



December 2024 Optimist International Foundation President's Newsletter



Beyond Words: Where Every Child's Voice Matters



A Monthly Resource for Club and District Foundation Representatives



OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

Mission Statement

Seeking, receiving and managing funds and real personal property for the benefit of Optimist International and its Member Clubs in its charitable, literary and educational activities.

Vision Statement

We envision a Foundation that can provide significant funding for Optimist International's youth and service programs and is proudly supported by individual Optimists, their Clubs, and the community at large.

Tagline

Helping Optimists Help Kids!

Tax and Charitable Status

The Optimist International Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States. Within 501(c)(3), the Foundation is a 509(a)(3) public charity.

Optimist International Convention

St. Louis, Missouri
St. Louis Union Station Hotel
June 29 - July 3, 2025

FOMO Newsletter

Ben DeRemer	Editor in chief
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Photo: Optimist International Tournament of Champions from page 6; provided by the Optimist Junior Golf Facebook Page.

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2019-2023 Past OI President Director-at-Large • Jim Kondrasuk

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Dear Friends,

As we wrap up another year filled with Optimism and opportunity, I hope this message finds you well. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Bodhi Day, Yule, Junkanoo, or simply take this time to reflect on the past year, this is a season for hope and gratitude, and I'm excited to share some updates with you as we transition into a new chapter.

Upcoming Elections: Meet the Candidates

It's election season for our Foundation! This year, we have two fantastic candidates running for office: **Sandy Cyphers** and **Joanne Ganske**. If you were a **Dime-a-Day Donor** last year, you will have the opportunity to cast your vote in February. Clubs that donated a Dollar a Day through the 365 Club program are also eligible to vote through their CFR, but they must have a current CFR this year to participate. Mark your calendars, and stay tuned for more details about the **Candidate Forum**, which will take place January 28th. Look out for an upcoming message from our Executive Director, Craig Boring, with information on how to participate and get to know the candidates better.

Club Grant and Childhood Health & Wellness Grant Webinar

We are thrilled to start the year with an informative webinar about two of our cornerstone programs: the **Club Grant Program** and the **Childhood Health & Wellness Grant Program**. This webinar will take place on **January 14th** and is a must-attend event for anyone looking to maximize their Club's impact through these incredible opportunities. Be sure to mark your calendar, and join us for this engaging and practical session.

Your Questions Answered

Last month, we launched an opportunity for **DFRs and CFRs** to submit questions for members of the Foundation Board of Directors, and we are thrilled to see the thoughtful inquiries we've already received. Thank you to those who have participated so far—please keep them coming! Some of our **past board members** have taken the time to answer your questions, and you can find their responses on the following page. Moving forward, this section will appear in the same place each month after my message. If you'd like to submit questions for our **current board members** and soon to be elected board member, we'd love to hear from you as well! Please send your questions to OIF.FOMO@gmail.com, and we'll do our best to include them in an upcoming issue.

Looking Ahead

As always, FOMO is here to ensure you never miss out on the latest news, resources, and opportunities within the Foundation. Thank you for your continued dedication to making a difference, and I look forward to the exciting projects and successes we will share in the months ahead.

Yours in Optimism,

Ben DeRemer
2024-2025 President
Optimist International Foundation

President's Team Messages



Were there any fundraising campaigns or programs you thought wouldn't succeed but ended up being wildly successful?

2021-2022 OIF President • Marc Katz

A decision was made by the Optimist International Foundation Board of Directors to designate the proceeds raised by the Women's Philanthropy Council Pink Purse Pins as restricted funds, with the monies specifically dedicated to providing scholarships for the Oratorical Contest. As a result, these funds no longer count toward the donor's recognition levels for Dime-A-Day, President's Club, or William Harrison Society giving.

Despite this change, donors have graciously continued to contribute at least at their previous levels, demonstrating unwavering support for both the Women's Philanthropy Council and the Oratorical Contest.

This steadfast commitment from our donors is what enables the Optimist International Foundation to sustain and expand the critical support it provides to Optimist International scholarships, Club Grant and Childhood Health and Wellness Grants, Junior Golf, and Junior Optimist International programs.

Can you share a success story from your time on the board that still inspires you today?

2022-2023 OIF President • Deb Merritt

One of my greatest successes as a member of the Optimist International Foundation Board of Directors was the opportunity to witness firsthand two of Optimist International's major programs: the Oratorical World Championships and the Junior Golf Championships. Watching students from around the world meet and compete on an international stage was truly inspiring. Knowing that I had a role in raising the funds necessary to support both of these incredible programs brought immense joy to my heart and reminded me of why I became an Optimist.

Another memorable success was a three-week road trip I took across the southeastern United States. During this journey, I had the privilege of meeting many new Optimist friends and sharing how the Foundation supports both students and clubs. Seeing other members become excited about supporting the Foundation's mission reignited my own passion for the work we do. The resulting increase in donations was simply an added bonus to an already rewarding experience.



Foundation Event Calendar



Club & CHW Grant Webinar

Learn how to apply for the Club Grant Program and Childhood Health and Wellness Grant Program in this webinar. Gain insights into crafting strong proposals, meeting requirements, and securing funding to support your Club's impactful projects and initiatives.



Meet the Candidates

It's election season! Dime-a-Day Donors and eligible 365 Club CFRs can vote in February. Join the Candidate Forum in late January to meet Sandy Cyphers and Joanne Ganske. Stay tuned for details from Executive Director Craig Boring.



1st Round CHW Grant Deadline

The first round of Childhood Health and Wellness Grant applications is due January 31. Don't miss this opportunity to secure funding for impactful projects that promote youth health and well-being. Submit your application today to make a difference!



Board of Directors Election: 2025–2029

Dime-a-Day donors from last year and Clubs that gave a dollar a day at the 365 Club level can vote in February through their current Club Foundation Representative to elect a board member who will serve on the OIF Board of Directors from 2025–2029.



The JOIful Weekend of Giving

The JOIful Weekend of Giving is a dedicated fundraising event to empower youth leaders by supporting the JOI Leadership Summit, funding opportunities for growth, education, and service. Together, we invest in the future of tomorrow's leaders today.



Optimist International Tournament of Champions

Submitted by **Deb Merritt** · 2022-2023 Optimist International Foundation President



Photo: Provided by the Optimist Junior Golf Facebook Page.

The 2024 Optimist International Junior Golf Tournament of Champions was held on November 2-3 at the beautiful Mission Inn Resort in Florida, drawing 125 of the most talented junior golfers from 20 countries. This prestigious event is a testament to the Optimist International Foundation's (OIF) commitment to supporting youth through sports, showcasing how philanthropic contributions can help nurture future generations of athletes.

The tournament featured fierce competition among the participants, with impressive performances across all divisions. Notable winners included Joshua Hess of Switzerland, who topped the Boys 16-18 division with scores of 72-70 (142), and Ayana Hiranaka of Japan, who dominated the Girls 14-18 division with consecutive rounds of 68 (136). These champions, alongside their fellow division winners, displayed exemplary skill, resilience, and sportsmanship, embodying the core values of the Optimist International Foundation and its mission to foster youth development.

The Optimist International Foundation was one of the key sponsors of the event, alongside the Junior Players Golf Academy and Lake County, Florida. The Foundation's financial and organizational support played a pivotal role in making this event a success. This sponsorship exemplifies how donor contributions directly impact programs that inspire and empower youth to pursue their passions and develop critical life skills through competition.

Volunteers are the backbone of every successful event, and the Tournament of Champions was no exception. Nineteen dedicated volunteers, including current and past foundation leaders, lent their time and expertise to ensure the tournament ran smoothly. Among them were Foundation President Ben DeRemer and board members Ken Garner and Craig Boring, who were joined by six esteemed past foundation presidents—Deb Merritt, Sandy Williams, Bob Garner, Ron Graves, Marc Katz, and Jan Oord Graves. Their presence and hands-on involvement highlighted the deep commitment of foundation leaders to the programs they support, further cementing the OIF's integral role in uplifting youth initiatives.



Photos: Provided by the Optimist Junior Golf Facebook Page.

The competition's high stakes were evident, as the top five finishers in each division earned coveted spots in the 2025 Optimist International Junior Golf Championship. Additionally, the winners of the Boys 16-18 and Girls 14-18 divisions secured exemptions to the prestigious Junior Orange Bowl tournament in December, setting the stage for further recognition of their talents on an even broader platform.

The importance of events like the Tournament of Champions extends beyond the fairways. For young athletes, participation is not just about competing—it's about developing discipline, resilience, and confidence. These tournaments provide experiences that shape not only athletic careers but personal growth. With the support of the OIF and its generous donors, the tournament continues to open doors for junior golfers from around the globe, demonstrating the power of collective philanthropy in making a difference.

Congratulations are in order for the champions who rose to the challenge:

Boys 16-18: Winner Joshua Hess (Switzerland) 142 | **2nd** Joey Iaciovano (Florida) 146 | **3rd** Nutthachai Khamkhokgruad (Thailand) 147

Boys 14-15: Winner Ryo Arakawa (Japan) 146 | **2nd** Eduardo Marin (Nicaragua) 146 | **3rd** Juan Antonio Aliseda Alvarado (Mexico) 146

Girls 14-18: Winner Ayana Hiranaka (Japan) 136 | **2nd** Angelina Pacheco (Florida) 138 | **3rd** Chanelle Mwangi (Kenya) 140

Boys 11-13: Winner Pablo Del Grosso (Panama) 135 | **2nd** Theodoros Kalionchiz (Florida) 138 | **3rd** Hans Huang (Germany) 139

Girls 11-13: Winner Si Ge (Eva) Wang (Hong Kong) 139 | **2nd** Olivia Hartman (Florida) 145 | **3rd** Kaori Arce (Peru) 146

The continued success of the Tournament of Champions is a powerful reminder of what we can achieve together. The Optimist International Foundation extends its heartfelt gratitude to every volunteer, donor, and supporter whose unwavering dedication allows us to host events that go "beyond words" and into opportunities where youth voices and talents truly shine.





2024 Childhood Health & Wellness Grant Submissions

The Childhood Health and Wellness (CHW) Grants program inspires Optimist Clubs to design impactful projects addressing critical health needs in their communities. From supporting children with disabilities to promoting healthy lifestyles and mental health, this program fosters creativity and innovation among Clubs. Below is a list of grant proposals submitted last year, highlighting the diverse and meaningful ways Clubs aim to improve the lives of youth and families. Clubs interested in applying for 2025 CHW Grants should note the submission deadlines: January 31 and August 22.

Chronic Diseases

Optimist Club of San Antonio, TX

Childhood Cancer: Childhood Cancer

Rochester Regional Optimist Club

Childhood Cancer: Family Cancer: Necessity Buckets for New Day Foundation Families

West Jay Optimist Club, IN

Childhood Diseases: Bringing Sunshine to Sick Kids

Disabilities

Optimist Club of Talladega, AL

Autism: Overcoming Obstacles through Play: Developing Social Skills

Optimist Club of Talladega, AL

Autism: Overcoming Obstacles through Play: Using Sensory Toys

Optimist Club of Centerville-South Metro, OH

Children in need of emotional support as determined by partnered organizations: HAH - Help for Anxious Hearts

Mecosta County Optimist Club

Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Gas Cards for ASL Students

Optimist Club of Manhattan, KS

High school students with disabilities: IPS Essay Contest

Optimist Club of Sun Prairie, WI

Neurodivergent youth (autism, ADHD, anxiety, dyslexia, dyspraxia): Sun Prairie Library Sensory Kits

Hope 4 Tomorrow Optimist Club of Pike County, GA

Suicide Prevention: ReGrowth

Healthy Lifestyles and Disabilities

Optimist Club of Washington, MO

Learning to swim and water safety: Swimming Lesson Scholarships

Optimist Club of Temple, GA

Musical influence in overall health-mental and physical health: JAM in the Park

Optimist Club of Meridian, ID

Nutrition: Holiday Food Drive

Optimist Club of Burlington-West Burlington, IA

Nutrition and Healthy Eating: N/A

Healthy Lifestyles and Mental Health

Sunrise Optimist Club of Lockport Inc., NY

Middle School Students: Personal care items for local school students

Optimist Club of Montgomery-Central, AL

Nutrition, Fitness, and Mental Health: Healthy Lifestyles Through Nutrition, Fitness, and Mental Health

Optimist Club of Caldwell, ID

Physical fitness and mental health: Optimist District Qualifier golf tournament

Mental Health

Optimist Club of Festus-Crystal City (TCA), MO

Acknowledging and rewarding positive student leadership: Youth Appreciation

Optimist Club of Festus-Crystal City (TCA), MO

Adolescent boys mental health and hygiene: Adolescent Boy's Health

Optimist Club of Saint Joseph, MO

Anxiety, depression, and suicide prevention: Hooves and Hearts

Optimist Club of Farmington Hills-Breakfast, MI

Children in Middle and High school age: Farmington Hills Junior Optimist Video Contest

Share-A-Smile Optimist Club of Narrows Glen, Washington

Joint Base Lewis McChord Washington: PCS Project for Military Children

Optimist Club of Fort Walton Beach, FL

School hygiene supplies impact students success in school: School and Hygiene Supplies for Kids in Need

Optimist Club of Southfield-Lathrup Village, MI

Youth Mental Health and Wellness: Teen Mental Wellness Community Forum and Essay Contest



Healthy Lifestyles

Wentzville-Lake Saint Louis Optimist Club, MO

N/A: *Turkey Trot*

Optimist Club of Detroit-Faith-Hope-Love, MI

Children of Tab Baptist Church members, community, friends: Bicycle Safety

Royal Oak Optimist Club of Michigan

3rd Graders: *3rd Grade Bike Helmet Program*

Pleasure Island Optimist Club

Children to have healthy food available to them: Healthy Food Options

Optimist Club of Westfield, NJ

Children, families, and individuals in Westfield and surrounding areas: Holiday Food Distribution Program

East Wake Optimist Club

Feeding food-insecure kids: Summer Feeding Program

Optimist Club of Watertown, SD

Fitness for foster care children: Fitness for foster care children

Optimist Club of Perdido Bay, AL

Getting students interested in a physical activity and into a social environment: Introducing Pickleball to the General Student Body

We Care Arts Optimist Club in Kettering, OH

Healthy eating: We Care Arts Garden

Optimist Club of Dubuque-Morning, IA

Healthy Eating: Rooted Box Program

Optimist Club of Senoia, GA

Healthy Eating/Nutrition/Subsidize School Breakfast Program: School Breakfast Program

Optimist Club of Hernando, MS

N/A: Dickens of a Christmas Ice Skating

Optimist Club of Knoxville, IA

Paying for childrens lunches: Paying for childrens overdue balances for school lunch

Optimist Club of Huntsville, AL

Personal Hygiene: Old Spice for Young Men

Optimist Club of Woodstock-Midday, GA

Primary care coupled with health promotion and wellness program: Bethesda Clinic Mobile Services

Optimist Club of Roseburg, OR

Roseburg Public Schools: *Weekender lunch for kids*

Monthly District Rankings, Achievements, & Shout Outs

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all District Foundation Representatives, Club Foundation Representatives, and District Governors for your dedication and efforts. Your leadership and commitment to growing membership, securing donations, and supporting programs are the cornerstone of our success. Thank you for helping us make a lasting difference.

Top Districts in Dime-a-Day Membership

District	Total Memberships
Michigan	72
GATEway	57
West Missouri	42
New York - New England	40
East Missouri	36



Membership Percentage Leaders:

New York - New England (7.86%), AMS&NW (6.61%), and New Mexico - West Texas (4.76%) set the standard for member engagement.

Biggest Year-Over-Year Growth:

AMS&NW skyrocketed with a +114.29% increase, followed by South Florida (+100%) and Kentucky - West Virginia (+62.5%).

Unrestricted Donations by Dollar-Per-Member

District	Dollar-Per Member	District Foundation Representative
Ohio	\$14.40	Bill Stone
North Carolina West	\$10.96	Bill Teague
AMS&NW	\$9.29	Susan Robbenolt
South Texas	\$5.85	Jym Chenault
New York - New England	\$5.30	Debra Davis

President's Club Recognition

Top New Members:

North Carolina West added 2 new members.

Michigan, Ohio, North Florida, and South Carolina welcomed 1 new member each.

Renewals Leaders:

North Carolina West and Alabama - Mississippi each celebrated 6 renewals.

South Texas, Michigan, Iowa, and Ohio followed with 4 renewals.

Women's Philanthropy Council Growth

Membership Percentage Leaders:

North Florida (3.61%), AMS&NW (1.65%), and Pacific Northwest (0.94%) continue to grow their Women's Philanthropy Council memberships.

Year-over-Year Growth Leaders:

AMS&NW shines with a whopping +800%, followed by Pacific Northwest (+500%) and South Texas (+100%).





OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
FOUNDATION

SAVE THE DATE!

2025 OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL 107TH CONVENTION

June 29 - July 3, 2025 • St. Louis, MO • St. Louis Union Station Hotel

365 CLUB

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