



Optimist International WINUM DISTRICT Newsletter

June 2026

Governor Vanessa's Message



Vanessa Rueth
WINUM Governor 2025-26



As we enter the final quarter of our Optimist year, I'm filled with gratitude for everything we've accomplished together. The first three quarters have been full of energy, service, and heart — and WINUM Optimists continue to Stand Tall, Face the Sun no matter what challenges come our way.

The Optimist International Convention is just around the corner, June 28–July 1 in Jacksonville, Florida. I'm excited to once again represent the WINUM District and to learn, grow, and connect with Optimists from around the world. President Tom Kendo's theme, Be the Change, reminds us that every workshop, every conversation, and every new idea help us bring even more optimism back home.

Looking ahead, our WINUM 4th Quarter Convention will be held in Weston, WI, with hospitality on Friday, August 21 and convention and elections on Saturday, August 22. I know many clubs are in the middle of their biggest fundraising efforts, but I truly hope to see strong representation from across the district. Your presence strengthens our connection and our future.

Thank you for all you do for your clubs, your communities, and our youth. I'm always happy to attend your events or visit your meetings — just reach out. Let's finish this year strong, continue to Stand Tall, Face the Sun, and boldly Be the Change in our communities.

Stand Tall, Face the Sun,

Vanessa
WINUM District Governor



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Governor Elect Message



Louise Bentley
Governor-Elect
2025-2026

This 2025-26 Optimist year is flying by! Governor Vanessa is doing a great job leading us as we “Stand Tall, Face the Sun.”

A group of us from WINUM, including Vanessa and I, are attending the Optimist International (OI) Convention in Jacksonville, Florida June 28-July 1. I will have a head start and have Governor-Elect training June 26-28. I am looking forward to learning new information about all things Optimism to bring back to the WINUM District to share with all of you.

Please plan to attend our 4th Quarter WINUM Convention in Weston Aug. 21-22. The incoming officers will be sworn in for the 2026-27 Optimist year, there will be

some roundtables with training, and other fun activities. There may even be some bowling! First timers are always welcome, and incoming club presidents should plan to be there for the training. I will be unveiling OI's goals as well as district goals for the upcoming year. You won't want to miss it!

See you in Weston!

In Optimism,
Louise



Contact Governor Elect Louise Bentley at winum2627@gmail.com or 715-379-8363.

Get ready to dream big!

At our 4th Quarter Convention, we're creating a vibrant, hands-on Idea Wall to help shape Incoming Governor Louise's year — and you are a key part of it. We'll have colorful Post-it notes ready for you to jot down your bold ideas, creative project suggestions, training topics, new approaches, or anything you'd love to see our district try in 2026–2027.

Start thinking now about what inspires you, what your club needs, and what would make next year unforgettable. Bring your imagination, your optimism, and your best “what if we...” ideas. Louise is excited to build a year that reflects the voices and vision of our members — and this Idea Wall is your chance to help spark that momentum.

We will be reviewing the wall ideas at 1st Quarter conference in November.

Let's fill that wall with energy, creativity, and the spirit of possibility.

WINUM 4th Quarter Convention
August 21-22, 2026
Comfort Inn & Suites, 5810 Scholfield Ave
Weston WI 715-355-9955
Dale's Weston Lanes & Mountain Bay Conference
Center, 5902 Schofield Ave, Weston WI 715-359-8488



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

(\$5 late fee each item)

☐	Advance (by Aug 16th)	On Site	Number	Total \$
Members				
Registration & Saturday Lunch	\$60.00	\$65.00	_____	_____
Menu: Taco bar				
(all menus are subject to change)				

☐	Spouse/Guest/Child (non-members)	Name(s): _____		
	Saturday Lunch	\$25.00	\$30.00	_____
	Menu: Taco bar			
	(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: Reserve online at:

<https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/DJ30T1>

or call the Comfort Inn 715-355-9955 - ask for the Wisconsin Optimist group block.

Rate is \$126 Dbl Queen or \$135 King + tax. Rooms "unblock" JULY 5, 2026!

4th Quarter Convention – Agenda (Tentative)

August 22, 2026

Comfort Inn & Suites Weston 5810 Schofield Ave, Weston, WI 54476

Dale's Weston Lanes (next to the hotel)

"Encouraging Others is more than a lesson — it's how we strengthen our garden. As this Optimist year comes to a close, we celebrate the growth we've inspired and the new season ready to bloom."

Friday, August 21

5:00-7:00 pm – Bowling at Dales's Weston Lanes (on your own)

7:00-10:00 pm - Hospitality at Comfort Inn and Suites

Saturday, August 22

8:00 am - Past Governor's Breakfast at hotel

8:00 am – Check-in & Registration at Dale's Weston Lanes

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 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. Vote for District Leaders.

10:20 am - Final Skit: "Stand Tall, Face the Sun — Encouraging Others to Bloom"

10:30 am - Break

10:40 am – Roundtable Training for Incoming Club Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, Lt. Governors, and Everyone! with Jann & Sue Van Dreser

11:35 am – Idea Wall – What are Your Priorities for WINUM for 2026-27?

11:45 am - Purchase Raffle Tickets

Noon – 1 pm - Lunch, Optimist Foundation Raffle Baskets

1:00 pm – Memorial Service

1:15 pm – Training: DREAM – Session 4 "Encouraging Others" with Jodi Arriola

A warm, engaging session on sparking motivation, building strong team energy, and keeping recognition flowing so everyone feels seen, appreciated, and excited to jump in.

2:00 pm -Break

2:10 pm – What is Your Favorite Spice? Remember to bring a spice to donate to a local food pantry.

2:30 pm – Town Hall Meeting

3:00 pm - Optimist Creed & Farewell

Spice It Forward

Share the Spice, Share the Love

Let's add a little flavor to our service!

At the 4th Quarter Convention, we're launching Spice It Forward, a simple but meaningful way to support our local food pantry. Spices are something most of us take for granted, yet they're rarely donated — and they can turn basic ingredients into a comforting, home-cooked meal. We're inviting attendees to



bring along a jar or two of their favorite seasonings to help stock the pantry shelves. Whether it's cinnamon, cumin, garlic, or something with a little kick, your donation will bring warmth and variety to the families who need it most. Together, we can share a little flavor and a lot of kindness.



A Fresh Look for This Edition

This edition has a slightly different look because Louise and I teamed up to get it out during a very full Optimist International Convention season. I'm beginning to transition our newsletter design into Canva, so you may notice a few updates as the layout continues to evolve.



— Vanessa

Third Quarter Conference Photos



**"Many roles, one community
celebrating every voice."**



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

2026-2027

Conferences & Convention Schedule

WINUM District

November 13-14, 2026 (1st Quarter Conference)

Hotel: Cobblestone Hotel & Suites, 100 N Bridge St, Chippewa Falls

Conference: Market on River, 128 W River St, Chippewa Falls

February 20, 2027 (2nd Quarter Condensed Conference)

Par 4 Resort, 201 Foxfire Dr, Waupaca, WI

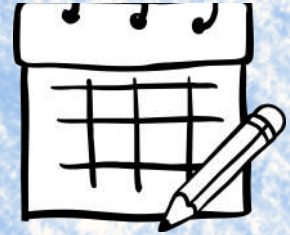
No Overnight Hotel Stay

April 30-May 1, 2027 (3rd Quarter Conference)

Double Tree by Hilton, 123 E Wisconsin Ave, Neenah

August 20-21, 2027 (4th Quarter Convention)

Radison Hotel & Conference Center, 625 W Rolling Meadows Dr, Fond du Lac



Newsletter Deadlines

First Quarter Newsletter Articles

Due: Oct. 1, 2026

Second Quarter Newsletter Articles

Due: Jan. 2, 2027

Third Quarter Newsletter Articles

Due: March 12, 2027

Fourth Quarter Newsletter Articles

Due: June 21, 2027

Recognition

I'm pleased to share that our district has been officially recognized as Back In Balance for the month of May. This means we moved from a negative membership position at the start of the month to a net +0 or better by the end of May — a direct reflection of your commitment to welcoming new members and keeping our clubs strong.

Thank you for everything you are doing to engage your communities, support youth, and share the mission of Optimism. Your efforts truly make a difference.

As we continue through the year, please remember that you're not alone in this work. If your club would like ideas, support, or help with membership growth, please reach out. We're happy to share what's working in other clubs and connect you with resources that can make the process easier.

Together, we can keep building momentum, finish the year strong, and continue making a positive impact across our district.

Together in Optimism,
Governor Vanessa Rueth
WINUM District 2025–2026



Zone Reports

Zone 1



Lt. Governor
Debbie Braden

The **Chippewa Falls Optimist Club** is so proud of their Essay Contest Winner Maura Bright for taking first place in the WINUM District Essay Contest on April 25. Maura received a \$2,500 scholarship that she will use next year while attending UW-Madison. You can see Maura's photo with Essay Chair Shannon Dalton and Governor Vanessa Rueth on the right. Congratulations Maura!



Chippewa Falls club partners with Kwik Trip every year for Teacher and Staff Appreciation Day. On April 15, the club packed up, see photo on right, and delivered 147 boxes of Glazer donuts among 16 schools and three administration offices in Chippewa Falls. It is a sweet way to express Optimist appreciation to school staff.



The club presented their Chippewa Falls School Bus Driver of the Year Award on June 11. Alan Prybylski, pictured on right, was nominated by GO Riteway Transportation Group for safely transporting over 50 children to and from school every day. Al is a favorite among the kids and is often requested for field trips as well.



Chippewa Falls recognizes a Youth of the Month every month with a plaque throughout the school year. They will be having their pre-fair picnic on June 23 as they prepare to open their cheese curd stand for the Northern Wisconsin State Fair. They will also be serving food at the stand for the BMW Riders Association National Rally, the Indianhead Car Show and Oktoberfest.

The Hallie Optimist Club hosted their Annual Free Kids Fishing Event at the Lake Hallie Sportsman Club on Saturday June 6. See photo below. The club provides everything kids need to enjoy a free day of fishing, and prizes and food as well.

WEAU TV 13 covered the event. Here is a [link](#) to read more about it, including an interview with event chair John Van Beek. "We have so much fun with all the work and everything, the preparation we go through to put this together," John Van Beek said. "But as soon as you see the smiles on the kids' face, we said, that's what it's all about. And that's why we're here."



On May 13, the Hallie club held a special evening meeting at the Lake Hallie Golf Course. Members, potential new members, friends, and members of the Chippewa Falls Optimist Club attended. Hallie President Daryl Dehnke proceeded over the event where the club outlined the many youth (including those critically ill or injured) in the community who have received monetary assistance from the club. A large amount of the funding comes from the widespread aluminum can collection that the club has been doing for many years.

Superior Optimist Club: On April 15, members of the Superior Optimist Club teamed up with The Salvation Army in Superior, who hosted a pancake dinner fundraiser to support families in need. This came as many local families feel the strain of rising grocery and household costs, leading more people to seek help with necessities. All proceeds went directly toward the Salvation Army's food pantry and hygiene shelf. This helps the non-profit supply essential items for families across Douglas County.

The dedicated Superior Optimists hit the Fields for Superior Youth Sports on May 13. The team spent the day at the Superior Youth Organization's baseball and softball fields preparing the grounds for the busy spring and summer seasons. Volunteers worked hard cleaning and painting the dugouts, hanging field signs, and handling the mowing and trimming. A photo of volunteers in the dugout is on the right. The fields look sharp and are ready for safe, competitive play.



On June 4, the Superior club and an energetic group of second graders from Northern Lights Elementary School planted flowers and laid down mulch at Superior's Central Park, as pictured to the left. The club has been running this wonderful program for decades matching their mission to bring out the best in kids with hands-on community care. The kids did an amazing job, and the club will keep the garden weeded and beautiful all summer long.

Zone 2



Lt. Governor
Mary Sue Edens Pfantz

During this quarter it was my pleasure to visit the following clubs. I was not able to visit with Merrill yet, but I will be there in July. I was surprised to meet up with so many people I already knew and a real hoot meeting new people like Lee Ayers in Stevens Point. Everybody picks on him

Optimist Club of Antigo

Nick Salm knows how to invite potential new members. Nick marched into the office of the newly hired economic development person, Melissa Kieper, and asked her to come as a guest a few minutes before the club meeting on May 27. Melissa showed up and learned all about Friend of Youth-Optimists in Antigo. Nice job Nick. Just Ask.

Everyone is getting ready for Langlade County's acclaimed Music in the Park. These are free summer concerts in June, July and August at 6:00 p.m. in Antigo, White Lake and Elcho. The club serves food at 5:00 p.m. including steak sandwiches, cheese curds, desserts, ice cream and drinks. At the June 15 concert, starting at 5:30 p.m., there will be a Flag Ceremony, sponsored by Nick and Jeanette Salm, Antigo Optimist Club.

Other events the Antigo club are looking forward to include the Langlade County Fair July 30-August 2, the D.A.R.E. program per Chief Joe Husnick and Officer Levi Barske, and a Bike Rodeo coming up soon with medical personnel helping out.

The Antigo Optimist Club Annual Fisheree for special needs children was held in May at Silver Moon Springs. One fish, a trout, was five pounds. One of the children came all the way from Elcho.



There are 43 Members in the Antigo club.

Everest Area Optimist Club

The Everest Optimist Club starts out their meetings by saying the Optimist Creed, which is laminated on 4X7 cards. This is a nice touch, just in case you stumble with the words. This is followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Saturday, May 9, Everest Optimists participated in the 52nd Annual Children's Festival held at Marathon Park in Wausau. The free, family-oriented community event is geared toward toddlers through tweens and features a large variety of activities. That weekend along with an event at Ace Hardware brought in \$3,800 in sales. Good job and thanks to all who helped.

Scholarships were given out to D.C. Everest High School graduates. The Optimists were able to distribute \$14,000 to many worthy students.

There will be an Optimist member outing Saturday, June 20 at the Wausau Woodchucks vs. Fond du Lac Dock Spiders baseball game. First pitch at 5:05 p.m. The box seat is priced at only \$20 per person. The Wausau Woodchucks host their games at Athletic Park and feature giveaways, theme nights and weekly concession specials.

Everest Optimists have 46 members.

Mosinee Area Optimist Club

The Mosinee Club reported a successful Memorial Day Weekend, with a goodwill offering for their Annual Brat Fry of \$389.55. It was held at Charlie's Hardware Store, where the hardware store provided tables for the event and makes a donation to the Optimist club added to what customers donated. Thank you to Bruce White who brought a grill for the brats and everyone else who helped out.

Mosinee High School was presented with two \$500 scholarships for their senior class. The Optimists already received thank you cards from the grateful students.

The Book Walk at Edgewood Park is happening now. The Mosinee Library in conjunction with the Mosinee Optimist Club provide 16 stations in the park, where young students can read two pages per station, as they move around the park. They will complete a book by the end of the last station. This project runs from April through October. The library changes out the stories once a month. Roni Kaczor Smith is the chairperson for this project.

Log Jam in Mosinee will be held this year August 14-16. The Optimist Food Stand will be serving cheese curds,

brats, loaded baked potatoes and more. The Kronenwetter Lions Club provides the food trailer. Governor Vanessa Rueth may help out this year too.

Soon Nitke Auction of Kronenwetter will be busy for a 3-day auction, and the Mosinee club will be there selling food.

This is a busy group of Optimists with 17 members, all excited to be a Friend of Youth.

The **Stevens Point Noon Optimist Club** completed the Spring Flower Sale just in time for Mothers's Day. The club sold over 100 plants. They are starting to plan for the Iola Car Show in July, their next major fundraiser. The club prepares eggrolls and Crab Rangoon at the show.

The club just finished the Stevens Point Noon Scholarship project. They provided 3 \$1,000 scholarships for students in Portage County. This year they had 24 applications, which was double the amount for last year. They also finished their Youth Recognition Awards presentations in May with an amazing group of students nominated for this award.

This summer the club is planning field trips to local non-profit organizations in the community. The first one is scheduled at the YMCA Glacier Hollow summer camp on June 3. They are looking forward to learning more about these organizations and building relationships for collaboration.

Bob Siskoff talked about Art in the Park. The Optimist Club builds a Log Cabin out of cardboard carpet rolls. They create a 10X10 ft Cabin, with a roof and trusses. The children are given smocks and can paint the cabin. This takes place the third week in September. The Event Chairperson for the Dictionary Project is Bonnie Dahnke. Pete Theisen is in charge of the Holiday Basket, where \$200-\$300 is given to two families. These funds come from a bake sale where sometimes a cake can go for \$80, and Dorothy Jean Pientka husband is the auctioneer for these baked goods. Don Bachleitner is getting ready for the Iola Car Show; the Optimist have been earning as much as \$1,500 in the food stand at the main tower.

Stevens Point Optimists recently added two new members. They now have 19 strong Optimist members.

The **Wausau Breakfast Optimist Club** hold their meetings each Monday morning at 7:30 a.m. at Vino Latte, 3309 Terrace Court, Wausau.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Northcentral WI was the guest speaker on May 18. Linda Koepke, executive director and Nicole Moon, program director talked about The Nest Mentoring Center located at 613 N 5th St. Everything in The Nest is free for BB/BS matches. Bigs and Littles can reserve their spot with a full kitchen, washer & dryer, crafts, games & books, Nintendo Switch, foosball & ping pong, hygiene and food pantries. Big Brothers Big Sisters enrolls children ages 6 through 15 that are struggling emotionally, socially, academically, or behaviorally. Currently their service areas include Marathon County, Abbotsford and the Merrill area. There are 100 students waiting to be matched, about 30 are in the Merrill area.

A special "thank you" to Brain Sabatke, Optimist member. As the Zone 2 Lieutenant Governor, I was about to get in my car, and vertigo set in and I fell on my left hip...and it was raining. Brian along with another gentleman got me to my feet, and all was well. Better than that, my sciatica nerve must have gotten jarred and it doesn't hurt anymore.

This club has 32 members.

The **Wausau Noon Club** just recently reviewed their by-laws and held elections of new officers. PHOTO: On May 9, Wausau Noon Club participated in the 52nd Annual Children's Festival. The club sets up and runs the woodworking booth. They lay plywood down on the floor, provide wood from Kolbe & Kolbe, and let children build whatever they choose. Wheels, goggles, hammers and nails are provided. Number of impacted youth is 1,500 to 2,000. Anne Heggelund and Tony Nakhla are the chairpersons for this event.

Respect for Law is chaired by Jim Wadinski and Anne Heggelund by honoring a member of the State Patrol, Marathon County Sheriff's Department and the Wausau Police Department. The club provides plaques of honor. Jeff Wickersham, Wickersham Jewelers, provides watches to all honored officers. The honorees are selected by their departments in recognition of their service to area youth.

The Scholarship Program for UWSP-Wausau/Northcentral Technical College chairperson is Vickie Richmond-Hawkins. Three \$600 scholarships are given to local high school students selected by their schools for their leadership and continuing their education at UWSP-Wausau or NTC. Also, there is one \$500 scholarship for an Internal Youth (parent is member of our club).

A check was presented to folks representing recent tornado victims in the Ringle area.

In June, the club is looking forward to the Powerboat Racing at Bluegill Bay Park. Chairpersons for this event are Dick Rayburn and Josh Reissmann.

The Elephant Ear Stand is now available for fundraising. Chairperson is Romey Wagner. Recent activity was at HyVee grocery store. They had a good day serving up delicious elephant ears.

This Optimist Club has 93 members.

Merrill Noon Optimist

The Merrill Noon Optimist Club has had a meaningful and energizing spring as we continued our mission of supporting youth and promoting respect within our community.

On May 1st, the club proudly hosted the Respect for Law Expo for 8th-grade students from Merrill and Tomahawk at the Prairie River Middle School in Merrill. The event opened with an inspiring message from Alan Karr, Special Agent in Charge of the Milwaukee Field Office of the FBI, who spoke about integrity, service, and the importance of understanding the role of law in society. Students then explored an expo filled with booths representing all areas of the legal system—from law enforcement to the judicial branch. They had the opportunity to interact with professionals, ask questions, and gain real-world insight into how the law works from multiple perspectives. The event strongly reflected the Optimist mission of fostering Respect for Law in young people.



Looking ahead, the club is gearing up for its busy fundraiser season which kicks off August 5–9, when we'll once again be serving our famous cheese curds at the Lincoln County 4-H Fair. It's one of our most beloved traditions and an important fundraiser that helps fuel the work we do for local youth.

Our 2nd Annual Golf Outing is set for Friday, August 14th and will be played in a scramble format. Open to all community members, this event offers a fun day on the course while supporting youth programs throughout the year. Want to join the fun? Team registration is now open simply use this QR code to sign up.

We'll close out our season on Labor Day with our final cheese curd sales of the year on September 7 at the Labor Day Car Show in Merrill. Stop by and see us!



Merrill currently has 42 Optimist members.

Zone 3



Lt. Governor
Ben Elsner

Howard Suamico Optimist Club

Past Events

- April 15th: Daddy D's Dinner "The 50's"
- May 12th: 14th annual Respect for Law Appreciation Lunch at 1951 West to honor Suamico and Howard Fire Depts, Brown County Sheriffs Dept and REACH-A-Child.
- May 13th: Culver's Share Nite



- May 23rd: Brat Fry at Pelkin's Meat Market raised \$640. Planning for another brat fry later this year.
- May 26th: Essay Awards Dinner 1st place Ashlyn Daul, 2nd place Maverick Poppe, 3rd place Jadyn Cahill



Upcoming Events

- June 15th: Fore the Kids Golf Classic at Mid Vallee Golf Course
- July 12th: Green Bay Rockers Baseball "Budlight Party Patio" concert noon with 1st pitch at 1:00 p.m.

Shawano Optimist Club

Past Events

- May 9th: Bike Rodeo - There were over 60 children who participated in the Shawano Club's Bike Rodeo. Thank you to the Shawano Police School Liaison Officers Tyler and Brandy, Shawano ambulance personnel, Friends of Mountain Bay Trail, and Tomina from City Hall with the bike licensing station.
- May 20th: Respect for Law - The 2026 Shawano Optimist Club Respect For Law recipients Shawano County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Ty Raddant and City of Shawano Police Detective Brent Dilge.
- June 5th & 6th: Sundrop Dayz – The Shawano Club helped with concessions throughout the weekend and also was responsible for traffic control and crossing for the 5K run/walk on the morning of June 6.

Upcoming Events

- Thursday at Franklin – The Shawano Club will be serving beverages and running 50/50 at the following night for the summer concert series: June 18, July 2, July 23, July 30, August 13 and August 20.

(Zone 3 continued next page)

Allouez Optimist Club

Past Events

- May 12th: Blizzard Game – The Allouez club partnered with 60+ families from the PALS program to take in a Green Bay Blizzard game.
- June 6th: Opening Ceremonies at the Miracle League – The Allouez club joined in the Opening Ceremonies for the Miracle League in the Green Bay area. (Photo below)
- June 14th: Allouezfest – Allouez Optimists hosted the 41st Annual Allouezfest Picnic & Car Show. Eagle III was in attendance along with over 400 cars. Brats, burgers, and lots of fun was had by the spectators attending the event.



Green Bay Optimist Club

Past Events

- April 16th: Oratorical contest - Congratulations to Elizabeth from Notre Dame de la Baie Academy! She finished first place in our Oratorical Contest and went on to compete at the Wisconsin North-Upper Michigan District competition April 25th where she finished first overall. Elizabeth's speech on the topic "The Moment I Realized I Belonged - My Definition of Community" won her a \$2,500 college scholarship.

Upcoming Events

- Girls Softball Concessions – The Green Bay club will be running concessions for the girls' softball games on the following nights Monday-Thursday starting the week of June 8th through July 30th. Come get some concessions at Finger Road Field and enjoy some games.

Green Bay Preble Optimist Club

Past Events

- May 26th: Diverse Abilities Night – The Green Bay Preble club in partnership with CP held the annual Diverse Abilities Event at Bay Beach where those with diverse abilities were able to come enjoy an evening at Bay Beach.

Upcoming Events

- August 2026: Cops 'n Bobbers – An event for kids to come and fish with local law enforcement.
- September 26th: Diverse Abilities Night – This is the fall night for those with diverse abilities to come enjoy Bay Beach.

(Zone 3 continued next page)

Pulaski Optimist Club

Upcoming Events

- July 16-19th – Polka Days and club will be working concessions during the event

De Pere Optimist Club

Past Events

- April 4th: Easter Egg Hunt – De Pere Optimists helped with the local Easter Egg hunt for children ages 1-9 years old.
- May 18th: Annual Scholarship Banquet – De Pere Optimists held their annual scholarship banquet to award six De Pere students. Each of these scholars wrote an essay on one of the lines from the Optimist Creed and how they exemplify it in their everyday lives.

Winners are from West De Pere High School:

Kailey Fink
Clara Hoffman
Grace Wagner

Winners from De Pere High School:

Isaac Herlache
Brett Spice
Cullan Handrick



Zone 4



Lt. Governor
Roger Phillippi

New Holstein Optimist Club

The New Holstein Optimist Park Playground, in the planning and fundraising stage for the last 19 months is coming to a completion this summer. The equipment has arrived and the assembly has begun, see photo on right. They are thankful to the Amerequip Corporation for donating employee man-hours for a week of the assembly. They are also thankful for the local volunteers who have come forward to help with the assembly and installation. They look forward to the days ahead when they can watch the kids out playing on the new equipment.



Many of the donations they make throughout the year fall in the spring of the year. They have donated to the local library's Summer Reading Program, the City's Music in the Park, to the New Holstein Fire Department, and a scholarship to a New Holstein High School senior.

(continued on next page)

Their spring fundraiser, a brat fry at Honeymoon Acres, the local greenhouse, was a huge success this year; raising over \$3,000 this year. Their other scheduled event this summer is the Bingo and Turkey Sandwich Luncheon at the Firemen's Picnic on July 12. The rest of the summer will be working to complete the assembly and installation of the playground.

Two Rivers

At their May gathering, the Two Rivers Optimist Club awarded the Two Rivers Police Department a donation for their DARE Program and a bag of treats (healthy and sweet) for each sworn officer for those days they miss their lunch break or have a difficult day. They also awarded two high school and three post high school scholarships this year.

Two Rivers will have a busy summer with their Meat Raffle Drawing and Summer Social on June 16 and the Annual Bike Safety Rodeo on June 23. In July, they will have a new event, an Optimist Night at the Two Rivers Polar Bear Baseball Game on July 20, as well as their Great Bike Give Away on July 27.

Zone 5

Appleton Noon Optimist Club



Lt. Governor
Chuck Erickson

Play ball! The Appleton Noon Optimist Club invites you to join them for a fun night at the ballpark, cheering on the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors, and help fill the stands while supporting a great cause — for every ticket purchased through the club's event link, \$3 will be donated back to the Appleton Noon Optimist Club to support youth programs in the community.

Everyone is welcome, so spread the word! Games are set for Tuesday, June 23, and Tuesday, August 18, both starting at 6:40 PM. For more information or to get the event link, contact Club President Chuck Erickson at chuck@collegeconnectors.com or 920-585-4300.

Brillion Optimist Club

Brillion Optimist Club kicked off Brillion Fest weekend with their annual evening "Electric" Parade on Friday, June 12, drawing crowds ahead of Saturday's festivities. The club partners with the City of Appleton's Flag Day Parade to bring in some of the same marching bands, and the event is made possible thanks to generous local business sponsors and the club's popular 50-50 raffle.

The club is now on summer break from their regular noon meetings through June, July, and August. They'll return in September with a special N.O.W. meeting at the local Nature Center — an evening BBQ social where members and guests grill steak or chicken, with sides catered by a local banquet hall and an open bar. This gathering will also double as the club's installation banquet.
(Continued on next page)



Looking ahead, mark your calendars for the club's biggest fundraiser of the year: the annual Walk Through Brillion Tasting Event on Saturday, October 24. The venue has changed this year, but attendees can still expect live music, raffles, a costume contest, and plenty of food and refreshments to sample. Stay tuned to the club's website (brillionoptimists.org) and Facebook page (Brillion Optimists Club) for more details as the date approaches.

Chilton Optimist Club

Chilton Optimist Club is gearing up for its Charter Picnic on Wednesday, August 19, kicking off around 5 PM. The picnic will be at Klinkner Park, 121 E Chestnut St, Chilton. This year's picnic will be a N.O.W. event, designed to give members a great reason to bring along friends and potential new members.

Adding to the excitement, the club recently hosted a program featuring five talented high school girls who have formed their own rock band, performing a couple of songs for the group. If schedules align, the club hopes to bring them back to play and sing at the Charter Picnic — a fun way to showcase local youth talent and help boost turnout for what promises to be a memorable evening.

Greenleaf Wrightstown Optimist Club

Congratulations to five outstanding seniors who were each awarded a \$500 Optimist Club Scholarship — a great way to recognize and support local students as they head off to their next chapter.

Looking ahead, the club is hosting Optimist Youth Day at the Park on September 12, and everyone is welcome to attend. Follow the club's Facebook page for more details as the date gets closer:
facebook.com/GreenleafWrightstownOptimists

Oshkosh Optimist Club

The Oshkosh Club has a new meeting schedule — they now gather on the first Thursday of each month at noon. Members and visitors alike are welcome to join!

Sherwood Optimist Club

The Sherwood Club hosted their annual Optimist Golf Outing on May 15 at Hickory Hills Country Club, with an impressive turnout of over 50 sponsors supporting the event! Mark your calendars now — next year's outing is already set for May 21, 2027.



Zone 6



Co-Lt. Governors
John Leonhard
Lori VanNatta

Fond du Lac Evening Club: At their May 27 membership meeting, the FDL Evening Optimist collected jars of peanut butter and jelly to donate to the Fond du Lac Salvation Army's Summer Bites Program (formerly called the Brown Bag Lunch Program). The club collected 30 jars of peanut butter and 17 jars of jelly.

On June 5, the FDL Evening club held a club bonding event at the FDL Dock Spiders baseball game. With some NFDL Optimists joining in on the festivities, there were 35 members and family members who enjoyed rooftop patio seating, an all-you-can-eat buffet, and great fellowship.

On June 21, the FDL Evening Optimists held their 49th Annual Car & Truck Show at the FDL County Fairgrounds. The Car & Truck Show is the club's second biggest fundraiser of the year.

The Fond du Lac Evening Optimist also made several donations to local organizations during this quarter. Donations of \$1,000 were given to the following organizations:

- Sleep in Heavenly Peace-Fond du Lac Chapter
- Back to School-FDL, an organization that provides nearly 2,500 Fond du Lac area youth with backpacks and all their school supplies needed for the school year.
- Fondy Food Pantry's Food for Thought Program, a program which provides nutritious, child-friendly food for students on weekends and holidays. Currently the Food for Thought Program supports nearly 1,000 students across Fond du Lac County.
- FDL Fire Rescue's Fire Prevention Program, a program that educates the community, and youth in particular, on how to prevent fires.

Donations of \$500 or less were given to several other organizations.



Fond du Lac Noon Optimist Club recently brought smiles, laughter, and community spirit together by hosting a "Skate with the Bunny" event for local children and families connected to Boys & Girls Club of Fond du Lac and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Fond du Lac County.

Held at Korneli's on the Ave, a local roller-skating rink, the family-friendly event gave children the opportunity to enjoy an evening filled with skating, music, food, and fun while celebrating the spring season along with a special visit from the Easter Bunny. Families gathered at the rink skate together, take photos with the Bunny, and enjoy quality time in a welcoming and energetic atmosphere.

In addition to skating, attendees were treated to pizza and soda, helping create a festive and memorable experience for everyone involved. Volunteers from the Noon Optimists helped organize the event and spent time interacting with the children and families throughout the event.

The event reflected the Optimist Club's ongoing commitment to supporting youth and strengthening the local community through positive and engaging activities. By partnering with organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club and Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Noon Optimists continue to provide opportunities that encourage connection, mentorship, and fun for area families. Organizers described the event as a wonderful success, with many children leaving the rink smiling after skating and having fun.

North Fond du Lac Club: The North Fond du Lac Club started out the third quarter with the annual Easter Egg Hunt, which served 126 children. The club also saw 46 youth compete in the annual District TriStar competition. The club provided funds to the local school district to support a business incubator program, helping fund student pitches, prototypes, and equipment. Additional support was given to the trap shooting club and a drone club, the latter which helped the student participate in a national competition.

The club donated \$250 to sponsor a local high school student's attendance at the Wisconsin Leadership Seminars (WILS). This annual program helps outstanding high school sophomores develop leadership skills and encourages civic engagement.

The club supported local efforts to develop a 5th-6th grade football program which is anticipated will encourage youth to continue participating in football at later ages.

The club distributed \$10,000 in scholarship funding to 12 local students and provided other funds to encourage young students in the "mileage club" to complete their exercise goals.

Several club members participated in the North Fond du Lac School District's Let's Fly Forward summit, where they shared perspectives on how the community can support local schools and strengthen student success.

The club contributed funds to support the Sleep in Heavenly Peace program, which helps ensure that no children sleep on the floor, and also contributed to the local library's summer reading program.

The Sheboygan Club continues to be active in the community. The club with only six really active members, supports the Salvation Army coat drive, local Easter events, Sheriden Elementary School, Back to School Basics school supply event. In addition, the club financially supports scouting, recreation sports teams and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Beginning the third quarter the Sheboygan Club supported the YMCA Easter Egg Hunt by providing 1,000 treat stuffed eggs. The "Y" used the eggs as part of their annual hunt at Camp Y-Koda. The event included many other kids' activities including games and crafts.

Sheriden Elementary School continues to be a focus of the club. Recently Optimists joined school staff in supporting students running the "Ninja Warrior" obstacle course. It is a great way for the kids to end the school year on a high note, with a fun outdoor activity.

Most recently club members made their annual visit to Optimist Park to "spruce" it up. A dedicated group of Optimists weeded beds and spread mulch. The "Optimist Park" sign bed never looked better, as shown in the photo below.



To round out the 2025-26 year, the Sheboygan Club is fund raising for Back-to-School Basics, supporting a local MLB hit, pitch, run competition, and will finish the Optimist year by presenting to the community its annual signature Back to School Basics event.

Committee Reports

First Timers

Co-Chairs 2025-26

Lori VanNatta and Trina DeLasky

We had the pleasure of welcoming solo “First Timer” Don Snyder from Howard Suamico Optimist Club to the Third Quarter Conference in Green Bay April 25.



First Timers, those attending their first WINUM conference, 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 chance to win a free conference registration, valid anytime within the next year.

If you have never attended a conference before, we would truly enjoy welcoming you as our next “First Timer.”

FIRST TIMERS QUESTIONS? Contact Trina at tidgy11@gmail.com or Lori at lavannatta@yahoo.com.

Membership



Hello Optimists!

We are approaching the final stretch of the 25-26 year, "Stand Tall, Face the Sun." So far, our District has added 76 members and deleted 73, putting us at a +3 for the first three quarters of the year. Remarkably, we are the only district in the Great Plains Region with positive membership growth and rank in the top 15 out of 1,638 clubs in Optimist International! WOW!

Ann Sheahan

Membership Chair
2025-26

A special shout-out (as of press time) goes to Fond du Lac Noon Optimist with a +7, Green Bay Allouez with a +5, and Antigo with a +4 in membership and many others with positive numbers. Membership isn't always about the numbers; find joy in your service to the youth in your communities too. Don't forget to ask those helping out to join your club and experience the sunny side of everything because our Optimism is contagious!

Choose Optimism!

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



Leadership Development



Jodi Arriola
Leadership Chair
2025-26

DREAM Session 4: Encouraging Others

Our DREAM journey wraps up at the 4th Quarter Convention with Session 4: Encouraging Others, a session focused on how leaders create confidence, connection, and momentum within their clubs. At the 3rd Quarter Conference, we explored Session 3: Encourage the Heart, emphasizing the power of appreciation and recognition. This final session brings it all together as we continue building a culture of supportive, empowered leadership throughout WINUM.

Have leadership questions or want guidance?
Reach out to Jodi Arriola at arrioljm@uwec.edu



Oratorical

WINUM District Oratorical Contest Recap

The WINUM District Oratorical Contest was held during the Third Quarter Conference on April 25 in Green Bay. It featured seven incredible contestants representing the Chilton, Oshkosh, Wausau Noon, Green Bay Preble, Green Bay Noon, Everest, and Kewaunee Optimist Clubs.



Chuck Erickson
Oratorical Chair
2025-26

It was a tight competition all around, with just one point separating 2nd and 3rd place. Congratulations to our winners:

1st Place: Elizabeth Bieda, Green Bay Noon Optimist Club — Elizabeth will advance to represent WINUM District at the 2026 Optimist International Oratorical World Championships, July 16–17 at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, MO.

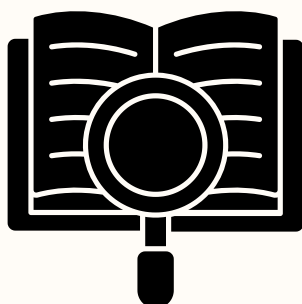
2nd Place: Anna Jacobson, Everest Optimist Club

3rd Place: Jayden Dalton, Oshkosh Optimist Club



Congratulations to all of our contestants on their hard work and outstanding performances!

If your Optimist Club would like to host an Oratorical competition next year, please contact Chuck Erickson, District Oratorical Chair.



New Club Growth

District Visits Barron, Cameron and Chetek

WINUM District was awarded a microgrant to be used for social media and membership growth. As the membership growth district chair, I used the \$250 grant to promote the Optimist organization in Barron, Cameron, and Chetek areas.



Troy Drostal
Growth Chair
2025-26

On May 4, Angie Riemer, Louise Bentley, Vicki Wilson, and myself from the Chippewa Falls Optimist Club as well as Tammy Koehler (Past Governor from Brillion) went to meet local people in the communities and to talk Optimist to those communities. Between the three communities, we were able to hand out over 125 flyers/information sheets on WINUM District and Optimist International as well as set up Meet and Greets for two weeks later to get to know Optimists a little more. Great conversations were had with people in the communities, and the Optimist was well received in the communities with people seeing the value of the organization.

On May 18, Louise, Tammy, current Governor Vanessa Rueth, and I held the Meet and Greets in all three communities. The first one was in Barron where there was great conversation with the mayor and a city council member who is very active in the community and definitely has ideas of having a club in Barron area to support the youth in the community. Troy will be meeting with them again over lunch in June to also talk with the Kiwanis group as they are the larger service group in the area.

In Cameron we were able to meet with the Kinship director (similar to a Big Brothers Big Sisters program) of We were able to exchange information about Optimist to her, and she was able to provide background information around her program and the need they have for "Bigs" to be mentors.

In Chetek our group meet with a few locals that are very involved with the community, and they definitely see a need for a club in the area. Chetek is a very busy tourist town with things going on all the time. We are still working with them to let them know that Optimist clubs are different than other organizations and that we do things for youth in the community directly. A lot of their groups/organizations overlap and there is concern that they might not be able to get enough/more volunteers. New Club Building is working with them that people might be willing to volunteer with the positive impact that it is for youth and being ambassadors and good role models to youth. We were also invited to attend the Chamber of Commerce meeting that evening and were able to network with business owners who were also very interested in seeing a club to benefit the youth in the area. We are still working with the folks that see the need for a club in the area and will work with them in whatever way we can to get new clubs built.

It was great to see so many faces light up when we talked about our mission. Many people have not heard of the Optimist Club before so we have room to grow. Others had a story, like the gentleman that won the Optimist Oratorical Contest back in the 1980s from Rice Lake and still has the plaque!

We are also planning to do similar visits to clubs in our district that are looking to grow in membership. Please contact New Club Building/Growth Chair Troy Dostal to have a discussion about how to grow your club!

For more information on New Club Building/Growth, contact Troy Dostal at 715-531-5085 or dostalt@live.com.

Optimist Foundation

Hello Fellow WINUM Optimists!

I hope that you have been enjoying the start of the summer season. There are so many good things happening in our clubs and communities. I see all the wonderful things that you are doing on Facebook. Keep up the great work promoting your clubs and making our communities better places to live.



Troy Dostal
Foundation Chair

I wanted to let you know that you still have time to join the Dime-A-Day membership for the 2025-2026 Optimist year! Donate \$36.50 to Optimist International Foundation (OIF) and you are automatically enrolled. Donations can be made online at [OIF Online Donations](#) or downloading the form [Dime-A-Day Form](#). See also the flyer on the next page as OIF President Fatima Plater asks you to donate to the foundation as “A Legacy of Giving for the Children” and OI President Tom Kendo asks you to “Be the Change.”

I also wanted to point out that the Childhood Health & Wellness Grant has a deadline coming up on August 21, 2026. For more information visit: [Childhood Health & Wellness](#). Please reach out to me if you have any questions or need assistance with completing the grants.

Let's finish this Optimist year off strong. There is still time to make donations to OIF.

And remember to bring your baskets for the OI Raffle to the WINUM convention August 22.

Thank you for your continued support of the OIF and helping support the scholarships for our youth.

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



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.