



# Optimist International WINUM DISTRICT Newsletter

October 2026

## Governor Louise's Message



Louise Bentllely  
WINUM Governor 2026-2027



Happy Optimist New Year!

On October 1, Optimists all over the world officially began a new Optimist year. If you haven't already done so, it is time to evaluate what your club completed in 2025-26, make some adjustments, and plan some goals for 2026-27. As your new WINUM governor, I have been busy working with our team on goals for our District as well.

Our District theme is "Your wings already exist, all you have to do is fly!" If we want our Optimist organization to grow, we must be willing to spread our wings and try new things and ASK others to join us as we bring out the best in kids, our community, and ourselves. As Optimist International's theme says, "Join the Optimist Movement!"

The biggest change this year in Optimist International (OI) is the C.H.A.P. Program. C.H.A.P. stands for Club Health Awards Program. It is a two-year pilot program that replaces the Honor and Distinguished Club program that we have had for many years. It is a District goal for 60 percent of our clubs to achieve bronze/silver/gold recognition based on the completion of specific benchmarks in five key areas. A handout describing C.H.A.P. is included in this newsletter.

You can find out more about C.H.A.P. and OI and District goals at the First Quarter Conference on November 13-14. I am excited to be hosting it in my hometown of Chippewa Falls. On Friday night, we will have a scavenger hunt at the Chippewa Area History Center followed by hospitality at the Cobblestone Hotel and Suites in downtown Chippewa Falls. (Continued top page 2)

## JOIN THE OPTIMIST MOVEMENT



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(Continued Governor's message)

On Saturday we will be holding our meetings at the beautifully restored Market on River. It is walking distance from the hotel and offers retail and restaurants on the first floor, offices and conference rooms on the second floor (yes, there is an elevator), and apartments on the third floor. We will be inspired by keynote speaker Robin Kelley; and Great Plains Region Vice President Howard Crofoot will have a message from new OI President Michael Goldman. There will be a communications session as well as roundtables with training on other timely topics as well. Please bring items to donate to the First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry and a basket for the Optimist International Foundation raffle.

Last but not least, I want to THANK Governor Vanessa Rueth for a fantastic job leading our WINUM District for 2025-26. I appreciate all of her assistance in preparing me for this role as well. I have some big shoes to fill, and I will do my best, with your help, to lead our great organization into the future. Please encourage others to "Join the Optimist Movement"! "Your wings already exist...all you have to do is fly!"

See you November 13-14 in Chippewa Falls!

Your Friend in Optimism,

2026-27 Governor Louise Bentley [winum2627@gmail.com](mailto:winum2627@gmail.com) or 715-379-8363

## Governor Elect Message



Ben Elsner  
Governor-Elect  
2026-2027

Hello WINUM!!

I wanted to just take a moment to say that I am very excited for this year to be shadowing our Governor Louise and working through the Optimist year. I am humbled to be your Governor Elect and can't wait to see where this year will take us!

Can't wait to see you all at the Conference in Chippewa Falls.

## Immediate Past Governor



Vanessa Rueth  
Immediate Past Governor

As I complete my year as Governor, I want to express my gratitude for the support, teamwork, and optimism shared across WINUM. It was an honor to serve, and I'm proud of what we accomplished together. Our clubs continued to Stand Tall, lift each other up, and make a meaningful impact in our communities.

As Immediate Past Governor, I look forward to supporting Governor Louise, Governor Elect Ben Elsner and our district leadership team as WINUM continues to grow, inspire, and serve. Thank you for the privilege of leading this remarkable district — the best is still ahead!

# Jayna's Story:

## *Finding Purpose After Loss*

If you have never attended an Optimist District Conference, please consider coming to our First Quarter Conference on November 13-14 in Chippewa Falls. We will have a special guest that you won't want to miss. Let me give you a little background:

On November 3, 2018, a Girl Scout troop in Chippewa Falls was collecting trash on the side of a county highway when a pickup truck careened into them. Three Girl Scouts and a mother of one of the girls were killed and several others were injured. Girl Scout Leader Robin Kelley was there that fateful day, as was her daughter, Jayna. Jayna, unfortunately, was one of the victims.

Robin has graciously agreed to share Jayna's story at our conference as our keynote speaker. She will tell us some things about Jayna's life, events of that tragic day, and what has occurred in the aftermath, including the creation of the Jayna Kelley Memorial Foundation. Prepare to be inspired as Robin shares how she is finding purpose after loss.

Take Care,  
Governor Louise



# REGISTRATION

## WINUM 1st Quarter Conference

**November 13-14, 2026**

Cobblestone Hotel & Suites, 100 N. Bridge Str,  
Chippewa Falls WI 715-720-0355 AND  
Market on River, 128 W. River Str, Chippewa  
Falls WI 715-723-5561



|                |         |                                      |
|----------------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Name           | Address | City, State, Zip                     |
| <hr/>          |         |                                      |
| E-mail address | Phone   | Is this your first conference? _____ |
| <hr/>          |         |                                      |
| Club Name      | Zone #  | Your 2026-27 office (if any)         |

### REGISTRATION INFO

|                                                                                                                                | (\$5 late fee each item) |         |        |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------|----------|
|                                                                                                                                | Advance<br>(by Nov 7th)  | On Site | Number | Total \$ |
| <b>Members</b>                                                                                                                 |                          |         |        |          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friday Night Scavenger Hunt<br>At Chippewa Area History Center                                        | \$ 5.00                  | \$ 5.00 | _____  | _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Registration & Saturday Lunch<br><i>Menu: chicken/ham buffet</i><br>(all menus are subject to change) | \$60.00                  | \$65.00 | _____  | _____    |

|                                                                                                                 |                |         |       |       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------|-------|-------|
| <b>Spouse/Guest/Child (non-members)</b>                                                                         | Name(s): _____ |         |       |       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friday Night Scavenger Hunt<br>At Chippewa Area History Center                         | \$ 5.00        | \$ 5.00 | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Lunch<br><i>Menu: chicken/ham buffet</i><br>(all menus are subject to change) | \$25.00        | \$30.00 | _____ | _____ |

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

### THREE WAYS TO REGISTER:

1. Register on-line at [www.WinumOptimists.org](http://www.WinumOptimists.org). You don't need a PayPal account—just enter your credit card.
2. Register on-line at [www.WinumOptimists.org](http://www.WinumOptimists.org) indicating that you'll pay onsite; bring cash/check on meeting day!
3. Snail mail your check & this form to Conference Chair Laurel Schirmer, 1807 North 6 Street, Sheboygan, WI 53081

If you would need 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](mailto:schirmerlaurel@gmail.com)

ROOM RESERVATIONS: Call the Cobblestone Hotel 715-720-0355 - ask for the WINUM Optimist group block. Rate is \$140 Dbl Queen + tax. **Rooms "unblock" October 13, 2026!**



November 13-14, 2026  
Cobblestone Hotel & Suites  
100 N Bridge St Chippewa Falls, WI 54729 (715) 720-0355  
Market on River  
128 W River St Chippewa Falls, WI 54729 (715) 723-5561  
RCU Conference Room, Second Floor - Elevator and parking lot east side of the building

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)**

**Friday, November 13, 2026**

5:30–7:00 pm – Scavenger Hunt at the Museum, Chippewa Area History Center, 12 Bridgewater Ave.  
Cost: \$5.00  
7:00–10:00 pm – Hospitality with appetizers, Cobblestone Hotel & Suites. Look for signs for suite number.

**Saturday, November 14, 2026**

7:45–8:45 am – Past Governor’s Breakfast at the hotel (all past governors, governor-elect and OI guest)  
8:00 am – First Timers Meeting at Market on River. If this is your first conference, we have a gift for you!  
8:00 am – Registration and conference check in at Market on River, second floor  
9:00 am – Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance and Introduction of First Timers, Honored Guests and Past Governors  
9:15 am- General Session: Introduction of 2026-27 Leadership Team and Leadership Reports  
Followed by Board of Directors Meeting: All members of the District Executive Board and all Club Presidents (or their representatives) are voting members of the board and should be present to conduct any business of the district.  
10:00 am – What’s New with Optimist International: Great Plains Vice President Howard Crofoot  
10:30 am – Break. First Presbyterian Church will pick up items for food pantry.  
10:45 am – Jayna’s Story: Finding Purpose After Loss: Keynote Speaker Robin Kelley  
11:45 am - Purchase Raffle Tickets  
Noon-1:00 pm - Lunch & Optimist Foundation Raffle Baskets  
1:00 pm – Communications Tools with Tammy and Troy: Tammy Koehler and Troy Dostal  
1:30 pm – New Leadership Program: Tammy Koehler and Troy Dostal  
1:40 pm – Member Bingo!  
2:00 pm – Break  
2:10 pm – Roundtables: Training continues in groups: Facebook Page, Optimist Institute, Club Impact Reports and MORE! BRING YOUR LAPTOP FOR HANDS ON LEARNING.  
3:10 pm – Town Hall meeting  
3:30 pm – Optimist Creed & Farewell

Service Project

Bring Items for First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry

Every Wednesday morning, for many years, the men's group of First Presbyterian Church has served breakfast for the Chippewa Falls Optimist Club meeting. These three or four church volunteers arrive around 5 a.m. to get everything ready on time for our 6:45 a.m. meeting. Every week, you can purchase either a bagel or raisin toast, and every other week they also prepare a big breakfast of sausage and eggs, pancakes or French toast. They charge a modest price that keeps it affordable to members and serve us in their beautiful fellowship hall of this historic downtown church.

The First Presbyterian Church serves the community in other ways as well. The church has a food pantry that is open Mondays 1-3 p.m. and Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m.-12 noon. They give away about 13,000 pounds of food every month and serve 60 households per day that they are open.

The WINUM District will be collecting non-perishable food items for the food pantry as a service project at our First Quarter Conference. **Please bring one of the following items to Market on River in Chippewa Falls on November 14:**



|         |                     |                   |               |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| cereal  | peanut butter       | boxed potatoes    | mac 'n cheese |
| soup    | canned vegetables   | canned fruit      | bags of chips |
| cookies | canned tomatoes     | canned chicken    | pasta         |
| tuna    | canned beef ravioli | spaghetti sauce   | crackers      |
| rice    | canned beef stew    | spaghetti noodles | toilet paper  |

We will have a representative of the food pantry stop by the conference and pick up the items. Thank you for supporting the food pantry at First Presbyterian Church in Chippewa Falls!



Fourth Quarter Convention Photos



"Many roles, one community celebrating every voice."



## SAVE THE DATE

### 2026-2027 Conferences & Convention 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  
First Quarter Newsletter Articles Due: Oct. 1, 2026

February 20, 2027 (2nd Quarter Condensed Conference)

Par 4 Resort, 201 Foxfire Dr, Waupaca, WI  
No Overnight Hotel Stay

Second Quarter Newsletter Articles Due: Jan. 2, 2027

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

Double Tree by Hilton, 123 E Wisconsin Ave, Neenah  
Third Quarter Newsletter Articles Due: March 12, 2027

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

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

Fourth Quarter Newsletter Articles Due: June 21, 2027



### OI District Ambassador



Vanessa Ruth  
OI Convention  
Ambassador  
2026-27

As your WINUM District Convention Ambassador, I represent our district at the Optimist International Convention. I help welcome members, guide them to sessions, and make sure everyone feels informed, included, and confident throughout the event. I also support our **Governor Louise Bentley** and **Governor-Elect Ben Elsner** by sharing updates and helping connect WINUM members with Optimist leaders from across the world.

#### Join Us in New Orleans

#### Optimist International Convention • July 6–9, 2027

The International Convention is inspiring, energizing, and full of opportunities to grow as an optimist. You'll enjoy leadership training, new ideas, global connections, and fun celebrations — all while bringing home fresh motivation for your club.

#### Be Part of the WINUM Team

I'll be there to help guide our district and make sure you feel welcomed every step of the way. Let's show up strong and make New Orleans a WINUM year to remember.



## OI Recognitions • Regional Updates • District News

### Recognition from Regional Vice President Howard Crofoot

Regional Vice President Howard Crofoot extends special kudos to the Greenleaf-Wrightstown Optimist Club for being one of only two clubs to submit their Club Impact Report on Day 1 of the Optimist year — and the very first in the Great Plains Region. Their leadership sets a powerful example for all clubs across WINUM and the Region.

Beginning the Club Impact Report at the start of the year is more than a reporting step — it is how we **capture the ongoing story of what our clubs are doing for the children and families in our communities.** Early and consistent reporting allows Optimist International, the Region, and our District to:

- Highlight real-time service and accomplishments
- Celebrate club impact throughout the year
- Strengthen support and resources for clubs
- Demonstrate the value of Optimism to partners and the public

Greenleaf-Wrightstown commitment shows how simple and meaningful the process can be. Their early action reflects the spirit of Governor Louise's motto: **"Your wings already exist — all you have to do is fly."** By starting strong, they encourage all of us to lift off confidently into a new year of optimism and service.

### Optimist International Club Health Awards Program (C.H.A.P.) – Pilot Overview

**Purpose** Increase organizational engagement through recognition. Clubs and Districts are celebrated for completing benchmarks across five key areas of club excellence.

**Qualifications** Clubs must meet Minimum Club Standards and be in good standing with International & District dues. Minimum Standards include:

- At least **7 regular members**
- Participation in one **OI Signature Program or Activity**
- **One fellowship event annually**
- **\$100 minimum** Foundation donation
- At least **one member** completing an Optimist Institute course

#### Levels of Recognition

**Bronze** – 5 benchmarks from at least 3 categories

**Silver** – 8 benchmarks from at least 4 categories

**Gold** – 15 benchmarks across all 5 categories

(C.H.A.P. continued on next page)

## Key Categories

- Youth & Community Impact
- Membership Engagement
- Foundation Support (OIF/CCOF)
- Club Leadership & Administration
- Membership Growth

Benchmarks include completing signature programs, participating in training, supporting the Foundation, submitting required reports, attending district events, and achieving membership goals.

## District Award Levels

**Bronze** – 10% of clubs earn Bronze/Silver/Gold

**Silver** – 20% of clubs earn Bronze/Silver/Gold

**Gold** – 30% of clubs earn Bronze/Silver/Gold

☀️ COMING SOON ☀️

## Optimist International C.H.A.P. Guide

The full Club Health Awards Program (C.H.A.P.) guide is being finalized by Optimist International. It will be released soon and shared with all WINUM clubs as soon as it becomes available.

Stay tuned for details, benchmarks, and recognition opportunities for your club!



**Wine Beer & Cheese FESTIVAL 2026**

Optimist International Club of De Pere  
November 6th  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Swan Club of De Pere  
875 Heritage Rd  
De Pere, WI

*New for 2026*  
**BOURBON Tasting**  
(Not included in ticket price)

**Tickets**  
\$30 EACH OR \$50 FOR 2 WHEN BOUGHT IN ADVANCE  
\$40 AT THE DOOR  
INCLUDES CARVED TURKEY, PRIME RIB, APPETIZERS AND SAMPLES OF WINE, BEER, & CHEESE

Tickets available for purchase at:  
SERVOLOTT'S CHOCOLATES  
THE WINE CELLAR  
COCON BREWING  
OPTIMIST CLUB MEMBERS  
COFFEE FUNERAL HOME  
WWW.EVENTRITE.COM

*Join the Fun!*

**SILENT AUCTION & RAFFLES**

Entertainment provided by De Pere High School



**SHAWANO OPTIMIST CLUB TRI-STAR FOOTBALL SKILLS COMPETITION**

Optimist International Club of Shawano

**OPEN TO ALL BOYS AND GIRLS AGES 8-13**

**PUNT, PASS & KICK**

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9th, 2026**

LOCATION - SHAWANO HIGH SCHOOL HAWKS PRACTICE FIELD

**5:00 PM • 6:00 PM**

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: 5:45 PM  
AWARDS AND DOOR PRIZES AT 6:00 PM

JOINT-EVENT SPONSORED BY SHAWANO OPTIMIST CLUB AND SHAWANO SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR SHAWANO HAWKS.

# Zone Reports

## Zone 1



Lt. Governor  
Angie Riemer

### Chippewa Falls Optimist Club

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

The club held their awards banquet on September 29 with 2026-27 Governor Louise Bentley installing new officers and

board members. Outgoing president Vicki Wilson passed the gavel on to incoming president Jack Halbleib at the end of the meeting. Upcoming events include the dictionary project and trunk or treat. The club recently presented the Educator of the Year Award and a \$200 scholarship to teacher Janelle Dachel.



### Hallie Optimist Club

Hallie Optimist Club will hold their Installation Banquet on October 14 at the Lake Hallie Golf Club with President Daryl Dehnke presiding. They will also induct two new members that evening.

### Neillsville Optimist Club

Neillsville Optimist Club Installation Banquet was held on September 16, and Lt. Governor Angie Reimer attended and installed their officers and board members. The club's president is Judy Morrow.

### Superior Optimist Club

Superior Optimist Club will be holding their annual Meatball Dinner on October 20. A group of district leaders will be attending the event and present a proclamation to the club from Optimist International for reaching 75 years as a club. Congratulations, Superior Club, on reaching this milestone!

### University of Wisconsin Eau Claire College Club



University of Wisconsin Eau Claire College Club kicked off their new school year with their first meeting on September 9. Incoming WINUM Governor Louise Bentley welcomed the students and gave a presentation on what the Optimist Club is about. 2026-27 Lt. Governor Angie Reimer installed the new club officers, as shown in the photo.

## Zone 2



Lt. Governor  
Mary Sue Edens Pfantz

### Optimist Club of Antigo

- Langlade County Fair – July 30<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup> serving Cheese Curds and Sundrop Slushies
- Bike Safety Rodeo was held on August 13, 2026, 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Health Fair 1:00 – 4:00 pm
- After Fair Picnic August 19, 2026 at Heizen Building
- Advertising Banners are being purchased for the cheese curd trailer and all other events.
- Antigo Bike & Ski Club – Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 at Gartzke Flowage 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
- Trunk or Treat – October 25, 2026 at Peace Lutheran Church
- Trunk or Treat – October 31, 2026 at Elcho School District
- Christmas Parade – December 2, 2026
- DARE program - \$500.00
- Backpack program - \$1,000
- President is Roger Fuller

### Mosinee Area Optimist Club

- Mosinee Optimist members worked at the Mosinee Log Jam Festival held on August 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Even Governor Vanessa Rueth got into the action.
- Schedule: 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 AM
- Location: Mosinee Cafe, Mosinee, WI
- President is Kenneth Muelling

### Merrill Noon Optimist

- Lincoln County Fair – August 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Merrill Optimist Club sold Cheese Curds, held at the Merrill Fair grounds.
- NFL Sweep stakes have been sold to many members and football enthusiast.
- Merrill Optimist Annual Golf Outing was held on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at Merrill Public Golf Club.
- Blue Magic Box should only receive paper; cardboard is not accepted.
- Merrill Optimist participated in the Labor Day Celebration at Merrill Fair Grounds.
- Merrill Optimist Club supports the Merrill Chamber at the Sip & Stroll. This wine walk is selling 300 tickets to people visiting 27 downtown businesses. The Blue Jay Radio will be live on air. Hours will be 1:00-7:00 pm, on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026. At each business, ticket holders will get 1 oz of wine. \$35 Advanced tickets through October 12 or \$45 day of the event if available. United Way will be doing a 50/50.
- President is Randy Wixson

## Everest Area Optimist Club

- Wisconsin Valley Fair – August 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Everest Optimist sold over \$29k in Cheese Curds. This is their largest fund raiser.
- Gave \$14k in Scholarships.
- Wood Chucks night \$20 per person.
- Everest Area Optimist Club received “Congratulations” and a digital badge to post on their socials or website, for getting **BACK IN BALANCE** with Lynette Arnhart as President. The program encourages Clubs and Districts that have dropped below their October 1 membership numbers to replace lost Optimists and thereby get **Back in Balance**. News Day Tuesday, August 18, 2026.
- Fran Bender received the President’s Citation Award for her continued help with Lyn Arnhart, President this past year at the Annual Installation Banquet held Sept. 30, 2026.
- Albert J. Romportl received the Person of the year at the Annual Installation Banquet held on September 30, 2026. Pictured on the right.
- President is Ashley Dupuis-Bohman



Everest Area Installation

## Stevens Point Noon Optimist Club

- Field Trips to other non-profits-visibility for club – options to collaborate
- Iola Car show selling food
- NFL Sweepstakes fund raiser
- Cardboard City, building Log Cabin with carpet rolls, children help paint project
- Glacier Hollow – YMCA camp- made donation for \$500 to purchase fishing poles and life jackets
- Central Wisconsin Children’s Museum – Donated a wishing well.
- Food and Farm Exploration Center – Informative and very nice place for children
- Youth Recognition 6<sup>th</sup> grade students: 12 Schools
- Trunk and Treat will be coming up soon.
- Holiday Parade
- President is Mary Grace Keene



Stevens Point Officer Installation

## Wausau Breakfast Optimist Club

- Wisconsin Valley Fair at Marathon Park, August 4-9<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The club is widely known for running an iconic food stand.
- **Secret Recipe:** Operating since the late 1960s, the stand sells thousands of orders of cheese curds using a unique batter recipe that incorporates stale beer to maximize flavor and crispness.
- Operates as a registered 501(c)(4) / non-profit organization with roughly \$73,000 in annual revenue, directing funds back into local programs.
- President is Matthew McDonald



Wausau Breakfast Installation

## Wausau Noon Club

- Blood Drive with Community Blood Center of Wausau. The blood donated through this organization stays in our local area hospital.
- Hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional Candidates both Republicans and Democrats made introductions with a little speech.
- Rainbow's End is a very rewarding event. Optimist serve hot dogs, chips, fresh fruit, soda pop to the Campers. A bounce house is also provided for the children.
- Wisconsin Valley Fair at Marathon Park, August 4-9<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The BIER Garden switched to canned beer rather than draft this year. The Food Stand continued to serve their famous Pork Chop on a stick. The Elephant Ear stand made it's first year appearance with an all-new trailer designed by Romey Wagner. The Elephant ears are a yummy treat. Customers stand in long lines to get them.
- Youth Heritage Days, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026 was a success even though it was a rainy day. More than 150+ children participated. Activities were hands-on stations featuring archery, trap and skeet shooting, BB and pellet gun shooting, kayaking, fly casting, and bloodhound tracking. Location was at the Wausau School Forest, 218735 County Rd KK, Mosinee, WI. Youth ages were 8-16. Event was FREE including lunch and a T-Shirt. Fun was had by all.
- President is Jonnee Bauer



Wausau Noon Installation

## Zone 3



Lt. Governor  
Ben Elsner

### Howard Suamico Optimist Club

#### Past Events

- September 8<sup>th</sup> – The Howard-Suamico club hosted some of the Bayport HS Dance team during their monthly meeting
- August 25<sup>th</sup> – Magic at the Masters event was held that sold tickets that winners would be able to attend one day of the 2027 or 2028 Masters Golf Tournament.
- July 12<sup>th</sup>: Green Bay Rockers Baseball
- June 15<sup>th</sup>: Fore the Kids Golf Classic at Mid Vallee Golf Course raised \$7,000



Green Bay Rockers  
Group picture

Bayport HS Dance Team



## De Pere Optimist Club

### Upcoming Events

- November 6<sup>th</sup> – Wine, Beer, & Cheese Festival – The De Pere Optimists will be hosting their annual festival at the Swan Club and will be having a Silent auction and raffles. Tickets in advance are \$30/person or \$50/2, \$40 at the door.

## Shawano Optimist Club

### Past Events

- Thursdayz at Franklin – The Shawano Club will be serving beverages and running 50/50 at the following night for the summer concert series

- o June 18<sup>th</sup>
- o July 2<sup>nd</sup>
- o July 23<sup>rd</sup>
- o August 13<sup>th</sup>
- o August 20<sup>th</sup>



- August 11<sup>th</sup> – National Night Out – The Shawano Optimist joined with local law enforcement agencies for their National Night Out and gave out water, hamburgers, brats, and hot dogs
- August 6<sup>th</sup> – The Shawano Optimist club was nominated by 100+ Men Who Care as one of the non-profits that was able to share our community impact.
- July 15<sup>th</sup> – The **Wolf River Pump Track** hosted the Shawano Optimist Club to show and demonstrate the newly opened pump track that was sponsored by the Shawano Optimists.



### Upcoming Events

- October 9<sup>th</sup> – Tri-Star Football skills challenge will be held to challenge youth passing, punting, and kicking skills.
- October 10<sup>th</sup> – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary banquet at Golden Sands

## Pulaski Optimist Club

### Past Events

- July 16-19<sup>th</sup> – Polka Days – The Pulaski Optimists helped with concessions and camping parking during the event

## Green Bay - Preble

### Past Events

- September 23rd – Respect for Law – The Preble Optimists held their annual Respect for Law banquet held at the Riverside Ballroom.
- September 15th: 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.
- August 2026: Cops 'n Bobbers – An event for kids to come and fish with local law enforcement.

## Allouez Optimist Club

### Upcoming Events

- October 9<sup>th</sup> – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will be held in conjunction with their installation banquet.

## Green Bay

### Past Events

- Girls Softball Concessions – The Green Bay club will be running concessions for the girl's softball games that concluded in August and held a family picnic for 220 families.
- The Green Bay club provided 800 shirts for UWGB Volleyball and St Norbert basketball camps with the saying “Do Your Best! Be Your Best!”
- September 23<sup>rd</sup> – Howe School shirt drop-off – The Green Bay Optimist club dropped off shirts for the Howe school for the kids and teachers that are worn every Wednesday for Optimist Wednesday. This program has been going for 10+ years.



### Upcoming Events

- October 16<sup>th</sup> – Green Bay Optimist Night at UWGB Volleyball against the Northern Illinois Huskies

## Zone 4



### New Holstein Optimist Club

The New Holstein Optimist Club was able to complete the playground project they have been working on for the last 23 months in September with the grand opening on September 23. Through the generosity of businesses, community members, grants and volunteers, they would not have been able to complete it. The best part, since the opening, kids have been coming from all over town to play there.

**Lt. Governor  
Roger Phillippi**

Their club was the sponsoring organization of the first annual Golden Harvest Festival held

September 26. For the first one, it was a great success. The organizers did a great job bringing in various vendors, including craft beer, soda and wine vendors, and a band to round out the evening.

This fall, they will host another Bingo event on November 15 and again have their annual Christmas Cut-out Cookie Sale at the Twinkling Lights 'Light Up the Park' event as well as decorating a section of the park for visitors to come and view during the holiday season.



## Two Rivers

Here Fishy, Fishy...

All are invited to Wisconsin's East Coast in Two Rivers to check out their Friday Fish Fry on November 6! Is it really "Cooler by Lake"...? Come find out!

Perch, Cod and Chicken Plates will be available as well as raffle baskets! Food will be served between 4pm – 7pm with the raffle drawings at 6:30pm. All this at the Westshore Sportsman's Club in Two Rivers (MapQuest will help you find them!). Proceeds benefit the youth – because as you know... it's what we are all about!

Two Rivers had a fun summer with a Bike Safety Rodeo, an Optimist Night at the local baseball club's night game and they also gave away 123 new bicycles at their annual Great Bike Give Away! They also had a very successful Meat Raffle which helps pay for those events! Fall is upon us, and as they gear up for activities with the local schools; they also plan to honor the local firefighters during Fire Prevention Month this October.

## Zone 5



Lt. Governor  
Chuck Erickson

### Chilton Optimist Club

The Chilton Optimists will host their Friend of Youth Raffle on Wednesday, October 21, at the Neighborhood Pub & Grill, N5091 County Highway BB, Chilton, WI 53014. Tickets are \$50 each and include a sit-down dinner, raffle tables, and plenty of cash prizes, with a top prize of \$5,000. For more information, contact Pat Miller at 920-849-9871.

### Brillion Optimist Club

The Brillion Optimists kept busy this summer. Although there were no monthly Noon meetings from June through August, the club hosted its annual electric parade in June, and gathered in September for a N.O.W. meeting with a BBQ. One of the guests has since joined the club, so welcome!

**Upcoming Fundraiser:** The Walk Through Brillion Tasting Event is Saturday, October 24, with registration beginning at 5 PM. Guests can enjoy food and local beer and wine samples at 24 stops, along with live music, a costume contest, and raffles. For more information or to order tickets, visit [brillionoptimists.org](http://brillionoptimists.org) or the Brillion Optimists Club page on Facebook.

## Committee Reports

### First Timers



Co-Chairs 2025-26

Lori VanNatta and Trina DeLasky

It was a pleasure to welcome a "First Timer", Sue Snyder, to the WINUM Convention! Before the conference begins, First Timers gather for a brief 15–20-minute meet-and-greet where we get to know one another, review the agenda, and answer any questions.

During the conference, each First Timer is encouraged to meet two new people and learn a little about them. After returning their completed form, they are entered into a drawing for a free conference registration valid within the next year.



Lori and Trina with  
First Timer, Sue Snyder

If you have never attended a WINUM Conference before, we would love the opportunity to welcome you as our next "First Timer!"

## Membership



Ann Sheahan  
Membership Chair  
2025-26

### Membership 2025-2026

Our sunflowers were standing tall all year and facing the Optimistic Sun! We were so close to coming in with a positive number too! So stand tall WINUM District. We finished at -37 which may sound like drooping flowers; however, we added 98 new members to our District and that is what we celebrate!! 98 new faces to spread the word and do great work with our youth! Thank you to all the sponsors for reaching out and ASKING someone to join. Let's keep the motivation going to add new members and do great things! As Governor Louise takes over remember her theme: Your wings already exist, all you have to do is fly! So let's fly into 26-27 with many new members to help promote optimism in our youth, our communities and ourselves!!



Trina DeLasky  
Membership Chair  
2026-27

### Membership 2026-2027

- **Spread Your Wings** – Invite One  
One invitation can make a difference.
- **Invite one person personally.** Ask a friend, neighbor, coworker, family member, or acquaintance to attend a meeting or event with you.
- **Bring a guest to lunch or a meeting.** A simple “Come with me and see what we do” can be much easier than immediately asking someone to join.
- **Invite someone to volunteer first.** Ask them to help with a youth project, fundraiser, community event, or service activity. Let them experience Optimism before discussing membership.
- **Share your personal “why.”** Tell someone why you became an Optimist and why you continue to be involved.
- **Think beyond your usual circle.** Consider newer residents, young professionals, retirees, parents, educators, business owners, former volunteers, and others who want to become more involved in their community.
- **Reconnect with former members.** Personally reach out and invite them back to a meeting or special event. Their circumstances may have changed.
- **Follow up with past guests.** Someone who attended previously but did not join may simply need another invitation.
- **Use social media personally.** Rather than only sharing the club's posts, add a sentence such as, “I am proud to be part of this group. If you have ever wondered what Optimists do, come with me sometime!”
- **Wear your Optimist apparel.** A shirt, pin, or name badge can naturally start conversations about the organization.
- **Talk about impact, not meetings.** Tell prospective members about the children, families, schools, and community projects your club supports.

## Student ID Verification Update for Essay & Oratorical Contests

Optimist International has updated the Student ID Verification process for the Essay and Oratorical contests. To better protect student privacy, **clubs and districts will no longer submit copies of student identification for District Scholarship winners.**

Instead, **Club Chairs and District Chairs will verify each contestant's identity and sign the required form confirming that verification has been completed.** No ID documents will be sent to Optimist International.

OI will revise the planning guides this year to reflect this change. This new process keeps student information secure while making verification easier for clubs and districts as they prepare for the 2026–2027 contest season.

## Optimist Essay Contest



Shannon Dalton  
Essay Chair

2026–2027 Topic: **"Finding My Voice in a World Full of Noise"**

The Optimist Essay Contest is open to students who are under the age of 19 as of October 1 of the current Optimist year and who have not yet completed high school or its equivalent. Québec students attending CEGEP are eligible, and there is no minimum age requirement. Students must submit their essays through the District in which they reside, and U.S. students attending school on military installations abroad may enter through the District associated with their last permanent U.S. home of record.

Per MarySue's correspondence with Optimist International, club chairs do not need to collect or copy student birth certificates. They only need to verify that the student has one, as handling or storing copies is not appropriate for clubs.

Essays must contain between 700 and 800 words, and every word is counted toward the total. The title, bibliography, and footnotes are not included in the word count. Clubs may award up to \$500 to their local winners, and many also present Optimist International medals, available in gold, silver, and bronze.

Thank you, everyone, and best of luck to all participants.

## Oratorical Contest



Chuck Erickson and Angie Riemer  
Oratorical Co-Chairs  
2026-27

The topic for the OI Oratorical Contest this year is: **"How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me."**

If your club is planning to host an Oratorical Contest, email Chuck at [chuck@collegeconnectors.com](mailto:chuck@collegeconnectors.com) before December 1, 2026.

The 3rd Quarter WINUM Conference will host the 2027 District Oratorical Contest on Saturday, May 1, in the morning at the DoubleTree Hotel in Neenah, WI. For more information, click here:

<https://www.optimist.org/member/scholarships4.cfm>

**The Purpose:** The contest gives youth the opportunity to gain public speaking experience, strengthen self-expression, build self-assurance, improve communication skills, and compete for a college scholarship.

**Funding:** The Optimist Oratorical Scholarships are funded by member donations to the Optimist International Foundation.

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

**Club Contests:** A club may be represented at the District by no more than two qualified contestants. There is no minimum number of participants for club contests. Here is the Oratorical Contest Club Planning Guide: [https://optimist2.tovuti.io/images/uWuOrSlgstRSyi864j4uA94hMzE0MTUyMzU1NjQz/Info\\_Site/Programs/Club\\_Oratorical\\_Planning\\_26-27.pdf](https://optimist2.tovuti.io/images/uWuOrSlgstRSyi864j4uA94hMzE0MTUyMzU1NjQz/Info_Site/Programs/Club_Oratorical_Planning_26-27.pdf)

**District Contests:** Each District winner will receive a scholarship for use at a college, university, or trade school only. Three winners will receive scholarships of \$2,500, \$1,500, and \$1,000 for first, second, and third place. District contests must have at least three participants. The 1st place winner will attend the World Championship in July 2027 at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri.

## New Club Growth



Troy Drostal  
Growth Chair  
2026-27

Happy Optimist New Year!

I am excited for Governor Louise's year. "Your wings already exist, all you have to do is fly" is a great theme for the year and for all of us to join the Optimist movement. We were all in our cocoon before joining our local Optimist clubs and the WINUM district. We have turned into beautiful butterflies and all we need to do is fly around spreading optimism to everyone we meet. That is where I want to help. Help our clubs by growing and helping our district grow at the same time. Optimist International has started a pilot program called C.H.A.P. (Club Health Awards Program). I wanted to talk about some of the criteria to receive points in the growth area for your club (each of these will receive 1 benchmark point):

1. End of Year Membership (Net 0)
2. End of Year Membership (Net +3)
3. End of Year Membership (Net +5)
4. 90% Retention Rate (Found on Optimist Scoreboard)
5. Host Dedicated Club Recruitment Event (NOW, WOW)
6. Build New Club (New Club must remain active for 1 year from date of charter)

I am looking to help you build your club and gain new members. Many hands will make light work. All our clubs can use additional members to help with our projects to make things easier on the current members. I am looking to work with clubs to build a Facebook presence and look at other ways to get your club promoted in the community. We will be hosting workshops/round tables at the conferences to help clubs create Facebook pages and talk through some best practices of using Facebook/social media. You won't want to miss this!

I am also happy to assist you with one-on-one as well. We need to show people all the great things we are doing in our communities!

### Did You Know?

The Optimist Institute offers a wide range of training and resources for members, including courses on club and district leadership roles, Excel, Word, Zoom, and much more. It's a great place for new officers to get started and for returning leaders to refresh their skills.

Both the Optimist Institute and the Optimist Info Portal require members to log in using their email address and the annual password. If you need this year's password, you can get it from your **Club President, Secretary/Treasurer, Lt. Governor, or the Governor.**

**"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."**

— William Butler Yeats

## JOI Clubs



Ann Sheahan  
JOI Chair  
2026-27

Nothing better than JOI; that's Junior Optimist International!! We currently have 6 JOI clubs registered through OI and they are: OC of Merrill, D.C. Everest Middle School Jr. Optimist, Antigo Junior Optimist Club, Greenleaf-Wrightstown, Kewaunee Junior Optimist, & Two Rivers High School Octagon Club. We currently have 39 clubs and only 6 Junior Optimist Clubs; we need to fix that ratio. I will be contacting the Lt Governors to promote some ideas to club presidents and hope to give some tips at every conference and newsletter.

First tip: Our youth are our future; let's invest in them. Having a youth group shows the kids in your community you care about their civic duty to volunteer for their fellow citizens. It also means, a youth club will support your adult club activities; nothing better than having younger, energetic youth, to help out at many of your events. It's also priceless to spend time with the youth and see what their brilliant minds are thinking when it comes to volunteering. Be an advisor it is so rewarding; contact me if you need help starting a Junior club.

I would like to highlight a JOI club or two for each newsletter article; so I will start with one I know very well. Two Rivers High School Octagon Club. We have been in existence since 2/6/1996. WOW 30 years! The students meet every Tuesday morning at 7:35am before school starts and surprisingly they all show up every week! Many projects from fundraisers to service are performed each year. Some highlights are Carving Pumpkins for our local Nature Center Enchanted Forest Event, Raking Leaves for the elderly, shopping for Christmas gifts for our adopted families as well as ringing bells for Salvation Army. In the spring we love to read to the daycare students and give them a book and stuffed animal that we made. We have a semi-annual fund raiser that one of our students suggested many years ago (2011) and has become a very profitable event as well as great for the environment; Electronics Recycling Drive. Spending time with our youth has been so rewarding for both the advisors: Judy Goodchild since 2001 and Ann Sheahan since 2004.



Don't be afraid to take a step into the world of JOI, you won't regret it!

## Optimist Foundation



Troy Dostal  
Foundation Chair

Greetings WINUM Optimist! It is an honor to be your District Foundation Rep again this year. Thank you for the support you have given to Optimist International Foundation (OIF) as well as myself. October 1<sup>st</sup> marks an important date on the Optimist calendar-It's the beginning of the Optimist New Year! What does this mean for you? You are encouraged to donate to OIF and become a member of the Dime-A-Day club. You can complete this donation directly on the OIF website or by giving your check to your club, who then can turn it in at the next conference. Visit [OIF Donation Page](#) to complete your donation today. You are also able to do other donations there as well.

While OIF is closing the books for the Optimist year 2026 I wanted to share [Top 10 Accomplished in 2025](#). These are the top 10 things that OIF was able to fund in 2025 because of your support. The more support they have, the more support they can give back to our youth.

With the new C.H.A.P (Club Health Awards Program) pilot going on I wanted to call out a few things for that can help your club receive points/recognition by donating to the OIF. For every item below that you support, you will receive 1 benchmark point:

- 1.Club Donation (Minimum \$100)
- 2.Club Donation (\$365/Dollar-a-Day)
- 3.Club Donation (\$500+)
- 4.Dime-A-Day Support (Minimum 15% of Club members)
- 5.Club Foundation Rep (CFR completes Optimist Institute Training)
- 6.Club Foundation Rep identified in COER (Club Officer Elect Report) by May 20<sup>th</sup>

I'm here to help with any pilot program or OIF needs.

Year-end reminder: Required Minimum Distributions and Qualified Charitable Distributions can be directed to OIF.

## 2026-27 Leadership Team

### Optimist International (OI) Leadership Team

Optimist International President:

[Michael Goldman](#)

Great Plains Regional Vice President:

[Howard Crofoot](#)

WINUM Executive Committee Governor:

[Louise Bentley](#)

Governor Elect: [Ben Elsner](#)

Immediate Past Governor: [Vanessa Rueth](#)

Past Governor: [Angie Riemer](#)

District Treasurer: [Deb Braden](#)

District Secretary: [Jodi Arriola](#)

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

OI Convention Ambassador:

[Vanessa Rueth](#)

#### Lt. Governors

Zone 1: [Angie Riemer](#)

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

Zone 3: [Open](#)

Zone 4: [Roger Philippi](#)

Zone 5: [Chuck Erickson](#)

Zone 6: [Mark Sprangers](#)

#### Committee Chairs

Communications-External Marketing:

[Tammy Koehler](#)

Communications-Internal/Newsletter:

[Vanessa Rueth](#)

Conferences & Convention Chair:

[Laurel Schirmer](#)

Essay: [Shannon Dalton](#)

Finance Chair: [Mark Sprangers](#)

First timers:

[Trina DeLasky](#)

Growth Chair: [Troy Dostal](#)

Hospitality: [John Leonhard](#)

Junior Golf Chair: [Ben Elsner](#)

Junior Optimists (JOI) Clubs:

[Ann Sheahan](#)

Leadership Chair: [Jodi Arriola](#)

Membership Chair: [Trina DeLasky](#)

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.
- Optimist Institute: [https://optimist.tovuti.io/?utm\\_source=copilot.com](https://optimist.tovuti.io/?utm_source=copilot.com)
- Optimist Info: [https://optimist2.tovuti.io/?utm\\_source=copilot.com](https://optimist2.tovuti.io/?utm_source=copilot.com)

Login required for both sites. Please contact your Club President, Secretary/Treasurer, or Lt. Governor for this year's access password.