held March 31st at Korneli's on the Avenue Roller Rink. Youth and family members attending the event skate for free including skate rental, and a light meal of pizza, cookies and soda.

The Club also recently donated funds to assist with St. Mary's Springs High School post prom party.



Committee Reports

First Timers

Co-Chairs:

Lori VanNatta and Trina DeLasky,

It was a pleasure to welcome three “First Timers” to the Second District Conference. One of those Optimists shared, *“I had the time of my life at the Optimist Conference as a first timer and met many new people.”*



First Timers gather for a brief 15–20-minute meet-and-greet before

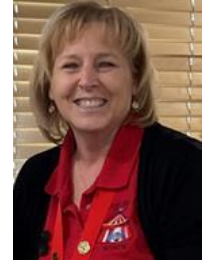
the conference begins. During that time, we learn where each person is from, what brought them to the conference, and a little about them. We also review the agenda and answer any questions they may have.

During the conference, each First Timer is encouraged to introduce themselves to two people they do not already know. They ask a few simple questions and return the completed form to us for a (cont. top of page above Membership Retention)

chance of winning a free conference registration valid within the next year. If you have never attended before, we would truly enjoy welcoming you as our next “First Timer.”

Membership Retention

Ann Sheahan,
2025-26 Membership Chair



This year, Optimist International is focusing on both growth and retention. **Congratulations** to Fond Du Lac Noon Optimist for finishing the 1st quarter with a PLUS 7 and no deletes; this places them 17th overall out of 1627 clubs in Optimist International! It's not just about the numbers; it's about the extra hands you gain with each new member. You'll also gain a new perspective and revitalized energy that they bring to your club. As our clubs become more active with summer projects approaching, don't forget to invite potential new members to help at an event and then ask them to join! It can't hurt to JUST ASK! I hope you have successful events and an influx of new members to keep your club fresh! Who will you ask next?

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

DREAM Session 3: Encourage the Heart

Jodi Arriola — 2025-26 Leadership Development Chair

At the WINUM 2nd Quarter Conference, we continued the Dream curriculum with Session 2: Leadership Nuts and Bolts, exploring how leaders inspire others, build trust, and drive positive change. We touched on the difference between leadership and management, the importance of self-awareness and communication, and how ethical leadership creates a culture of accountability and impact.

Session 3: Encourage the Heart will be presented at the 3rd Quarter Conference on April 25 in Green Bay. We'll dive into our personal “whys” as Optimists and highlight the many leadership opportunities within our clubs, WINUM, and Optimist International — and how support from fellow Optimists makes stepping into leadership less intimidating and far more rewarding.

At the 4th Quarter Convention, we'll wrap up with Session 4: Encouraging Others.

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



2026 WINUM District Oratorical Contest

Oratorical Chair: Chuck Erickson



The 3rd Quarter WINUM Conference will host the **2026 District Oratorical Contest** in Green Bay on **Saturday, April 25**. This year, the contest will be a featured part of the conference, and all conference attendees are encouraged to attend and support the students representing our Optimist Clubs.

The contest will begin at approximately **9:30 a.m.** at **The Rock Garden Banquet & Event Center, 1951 Bond St., Green Bay, WI**. Contestants should plan to arrive by **9:00 a.m.** to check in and prepare.

We expect contestants from **Chilton, Everest, Green Bay Preble, Green Bay Noon, Kewaunee, Oshkosh, and Wausau Noon**. The **topic for the 2026 Optimist International Oratorical Contest** is: **“The Moment I Realized I Belonged — My Definition of Community.”**

The contest provides youth with the opportunity to gain experience in public speaking, develop self-expression, build confidence, improve communication skills, and compete for college scholarships.

District contest winners receive scholarships for use at a **college, university, or trade school**: **1st Place: \$2,500, 2nd Place: \$1,500, and 3rd Place: \$1,000**. The **1st-place winner will repeat their speech at the conference and** advance to represent the district at the **World Championship in St. Louis**.

The Optimist Oratorical Scholarships are funded through **member donations to the Optimist International Foundation**. Member support of the Foundation helps ensure that this important youth program continues to provide scholarship opportunities.

If you know someone in the Green Bay area who would be interested in serving as an **Oratorical Judge**, please contact **Chuck Erickson, WINUM District Oratorical Chair**.

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



Essay Contest

Shannon Dalton — 2025-26 Essay Contest Chair

The District Essay Contest is well underway, and our judges are currently reviewing 11 thoughtful and inspiring submissions from students across WINUM. We look forward to announcing the results at the 3rd Quarter Conference in Green Bay on April 25, where we will celebrate the creativity and insight of our young writers. Thank you to all the clubs who encouraged students to participate and share their voices.



ESSAY CONTEST QUESTIONS? Email Shannon at shannon@wickershamjewelry.com.

Optimist Foundation

Troy Dostal — 2025-26 OI Foundation Representative



Hello WINUM Optimist. Thank you for a great turn out at 2nd Quarter Conference in Rothschild. You did not disappoint with the support you show Optimist International Foundation (OIF) with the raffle baskets that you donate. I appreciate you and your clubs willingness to bring those baskets to raffle off each quarter, so we can support the OIF. We were able to raise about \$2,300 on that day to donate to OIF through Dime-A-Day memberships, raffle basket ticket sales, and unrestricted donations from individuals and clubs. These funds go directly to OIF to help support the scholarships that OIF awards for essay, oratorical, and CCDHH (communication contest for the deaf and hard of hearing).

These donations also help with the club grants and childhood health and wellness grants. More information on the childhood health and wellness grant is available at: [https://www.oifoundation.org/Childhood Health Wellness.html](https://www.oifoundation.org/Childhood_Health_Wellness.html). This grant has 2 cycles per year with due dates in January and then again on August 21, 2026.

Club Grant information can be found at: <https://www.oifoundation.org/club-grant.html>. This year's deadline was March 20, 2026, and it is only 1 cycle per year and must be for a "NEW" project. Both grants you can receive between \$250-\$1,000.

I do also want to highlight the Dime-A-Day membership. Any member who donates \$36.50 per Optimist year will be automatically enrolled.



The Women's Philanthropy Council is a restricted donation of \$100 designated to OIF to be used for the World Oratorical Championship scholarships for young women that win the Regional Contest from the US and Caribbean.

Both these and other donations can be made online directly with OIF at: <https://www.oifoundation.org/donate.cfm>.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions about OIF or need assistance with any of the programs or benefits from OIF

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



New Club Growth

Troy Dostal — Growth Chair 2025-26



Let's not be the best kept secret!

Here are a few great quotes of why we need Optimist Clubs in every town:

- “An Optimist is someone who believes every challenge is an opportunity to serve.”
- “The future of our communities begins with the youth we encourage today.”
- “Optimists don’t just hope for a better world—they build it through service.”
- “Every act of encouragement can change the direction of a young person’s life.”
- “Where Optimists gather, communities grow stronger.”
- “The power of an Optimist is believing in youth before they believe in themselves.”
- “Service with optimism creates leaders for tomorrow.”
- “A single Optimist can inspire hope—but a club of Optimists can transform a community.”
- “Optimism is contagious when it is put into action.”
- “The best way to predict a brighter future is to mentor the youth who will lead it.”

These quotes along with our Optimist Creed should be things by which we should live. However, not everybody knows about the Optimist Creed and all the great things that Optimist Clubs do. We are looking to spread the word of Optimism to communities in our district that might not know about the Optimist organization.

We will be having some upcoming meetings shortly to come up with a game plan to promote our great organization. This is where we need all members to help. Those that are on Facebook or other social media platforms-like, follow, repost items from Optimist International and other clubs so that we can promote all the great things that we are doing. I might only know 300 people, but if I (as well as our clubs) start to share posts they begin to reach more and more people. I still might only know the same 300 people, but I may gain followers for my club and soon 500 people will know me or my club and see the work I do. Then that becomes 750 people who know me, and then 1,000 people, etc. Let's share the best kept secret!

As part of new club growth, we need to also consider current membership and retention of members in those current clubs and continue to grow our current clubs. I (as well as others in the district) would be happy to assist those clubs with getting things set up so that we can promote things via social media platforms. I will be working to bring information to future conferences to assist with making our clubs stronger. “Many hands make light work.”

Please reach out - I would be glad to help you explore ways to promote your club and increase your presence on social media.

Contact Troy Dostal at dostalt@live.com or 715-531-5085.



A New Benefit For Optimist Members

Dear Optimist Member,

You may remember our friends at **Grouper**, who have supported Optimist members in the past and share our commitment to building strong, connected communities. Recently, we took the next step in that partnership.

Optimist has launched a new online space within **Hello by Grouper** - a national healthy-living platform designed to help members boost their well-being by staying active, engaged, and inspired. **Hello by Grouper is currently available to dues-paying, U.S.-based members only.**

Optimist members have access to a wide range of healthy-living tools and experiences through Hello by Grouper - from fitness and mobility classes to wellness tools, educational talks, and interest-based communities. Within the platform, Optimist will also have its own dedicated space where members can stay connected between events and continue strengthening the ties that make our community thrive.

And because Hello by Grouper brings many associations together, you'll also be able to explore new interests and connect with a wider world of supportive peers, all included with your Optimist membership at **no additional cost**.*

By joining Hello by Grouper, you're investing in your own wellness and the overall well-being of our Optimist community, with access to:

- **Hundreds of live and on-demand classes and experiences:** From fitness and strength & balance to arts & crafts and daily puzzles, Hello by Grouper offers endless opportunities to stay healthy and engaged.
- **Communities that inspire and uplift:** Connect with like-minded people - from walkers and gardeners to crafters, music lovers, and lifelong learners - who'll motivate you to build healthy habits.
- **Inspiring content and events:** Book clubs, webinars, monthly challenges, and talks on healthy aging - all designed to spark joy and boost well-being.
- **Your Optimist space:** Connect with fellow members, share what makes our organization shine, and stay up-to-date with club-related discussions and news.

Staying healthy and connected matters now more than ever - and strong communities don't happen by accident. They grow when we show up every day.

Join us! Getting started is simple - just follow the steps to sign up and explore

[Click here to Join Hello by Grouper!](#)

Partnering with Hello by Grouper is about investing in ourselves and the future strength of our organization.

We can't wait to see you inside the community!

Warm regards,

The Optimist Team

**Hello by Grouper is included as part of your member dues and available as a free benefit for all dues-paying Optimist members.*

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](#) and [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: [Troy Dostal](#)

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 of page.