

Illinois District Optimist Land of Lincoln Bulletin



December 2025

Hello Illinois Optimist Friends!

I could not be more excited or more honored to step into the position of 2025-26 District Governor. My predecessors have provided me with a high quality of content and inspiration that fits like a glove with the actionable ideas I have learned in training.

Illinois has some incredible people, doing amazing things for our youth. We are well recognized for the Youth Golf Tournaments, Basketball Tournaments, Community Fests, Holiday Fests, Food Trucks, Ice Cream Socials, Public Servant Recognition, STEM instruction, clothing drives, Scholarship Contests, Youth Leadership Opportunities and a high quality of volunteerism to name a few. What's not to like?

For example, our very own Highland Club, passed a rigorous evaluation to be named the BEST club in all of Optimist International. Considering that OI Covers over 25 countries and regions, that is some feat! Congratulations to the dedicated leadership and committees of the Highland Club. Your leadership is so many programs and activities makes you Rock-Stars to the youth of Highland.



Never forget our smaller but mighty clubs. In ways you can see, and in ways you may never see, you all are making the future better by providing fun, hope and a positive vision to our youth. You are so appreciated!

We've taken surveys and training. Now that we know what's wanted, let's go! The five goals that we have established for this year are:

Goal 1- Continue to improve Communication: We will work on improving communication by a variety of means including FaceBook, Zoom, text and a new YouTube channel which we encourage clubs to post.

Goal 2- Marketing: We will share and assist with press releases, and toot our own horns about the optimist opportunities.

Goal 3- Finance: We will expand the grant program from once to twice a year (January and August)

Goal 4- Personal development: I would like to suggest that those interested join our district study group on Jim Kwik's *LIMITLESS*. This book is a true story about a brain-injured young man who created success methods to work around his severely adverse conditions.

Goal- 5 Membership Retention and Growth: If 1-4 are even partially executed we should achieve our Goal for 2025-26 of 2 net new members per club. ***We are already on our way to membership growth as the IL District is #2 in all of Optimist International in 1st quarter 2026 membership gain! Way to go IL District!***

Please watch for email, text and social media messages from the district that we hope you will read and share.

I hope you had a blessed Merry Christmas and will have the most optimistic New Year.

Yours in Optimism

Nancy Roach-Wilder
224-305-2257
optimistnancy@gmail.com



We welcome the following 26 new members who have joined Optimist International since our last bulletin in September. What a great beginning to the 2025-26 club year!

New Member	Club	Sponsor
Eddie Fay	Des Plaines	Richard Arnold
Mathew Edmondson	Des Plaines	Jennifer Boys
Thomas Servantes Mayo	Moline Breakfast	John Castree
Yves Glavtcheff	Moline Breakfast	Bob Schwieder
Matt Wright	Moline Breakfast	Sandi Schmidt
Gene Jacoby	Sterling	Tricia Vorhees
Ronald Eberle	Quincy	Bill Henehan
Madena Whitesell	Chillicothe	Jacalyn Taylor
Alycia R. Ball Parsons	Delavan	Kelly Powell
Deborah Tomm-Woiwode	Delavan	Steven Skinner
Patrick Woiwode	Delavan	Steven Skinner
Crystal Smith	Delavan	Adele Wheeler
Wendy Schweigert	Delavan	Elizabeth Skinner
Janice Oney	Marshall-Clark Co.	Lisa Richey
Mandie S. Mason	Marshall-Clark Co.	Mary Jenkins
Diane Sinn	Belleville	Susan Reilmann
Sydnee Jackson	Belleville	Charles Mayhew
Katherine Spengler	Belleville	Charles Mayhew
Christina Gibson	Belleville	Charles Mayhew
Sean Childers	Millstadt	Charlie O'Donnell
Brain Mentzer	Millstadt	Elizabeth Biermann
April Rottmann	Highland	William Wagner
Chris Staub	Highland	William Niewbrugge
Andy Wessel	Highland	Keith Frank
Conner Reinarman	Highland	Joe Horstmann
Jordan Frey	Highland	Brant Frey

Plan now to attend the next Illinois District Optimist Conference

January 23-24, 2026

Holiday Inn & Suites

101 Holiday Street

East Peoria, IL

The January, Second Quarter Conference will feature the first of our grant award competitions for the year. Three clubs will be awarded \$750, \$500 or \$250 grants to help foster a program in their club. See the club grant information and application on the next page

Conference Registration and meeting information will be sent out soon.

See you there!



2026 IL District Optimist Club Grants

Two Opportunities this year! January and August

Three grants in the amount of \$750, \$500 and \$250 will be awarded at the 2nd Quarter IL District Optimist Conference to be held January 23/24, 2026 at the Holiday Inn & Suites in East Peoria, IL.

Eligibility: Any Illinois District Optimist Club (Adult or JOI) is eligible to apply for a grant for a new or existing service project.

1. The service project must be conducted between January 1, 2026 and December 31, 2026.
2. Club dues must be current as of January 15, 2026.
3. A representative from the club must make a 5-10 minute presentation at the January 24, 2026 Illinois District 2nd Quarter Conference.
4. Conference attendees will vote on which clubs will receive the grants, with the club receiving the most votes getting the \$750 grant, second most votes the \$500 grant and the third most votes the \$250 grant.
5. An application for the grant will be included in the December "Land of Lincoln Bulletin" and will also be sent to each club president by snail mail.
6. Club Grant Application is due **January 15, 2026**.
7. Notification of grant application acceptance will be on January 5th, 2026.
8. Winning club grants will be required to submit an article with pictures to the "Land of Lincoln Bulletin" after completion of the project.

2026 IL District Optimist Club Grants Application

Club Name _____

Club President _____

Name of Project _____

Short description of project

I certify:

1. That my club dues are current as of January 15, 2026.
2. My club will send a representative to present at the 2nd quarter IL District Optimist Conference, January 23/24, 2026 at the Holiday Inn & Suites in East Peoria, IL.
3. That this service project will be completed between January 1 and December 31, 2026.
4. That my club will submit an article with pictures to the “Land of Lincoln Bulletin” after the completion of the project.

Club President Signature _____

Date:

Send application to optimistnancy@gmail.com or snail mail by January 15, 2025 to:

Nancy Roadh-Wilder

IL District Optimist Governor

504 Littleton Trail

Elgin, IL 60120

"How I Can Show Optimism in My Community"

Rules for Entry

- Poster Contest is open to Illinois residents for students in 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th grades.
- Two divisions - one for 3rd and 4th grades and one for 5th and 6th grades.
- Each Club may submit one winner from each of the two divisions.
- Posters shall not have been entered in any previous Optimist Contest.
- Students are allowed to enter only one Optimist Club's Poster Contest.
- Posters must be on poster or illustration board - 14" x 22" (horizontal or vertical) and have a flat surface with no moving parts.
- Posters shall include only original artwork. No computer-generated pictures or wording are allowed. Poster designs may not incorporate any photographs, magazine or newspaper illustrations.
- Dark colors show best, and markers, paints, crayons and colored paper all work well on posters.
- The Contest slogan is: **"How I Can Show Optimism in My Community"**. THESE WORDS MUST BE ON THE FRONT OF EACH POSTER. Illustrations must be used in addition to words and must be related to the contest slogan.
- District winners will receive \$125 for first place, \$100 for second place and \$75 for third place. All winners will receive prize ribbons. Checks and letters of congratulation will be sent to each winner at the address on their Entry Form.
- Clubs may enter their winning posters (one from the 3rd - 4th grade division and one from the 5th - 6th grade division) by taking a picture of each and sending the .jpg file to Stephen_G_Wilder@yahoo.com With each picture please include a separate picture of the completed entry form that includes the student's full name, address, phone number, grade, school name, teacher's name and the name of the Optimist Club submitting the entry.
- All entries must be received by Friday, April 3, 2026 to be eligible for judging. Winners will be announced during the April 24-25th 2026 District Conference.

Any Questions - Please contact Poster Contest Chairperson – Stephen Wilder at (224)833-1253 or Stephen_G_Wilder@yahoo.com



Affiliated with Optimist International

Must be provided for each poster submitted for judging

Illinois District Optimist Poster Contest 2026 – Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ IL Zip _____

Phone No. _____ Grade _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Optimist Club Name _____

Must be provided for each poster submitted for judging

Illinois District Optimist Poster Contest 2026 – Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ IL Zip _____

Phone No. _____ Grade _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Optimist Club Name _____

Optimist International Grants are waiting for you to apply!

The Optimist International Foundation (OIF) offers two types of grants to Optimist clubs – Club Grants (more information about that will be available in January 2026) and Childhood Health & Wellness Grants.

This email is being sent to Club Foundation Reps and Club Presidents to share information about the Childhood Health & Wellness grants and to encourage your Optimist club to apply for one of these grants.

You can find the application for Childhood Health & Wellness Grants, as well as directions for completing the grant application, at these links:

https://www.oifoundation.org/downloads/Childhood_Health_Wellness_Grant_Application_Fillable.pdf

<https://www.oifoundation.org/downloads/CHW%20Grant%20Application%20Directions.pdf>

Here are some important things for your club to remember as you consider a project for this grant:

- The application deadline for the first round of these grants this Optimist year is January 30, 2026.
- These are matching grants and can be for \$250-\$1000.
- These grants can be for new or ongoing projects of your Optimist Club.
- There are four focus areas for these grants, with a lot of flexibility as to how projects fit in these categories:
 - Healthy Lifestyles
 - Chronic Diseases
 - Mental Health
 - Disabilities – Physical, Intellectual & Developmental
- Your grant will score better when you have a larger percentage of your members actively involved in the project.
- The project must be completed within one year of when a grant is awarded.

Now is the time for your club to be looking at your projects and deciding how one of them meets the grant requirements. Then fill out your application and bring some of the OIF's money back to your community and your youth. Good luck!

If you have questions, you can reach out to me or you can contact OIF directly at info@oifoundation.org.

Sandi Schmidt
schmidtsandi@gmail.com
309-236-1342

Club Presidents...

Watch your mailbox for important information on the Essay Contest from IL District Essay Chair, Al Hippensteel. A packet will be sent the first week of January.



*Al Hippensteel
IL District Essay Chair
AllanHippensteel@proton.me*



2025-2026 PRESIDENTIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM

CLUB RECOGNITION

Merit Club

- Grow Club by Net +0 members (Maintain beginning October 1 membership count)
- Make a non-restricted contribution to the OIF or CCOF of at least \$100
- Be current on District and International dues and fees

Honor Club

- Meet Merit Club Requirements plus Grow Club by Net +3 members

Distinguished Club

- Meet Honor Club Requirements plus one of the following:
 - Grow Club by Net +15 (inclusive of 3 Honor Club members)
 - Charter a one or more new Clubs

DISTRICT RECOGNITION

Merit District

- Grow District by Net +10 members
- Raise \$7,500 in non-restricted contributions to the OIF or CCOF
- All District reports filed with Optimist International as required

Honor District

- Grow District by:
 - Net+10 members and Build 1 new Club or
 - Grow District by Net +25 (inclusive of 10 members from Merit District)
- Raise \$7,500 in non-restricted contributions to the OIF or CCOF
- All District reports filed with Optimist International as required

Distinguished District

- Grow District by:
 - Net +25 members and Build 3 new Clubs or
 - Grow District by Net +70 (inclusive of 25 members from Honor District)
- Raise \$10,000 in non-restricted contributions to the OIF or CCOF
- All District reports filed with Optimist International as required

Club & District Incentives will be fulfilled through the Optimist Merch Store.

ADDITIONAL AWARDS

Governor Pacesetter Award

- Grow District by Net+15 in membership by June 30. And Charter two or more new adult clubs by June 30.

Builder of Excellence

- Up to 4 Builders of Excellence can be named for each new adult Club, regardless of the number of Sponsor Clubs.
- Up to two Builders of Excellence can be named for a Club within a Club. (Medallion for first BOE with a Ribbon Star thereafter)

Optimist District Junior Golf Dates and Site Announced.

June 8-10, 2026
Red Tail Run Golf Club
Decatur, Illinois



36-hole tournament with 18-hole practice round on June 8 and competition rounds June 9-10.

Ages: Boys and girls between 10 and 18. There are 4 boy divisions and 3 girl divisions.

Entry fees will be determined and announced in January once the Decatur Park District determines their fee structure for the 2026 golf season.

Any club or member desiring information concerning this tournament or the Optimist International tournament in July at Doral Golf Club should contact Bill Wagner who's contact information is listed below. Remember the Illinois District Tournament serves as the qualifier for the Doral Tournament.

Inquiries should be directed as follows:

Bill Wagner
Illinois District Golf Chairman
36 Willow Creek Drive
Highland, IL. 62249
Email: wwagner6@charter.net
Cell phone: 618-401-0681

TAKE NOTE: Important District Dates

Illinois District 2nd Quarter Conference	Registration information out January 1, 2026	January 23-24. 2026 Holiday Inn & Suites East Peoria, IL	Illinoioptimist.org	Nancy Roach-Wilder Governor optimistnancy@gmail.com
District Jr. Golf	Committee is always looking for new members	June 8-10, 2026 Red Tail Golf Course Decatur, IL	www.oijgc-il.dist.org	Bill Wagner, Jr. Golf Chair wwagner6@charter.net
District Land of Lincoln Bulletin	Send articles and pictures for the next bulletin	Articles due February 1, 2026. Issue to be distributed in March via email.	All bulletins can be found at illinoioptimist.org under the "Member Section"	Carol Schlitt, Editor lolbulletin23@gmail.com
District Oratorical Contest	Northern and Southern Regional Contests, by April 10, 2026.	District Contest—April 25, 2026 at 3rd Quarter IL District Conference	www.optimist.org	Northern Chair: Sam Meier sam.meier@edwardjones.com Southern Chair: Pam Werle werlebird@att.net
District Essay Contest	Essays due February 28, 2026 to Al Hippensteel, Essay Chair \$25 entry fee for club winning essay due February 28.	Winning District Essay will be read by the winner at the 3rd Quarter IL District Conference on April 25, 2026	www.optimist.org	Al Hippensteel, Essay Chair AllanHippensteel@proton.me
District Poster Contest	Winners announced at 3rd Quarter District Conference	Pictures of posters due April 3, 2026	Illinoioptimist.org	Stephen Wilder, Chair Stephen_G_Wilder@yahoo.com