

Illinois District Optimist

Land of Lincoln Bulletin

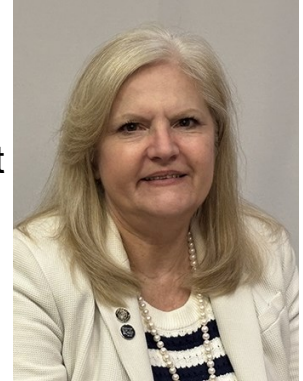


June 2026

Dear Wonderful Illinois District Optimist,

BRAVO to you!

I'm so PROUD of the varied initiatives our 31 clubs are using to lift optimism in our communities. From Buddy Ball, Beer B Que, Battle of the Bands and Basketball Shoot Outs to Holiday Festivals, Food Drives, Avenues of Flags, Public Servant Recognition, College Scholarships, and Child Critical Illness Stipends, we are bringing out the BEST in youth and ourselves.



The international Convention will feature activities being put on by clubs. Would you like to feature your activity in Jacksonville? Email me.

GRANTS Because you put on great projects, a second CLUB GRANT 25/26 opportunity exists. See the club grant information and application on page 5 and present at the 4th Quarter conference, where we will hear from prior club grant winners. At the mid-point of my 25/26 year, it is my great honor, and privilege to getting to know all of you, and I hope that by matching your questions with the potential RESOURCES I can continue to elevate you towards having your best Optimist year possible.

CALENDAR In this issue you see evidence of the great work being done, the names of district contest winners and new members. Also check out the CALENDAR on the back page, and our FEEDBACK FROM YOU section, which compiles the notes from brainstorming we did during the 3rd quarter conference in April.

GRATITUDE And no leader serves in a vacuum. With an abundance of GRATITUDE, I created the 2026 Governors Choice Awards, for our last conference, for certain individuals who have moved me along in this endeavor (while in many cases pulling double duties for the district).

To: Marc Cappel Immediate Past Governor, Growth Chair, Golf Committee: for his heart, his humor and his devotion to making everywhere he is a better place.

To: Allan Hippensteel, Past Governor, President at Fox Valley and District Essay Chair. For keeping the light of Optimism going, everywhere he goes, and for supporting me above and beyond, in every way possible.

To: Charles Mayhew, soon to be Best Past Secretary/ Treasurer of the Illinois District: For selflessly volunteering to be our safety net, for his excellent budgeting and editing skills. And for his availability to train the NEXT BEST Secretary/Treasurer of the district.

To: Carol Schlitt, Past Governor, Bulletin Editor, Membership Engagement, for being my role model and my moral support since day one. For attending every Zoom and keeping communications going as interim secretary. For sharing her Bulletin skills with all of us. Carol's constant support is with me every where I go.

Honorable mentions:

To: James Patrick Schmidt, multiple duties and excellent technology Skills: easy laugh.

To: Sandy Schmidt, Directory Assembly, multiple duties and excellent procedural skills, all while advancing in the Optimist International ranks. For her kind feedback.

To: Adelle Wheeler, for her giving spirit for sponsoring over 6 members in the past year.

To: Bill Wagner, Leadership Chair, Junior Golf Chair, Advisor to the governor, and all around Class Act

To: Stephen Wilder, Assistant to the Governor, for being an extra set of hands in marketing, programming, transportation, event planning and joy maintenance.

In time I hope to RECOGNIZE everyone. You, our valuable members, are the catalyst of the recognition we are gaining. It makes me wonder, how much more could we do? And might we do more without making things harder? I have learned that successful clubs and districts put co-chairs and assistant officers, 2 and 3 deep in various positions. In this way, they build leadership in members, share the workload and unleash more creative potential.

My ask? Talk to your boards this summer about appointing more Co-Officers and Co-Chairs for every activity. Call with questions and I'll be happy to explain how this might work. I'll even provide a You-tube video for motivation.

As always, please call, email or text me with any questions, concerns or suggestions and I will do my best to provide the value you deserve.

Yours in Optimism,

Nancy

Nancy Roach-Wilder

224-305-2257

optimistnancy@gmail.com

Welcome to our New Members

We welcome the following 29 new members who have joined Optimist International since our last bulletin in December. Welcome to the Optimist Family!

New Member	Club	Sponsor
Paris Collingsworth	Des Plaines	Edward Welther Sr.
Mandy Collingsworth	Des Plaines	Edward Welther Sr.
Marial Poladian	Glenview	Kevin Bucklin
Wes Llewellyn	Moline Breakfast	Thom Cornelis
Connie Stevenson	Moline Breakfast	Ken Schneck
Leroy Stevenson	Moline Breakfast	Ken Schneck
Jeff Tilley	Moline Breakfast	John Castree
Debra Welling	Moline Breakfast	Patrick Wendt
Maria Camacho	Sterling	Andrea Rogers
Mark Whiteman	Delevan	Adele Wheeler
Tami Whitemen	Delavan	Adele Wheeler
Barbara Boucher	Springfield Breakfast	Dean Hawk
Donna Hutcheson	Springfield Breakfast	Mark Depue
Amanda Bayer	Belleville	George Santner
Tamara Hardy	Belleville	George Santner
Charles Gray	Belleville	Robert Dintelmann
Angie Lee	Belleville	Robert Dintelmann
Julie Whitney	Millstadt	Kara Rosenkranz
John Whitney	Millstadt	Adam Rosenkranz
Rebecca Diamond	Millstadt	John Touchette
Ron Vallandingham	Millstadt	Peggy Vallandingham
Lawrence West	Pinckneyville	Greg Hale
Bonnie Finger	Alton Area	Laura Shansey
Bill Sloan	Highland	Corey Suter
Steve Aagaard	Highland	Randy Weiss
Jeffrey Jenkins	Highland	Kenneth Carp
Karl Herman	Highland	John Stratton
Rick Bellm	Highland	John Schoen
John Kapp	Highland	Daniel Kapp

Plan now to attend the next Illinois District Optimist Conference

August 21-22, 2026

Holiday Inn & Suites

101 Holiday Street

East Peoria, IL

The August, Fourth Quarter Conference will feature the second 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 in July.

See you there!



2026 IL District Optimist Club Grants

The second opportunity to apply for a club grant this year will occur at the August District Meeting.

Three grants in the amount of \$750, \$500 and \$250 will be awarded at the 4th Quarter IL District Optimist Conference to be held August 21/22, 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 August 1, 2026.
3. A representative from the club must make a 5-10 minute presentation at the August 22, 2026 Illinois District 4th 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 June "Land of Lincoln Bulletin" and will also be sent to each club president by snail mail.
6. Club Grant Application is due **August 7, 2026.**
7. Notification of grant application acceptance will be on August 10, 2026.

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 August 1, 2026.
2. My club will send a representative to present at the 4th quarter IL District Optimist Conference, August 21/22, 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 August 7, 2026 to:

Nancy Roach-Wilder
IL District Optimist Governor
504 Littleton Trail
Elgin, IL 60120

Essay Winner and Oratorical Contestants at 3rd Quarter District Meeting



L to R: Alise Lawler, Essay Contest winner sponsored by Freeburg Optimist Club; Jake Andrezejewski sponsored by Rock Falls Optimist Club; Grace Millman sponsored by Moline Breakfast Optimist Club; John Thompson sponsored by Rock Falls Optimist Club; Lillian Herling sponsored by Belleville Optimist Club; Jordyn Seitz sponsored by Greenville Optimist Club; Elena Dothager sponsored by Greenville Optimist Club

The annual Illinois District Optimist Oratorical Contest was held on Saturday,, April 25 during the Third Quarter Illinois District Optimist Conference in East Peoria. Six finalists—three from the Northern Region and three from the Southern Region competed in the contest with the theme, “The Moment I Realized I Belonged — My Definition of Community”

Participating clubs were Belleville, Greenville, Moline Breakfast and Rock Falls with a total of nineteen contestants.

The winners were 1st place scholarship of \$2500 Grace Millman (Moline Breakfast); 2nd place, \$1500 Jake Andrezejewski (Rock Falls); and 3rd place \$1000 Lillian Herling (Belleville).

Grace will represent the Illinois District at the Optimist International Oratorical Competition in St. Louis at St. Louis University, July 16-17, 2026 . The winner will receive a \$15,000 scholarship.

The annual Essay Contest was conducted in February and this year’s winner was Alise Lawler from the Freeburg Optimist Club. Elise read her essay at the conference and will receive a \$2500 scholarship as the first place winner.

2026 Poster Contest Winners

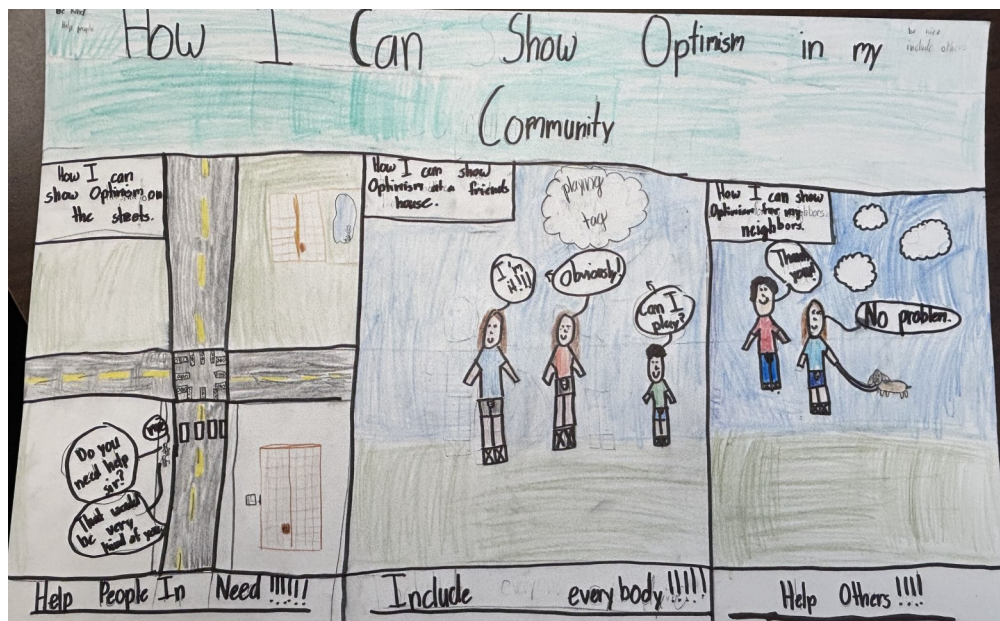
3rd and 4th grade division



First Place—Natalia Kosnierz, 4th Grade, Des Plaines Optimist Club



Second Place—Dawson Morris, 4th Grade, Moline Breakfast Optimist Club



Third Place—Amelia Luitjohan 4th Grade, Highland Optimist Club

5th and 6th grade division



First Place—Sienna Chapman, 5th grade, Des Plaines Optimist Club



Second Place—Nora Harland, 5th Grade, Delevan Optimist Club

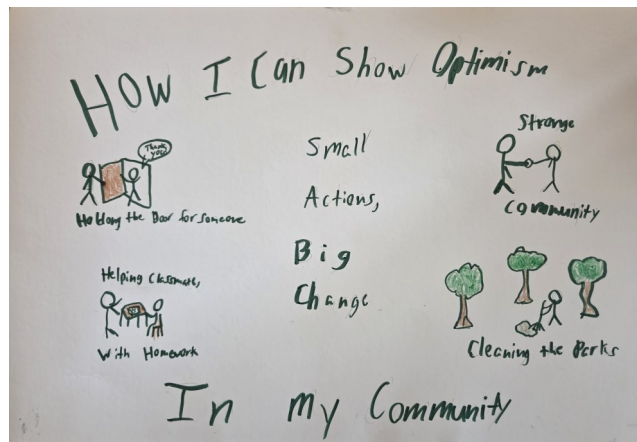


Third Place—Charlotte Stafford, 6th Grade, Clark County Optimist Club

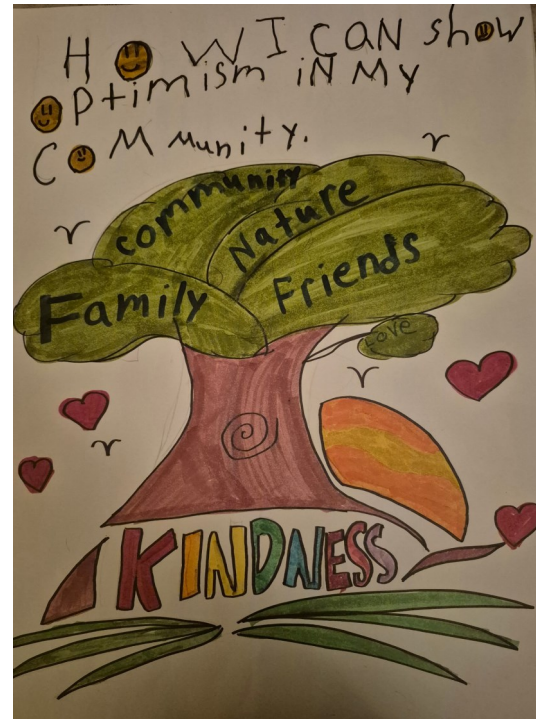
Honorable Mention Posters



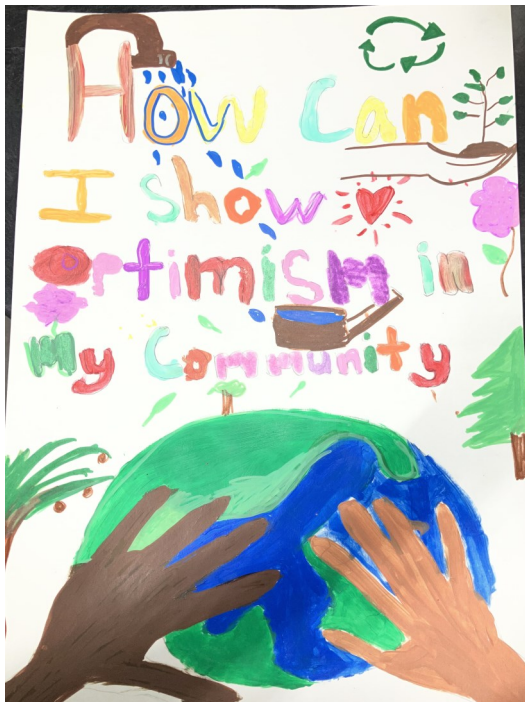
Raelyn—Highland Optimist Club—5th grade



Jace—Freeburg Optimist Club—5th grade



Lacey—Delevan Optimist Club—4th grade

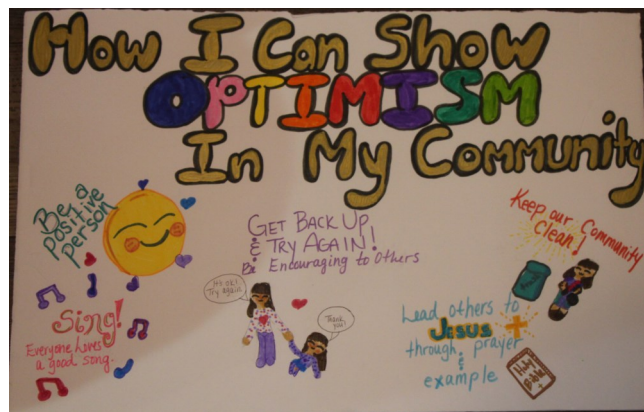


Alaine—Moline Breakfast Optimist Club—3rd grade

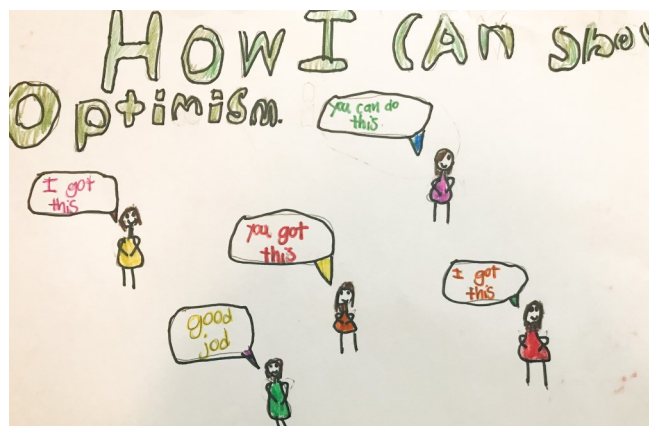


Xarra—Belleville Optimist Club—6th grade

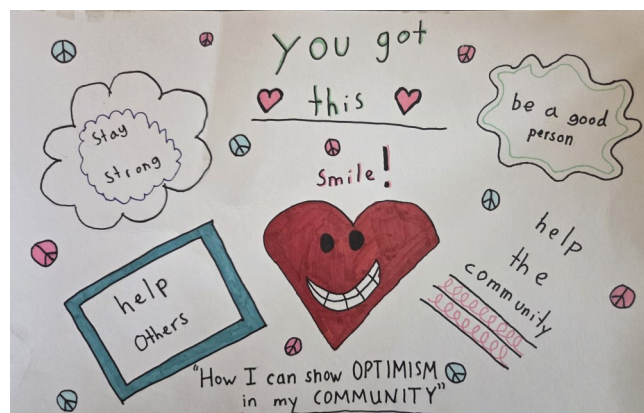
Honorable Mention Posters



Annette—Granite City Optimist Club—3rd grade



Madison—Belleville Optimist Club—4th grade



Emily—Freeburg Optimist Club—4th grade

The Belleville Optimist Club Participates in Belleville Kid's Day

The Optimist Club of Belleville participated in Belleville's Kid's Day on April 11th. The kids enjoyed playing a bunch of fun games and getting prizes.



Granite City Optimist Club Donates Diapers

The Granite City Optimist Club donated diapers and wipes to the Madison County Soup-N-Share Outreach Program in Madison, Illinois, for their bimonthly diaper distribution initiative.

Shown in the picture are Sherrie M. Hare, Executive Director of Soup-N-Share and Paul Hellrich, president of the Granite City Optimist Club.



TAKE NOTE: Important District Dates

Illinois District 4th Quarter Conference	Registration information out July 2026	August 21-22, 2026 Holiday Inn & Suites East Peoria, IL	illinoisoptimist.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 July 1, 2026. Issue to be distributed in September via email.	All bulletins can be found at illinoisoptimist.org under the "Member Section"	Carol Schlitt, Editor lolbulletin23@gmail.com
District Club Grants	Application due August 7, 2026	See page 5 in this bulletin for information and registration form	illinoisoptimist.org	Nancy Roach-Wilder Governor optimistnancy@gmail.com
108th Annual International Convention	Jacksonville, FL	June 28– July 2, 2026 Hyatt Regency	https://www.calendarwiz.com/calendars/popup.php?op=view&id=184250464&crd=optimi	Contact: Ronda H Vaughn Email: ronda.vaughn@optimist.org Phone: 3148811305

Feedback from You

During the 3rd quarter conference we had a brainstorming session where the room was divided into 2 groups. Each group was tasked with coming up with as many answers as they could to the following 2 questions—1) **What is your best advice for new club presidents**, and 2) **What can be done to improve our quarterly District conferences**. After 5 minutes, each group had to choose their 3 best answers to each question. Below are the 6 best answers to each question.

What is your best advice for new club presidents?

1. Let members passion lead
2. Define your roles and responsibilities
3. Decisions at Board Meeting—network after
4. Learn to delegate
5. Complete training
6. Empower committees

What can be done to improve our conferences?

1. More content, club participation, breakouts
2. Communicate sooner and more often
3. Provide incentives to clubs to attend
4. Hybrid meeting options—utilize media
5. More OI speakers
6. OI President meet with District—Zoom or Video