



Nebraska District Optimists



Sandra Allen, Governor
December, 2020
OI 1st Quarter Theme
“Resilience”

Mark Your Calendars!

December 21, 2020

OI Webinar – 7 p.m.

“Getting Started with Instagram for Your Club”

January 9, 2021

Coffee with the Governor
Zoom Event 9:30 a.m.

Academic Decathlon
Regionals

January 18, 2021

OI Webinar - 7 p.m.

“Effective & Fun Meetings – Online, In Person or Hybrid”

February 13, 2021

Coffee with the Governor
Zoom Event 9:30 a.m.

February 15, 2021

Deadline for Clubs to File
Form 990-N

OI Webinar – 7 p.m.

“Club Facebook Basics”

February 19 & 20

Academic Decathlon State Finals

February 26-27, 2021

2nd Quarter Conference
Zoom Event

February 28, 2021

Essays Due to
District Chair Lana Urban
“Reaching Your Dreams by
Choosing Optimism”



Sandra Allen, Governor

Governor’s Message

*“As dry leaves that before the wild
hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle,
mount to the sky,”*

Clement Clarke Moore, “Twas the
Night Before Christmas”

‘Tis the end of first quarter and all
through the state
So much work to do. So many
plans to make.
Optimist Clubs are meeting
with care,
Knowing that Covid is still in
the air.

You haven’t completed all you
had planned.
Challenges lurk all over the land.
Though 2021 is surely nigh,
We still have time to soar to
the sky.

How many members have you
brought in so far?
The more volunteers, the more
effective we are.
Over six million kids each day
we touch.
Just one more member. That’s
not asking too much.

Lieutenant Governors, are your
clubs meeting?
Have they tried Zoom, Facebook
or tweeting?
The Nebraska District works well
together,
Please ask for help to make
things better.

So what’s next? Dues. The
quarterly A&A.
What about contestants for the
District Essay?
Don’t forget Oratorical. It’s
coming up too.
Great opportunities for our
talented youth.

Optimists also improve
themselves.
(Put the philosophy books back
on the shelves.)
The PDP tells you what to do.
It builds confidence and skills for
a better you.

February 27th is our next
conference date.
It’s virtual again so we can all
stay safe.
Check the website for conference
details.
Virtual game ideas? Send us an
email.

Well, that’s all for now. Hope you
feel merry and bright.
**HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL AND
TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!**

©Sandra Coaxum Allen
December 8, 2020



**New Members
In November
(P.S. Two Is too Few)**

Lincoln Friends
Alyssa Atkinson
Casey Boring, sponsor

Omaha
Dave Heineman
Rhonda Heineman, sponsor

**Bringing October's
New Members
Up-to-Date**
Norfolk Noon (10/25/20)
Leonor Fuhrer
Mark Claussen, sponsor

Friends of Optimists
Lincoln (10/31/20)
Rick Thompson

Southwest Omaha (10/31/20)
Edward Kovich
Beryle Lantz, sponsor

Jenny Kovich
Beryle Lantz, sponsor

Nebraska may "not be for everyone," but optimism is for everyone! Thank you for choosing to be a part of this important organization and sharing in the mission.

**8 Miles
8 Transfers**

When the Bellevue Optimist Club disbanded, eight members transferred their membership to the Papillion-LaVista Optimist Club, eight miles away!

Lee Buist
Karen Curry
Patrick Jones
Connie Mansfield
Richard Quinlan
Donald Smith
Steffi Swanson
Paul Zamiska

Happy Holidays!

**December 31st –
The End of 2020 (Finally)
and the
End of Membership
Incentives**

In case you've forgotten, three current incentive membership programs are going away with 2020! If you have a potential member who is: under 30 years of age, or a teacher, or a first responder, encourage him or her to join by December 31st. This will be the last opportunity to take advantage of these reduced initial membership fees for the 2020-21 Optimist year.

**1st Quarter Conference
Recap**

The First Quarter Conference is now history, but the information gained can help move our Clubs and District forward. Thanks to Zoom, the Conference stretched from Pennsylvania to California and into Canada.

The Conference opened with "The Star Spangled Banner" sung beautifully by Dylan Anderson, a Wayne High School student. The invocation was given by District Chaplin, Rev. Kenneth Allen, who was at the Philadelphia International Airport. Special guests were OI President Mark Weinsoff from Santa Barbara, California; Tom Gorman, Great Plains Vice President and a member of two clubs in Minnesota; and Edie Harris, Past Great Plains Vice President and current OI Leadership Chair. Edie is a member of four clubs in Alberta, Canada.

In addition to the special OI guests, eight first timers attended. Angie Birkett, Lincoln West; Portia Cavitt, Omaha; Gwen Foxall, Omaha Miracle Hills; Diana Kincaid, South Sioux City; Jodi McGill, Lincoln West; Helen Ortlieb, Gretna; Ivan Wineglass, Omaha Breakfast; Shelly Witt, Ogallala.

Governor Sandra presented and discussed her goals for the year. OI President Mark addressed bringing fun back to the meetings. He said each meeting should express gratitude, have a positive intent, and express hope. Edie Harris continued the theme of bringing back the fun. She discussed several fun activities that can be accomplished with Zoom. One of the activities involved toilet paper, but the secret to the game will not be divulged here! Harris also recommended doing a Google search for "fun at virtual meetings."

There were four breakout sessions. One session was focused on club growth and incentives. The other morning session was a Q and A about Zoom and Facebook. The afternoon session topics were the Learning Management System and the Optimist International Foundation. Many useful ideas were presented during the four sessions. Thanks to Zoom, those attending were able to join in on the discussions as they would at an in-person conference.

Dear Santa,

All I want for Christmas is a new member for my Optimist Club. I have been a good club member all year!

Good Member
a/k/a Ineffective Recruiter

Dear G. Member,

I am sorry, but a "new member" will not fit in my toy bag. If you are a good club member, you will find your way to new member. Just Ask!

S. Claus



Achievement and Awards For Optimist Year 2019-2020

This year will go down in history for many reasons. Because of the pandemic some clubs were unable to do their normal activities and many did not send in A&A reports, but I am happy to report that many of our Nebraska District clubs continued to adapt and innovate to serve their communities. Four clubs submitted forms for all four quarters: **Lincoln Sunrise** (10,615 points); **Lincoln Evening** (9,923 points); **Lincoln West** (12,800); and **North Platte** (11,270 points). Congratulations to these clubs. Seven other clubs submitted forms for one or two quarters.

Some of the pre-pandemic (1st quarter) activities around the district included: Halloween parties and events, Thanksgiving projects, food pantry collections and donations, bell ringing for charity, and Christmas projects like mitten and hat and pajama drives. And then the world went crazy!

As clubs could not meet or hold events, some transitioned to Zoom meetings and some corresponded by email. Some clubs transitioned to making donations, collecting and donating masks, and participating in the Essay and Oratorical contests, which had to switch to digital mid-stream. Some clubs were able to have modified outdoor activities.

Many clubs had to cancel or curtail their fundraising events this year, putting a strain on budgets and donations. Perhaps a surprise, five clubs who sent in reports gained new members during this time. This serves as proof that our mission can withstand the worst of times as we continue to bring our message of Optimism to our communities.

We are needed in this world more than ever!

I will be modifying the A&A report form slightly and post the first quarter report on the district website in late December. I look forward to receiving reports from even more clubs this year.

Judy Winkler
District Chair
Achievement and Awards

2020-21 Nebraska Academic Decathlon Program

The current year has brought two significant changes - - - First, a new Executive Director has assumed control of the day-to-day operations of the Program.



Her name is Vicki Denniston Reed and her many years of experience as the Academic Decathlon Coach of her former high school provided great preparation for her new role. She has already recruited two new schools into the Program – Elkhorn North High and Elkhorn South High. The theme for the 2020-21 Curriculum is “The Cold War.”

Second, the Program is following the lead of the umbrella organization (United States Academic Decathlon) and all competition events will be virtual. The seven Regionals on January 9th and the State Final on February 19 & 20 will be virtual. For both the Speech Test and the Interview Test on February 19th, volunteers will be needed as judges. Since the Optimist Clubs of Nebraska have been the main sponsor of the Program for its entire 39-year history, Optimist members have been the major source of the volunteers. If you are interested or if you have a friend who is interested, please send the contact information (name, email address and phone

number) to John Anstey. Email address is iranstey@cox.net.

A special thanks goes to the Optimist Clubs who have also provided financial support for the program. These donations are especially important with the current condition of the coronavirus, as many donors are redirecting their donations to organizations dealing more directly with the impacts of the virus. If any club wants to provide a financial donation, please snail mail the contribution to John R. Anstey; 2175 North 124th Avenue Circle; Omaha, NE 68164. If you have any questions, please contact me. Thanks.

John Anstey
District Chair
Academic Decathlon

Optimist International Foundation Overview

“Pony Up and Choose Optimism”
(OI President Mark Weinsoff)

*“We are stronger when we listen,
and smarter when we share.”*
(Ranis Al-Abdullah)

Jan Oord Graves, OI Foundation President, shared this quote with the Optimist International Foundation Representatives. Optimists have an impact on the success of the foundation’s fundraising efforts. Each Club has a foundation representative with the responsibility to share the information needed for member and club participation. With the club members SMARTER, the District will be STRONGER! So it’s time to **Pony Up!**



For those of you who virtually attended the 2020-21 Nebraska District 1st Quarter Conference November 14th, Governor-Elect Cindy Von Fange presented an excellent overview of Optimist International Foundation. Unfortunately she was speaking to the

choir! But fortunately the information is available on the OIF website: oifoundation.org. The OI Learning Management System, LMS@optimist.org, also provides additional detailed information. Be SMARTER!

OIF Revenue Sources

Member Donations, Club Donations, Endowments & Sponsorships, Outside Revenue, and Investments

Member & Club Donation Programs

Dime-a-Day
Women's Philanthropy Council
Presidents Club
Friends of Today
Christian D. Larson Partner
William H. Harrison Society

Club Donations & Recognition

Childhood Health & Wellness
Disaster Relief
356 Banner Patch
In Honor/Memory/Veteran Patch

How OIF Supports OI and Clubs

Scholarships: Oratorical
Essay
World Jr. Golf
Grants: New Club
Disaster Relief
Pass Through Program

Nebraska District Optimists Goal for 2020-21

Unrestricted Donations to OIF: \$10,500!

\$10,500 is about what the OI Foundation returns to the Nebraska District annually! Currently, Nebraska has 1,260 members in 44 clubs. Historically OIF has had an 8% member participation! If 8% of our membership participates in the Dime-a-Day Program (\$50 each), \$5,000 would be raised. If Clubs do the minimal \$100 donation (total \$900), \$5,900 does not make it!! How about 20% participation? That would raise over \$13,000. WOW, we are there! But, it would be a lot more FUN to have 50% (\$33,700) or 100% participation!

This is not much from each member!! Let's share some fun and see what **we can do!!** The Kids deserve it!

Listen - Share - Pony Up - Be Strong

Club Foundation Representatives, members, clubs, District Foundation Representatives - It only takes a Team to do it!!

Beryle Lantz, DFR
District OI Foundation Rep

OI Isn't Just Helping Kids! The PDP Program Can Help You!

We are in full swing into the 2020-21 membership year. Along with engaging in beneficial activities to benefit youth and agencies that provide services to youth in our communities, it is our District's goal to promote Optimist International's Professional Development program, (PDP).

The Professional Development Program can enhance a person professionally as well as personally. It will be up to each member to decide the direction in which they want to grow as to the activities they choose to involve themselves in order to advance through the various Professional Development Levels.

The growth levels are: Bronze, Green, Burgundy, Blue, Black, Purple, Gold, Orange, Yellow, and the advanced levels are Bronze, Silver, and Gold Pins.

Each performance growth level contains the same areas, but the requirements and activities differ. Areas are: Project Management, Marketing, Continuous Improvement, Organizational Knowledge and Culture, and Communication Skills, and Certification.

To receive the certificates and pins the activities must take place during a twelve-month time frame. There is a brochure that

details the Professional Development Program on the OI website. Click on Member Resources, scroll to Leadership Development, and click on Professional Development Program.

We are committed to sharing information regularly about the PDP to ensure that more of our members achieve their PDP levels and receive their awards. If you have questions or ideas to share please contact Tamara Bailey at redvirgo1959@aol.com.

Tamara Bailey
PDP District Chair

Take the "Midnight Train to (Atlanta) Georgia"

Gladys Knight and the Pips may have taken the "Midnight Train to Georgia" but you may want to fly or drive. However you plan to get to Atlanta for the OI Convention, you can reserve your hotel room now.



Go to the OI website, click on Member Resources, and scroll down to Meetings & Convention. Registration for the Convention will open early in 2021. (OI website: www.optimist.org)

Reaching Out

As Nebraska District Club Fitness Advisor, I am reaching out to all the Nebraska Optimist Clubs. My role is to cheer every club on and assist wherever I can. I am hoping that every club is continuing to reach out to your community, as research as shown that it elevates the spirit of both the person acting as well as the recipient of the action.

Do not forget the members of your club that are not able to be

out and about interacting with others. Separation from others can lead to depression. Please drop a card in the mail or make a phone call to brighten their day, updating them on their club and that you are missing them.

I would like to introduce Mary Hatfield, OI Great Plains Region Club Fitness Advisor. She is willing to Zoom in to any of your Club or Zone meetings to share some of the activities that other Optimist Clubs are doing to encourage and revitalize their members in this trying pandemic.

Linda Wheeler
District Club Fitness Advisor

I am the Optimist International Club Fitness Advisor for the wonderful Nebraska District! I have the pleasure of assisting Governor Sandra



Allen and your District Club Fitness Advisor, Linda Wheeler, as we strive to create optimistic service clubs. By "Choosing Optimism," our goal is to ensure that every club inspires hope and a positive vision in youth, their communities and their members! And we're going to have fun doing it!

I am more than willing to assist your District, Zones, and Clubs to have exciting, engaging gatherings - you know - those things we used to call meetings! We can do this even virtually. I really am available to attend your Zoom meetings! I want to be your cheerleader! Together we will motivate all Optimist members to expand on their relationships with each other and their communities.

As Optimist International President Mark Weinsoff has stated, we will lead the way to instill hope in people and build resilience in our youth while creating a more

inclusive and relevant organization.

I am so excited to help all clubs be the best they can be! Together, we're headed toward a banner year!

Mary Hatfield
Mhat123@yahoo.com

Choosing Optimism - World Wide

One of the goals set by Governor Sandra and the District Executive Committee is "To build at least three new clubs within the District and **at least two** international clubs." Good news, half of that goal is close to being achieved!

The **Norfolk Noon Club** is the co-sponsor of the Trinity Optimist Club of Accra, Ghana. It was officially organized on November 8th with 24 members. The Club is the eighth Optimist club in Ghana and the sixth club in Accra.



Picture from Facebook

The **Norfolk Panther JOI Clubs** sponsored the first JOI Club in Ghana, MODEC Academy JOI Club, also officially organized in Accra on the same day.

The **North Platte Club** is in the process of co-sponsoring a new club in Beirut, Lebanon. The process has been slowed as residents have been locked down due to the pandemic. Dave Thelen reported the Beirut Family Optimist Club is hoping to have a Christmas Project for children, but has not yet received information on the project.

Prior to this Optimist year,
Lincoln West and Omaha

Miracle Hills sponsored two international clubs in Nepal. The following articles are updates on the two Nepal clubs.

Optimist Club of ILAM, Katmundo, Nepal

We recently exchanged emails and our club shared what our club is doing and how we are coping with COVID-19. We received the following from their President, Niraj:

"So good to see your email and the way you shared your club activities and involvement. We are very young 12 to 14 clubs and growing here in Nepal. This year we haven't been able to run any projects or activities apart from few online meetings. The pandemic has held us hostage, if I can put it that way. It's just been some 3 years for me in Optimist Nepal. I've been to optimist conference once, in Ottawa in 2018. I belong to Optimist club of ILAM and my wife, Sunita is in Optimist Club of Parbat. Thankfully none of Optimist members are reported to have contacted COVID but some of our relatives have survived the infection though. My far relative uncle and immediate aunt won the battle last week. It's getting close but my God has kept me safe from it.

*By the way, it would be so nice to exchange some greeting cards through pouch, if you will. It might take some 10-15 days by regular postal service. One of the other things I would like to share with you...I and Sunita have a new born baby. She is roughly 1.5 months. We named her Nancy and she has been keeping us busy.
Niraj Dhungel"*

While COVID-19 has certainly changed our lives here, it is interesting to see how it has affected others around the world. Even though Nepal is about

7,600 miles from Nebraska, they are facing many of the same challenges we are at home. Our club recently sent their club a "From Nebraska" basket. We are anxiously waiting to hear that they received it.

Submitted by Judy Winkler, Secretary
Lincoln West Optimist Club

Optimist Club of Nawalparasi Nepal

Recently David Catalan shared an email he and Marvin Wastell received from Shyam Kumar Basyal of their sponsored club in Nawalparasi, Nepal.

"Hope this email finds you in good health and high spirits. I am deeply apologetic for taking so long to get back to you. To be honest, October was quite stressful for me personally so I decided to stay away from social media and my emails as much as possible. I even took a 12-day meditation course (in complete silence and solitude – disconnected from the outside world) called Vipassana (which apparently is the practice through which Gautam Buddha attained Buddhahood). I feel very relaxed and energized after the course and also recommend it to both of you, if you are interested.

Indeed, serving the youth is not easy but I and my fellow Optimists are strongly driven towards our mission. Given the ongoing Covid pandemic and how it has impacted school children especially from the poor communities, my home club - OC Nawalparasi Nepal is initiating a new project called 'CI School'- where we will be serving the educational needs of children from poor communities that have very few means to attain quality education. A concept note for the same is attached herewith. We are raising funds for the project and if you guys could help in any possible way, I would be

extremely grateful. Also, could you please also forward it to your club members and friends.

I promise I'll be better and faster with my communication in the future. Take care of yourself and your family.

Regards, Shyam"

Ed. Note: Following is a portion of the concept note that David and Marvin received with the email. *"With Nepal's education at a standstill at the moment with slim chances of schools' resumption, CI (Community Inspired) School is something that might aid those students who might have no choice other than giving up on their education for this school year. While the demand for online and zoom classes are on the rise, we should not forget that there a large population of school kids in Nepal who have never seen a computer or know what internet means or how to access it. At Optimist Club of Nawalparasi Nepal, we believe CI School can be a great way to support those kids, not only during the pandemic but even after schools reopen. At CI School, the goal is to form groups of students within a local community and provide them with education to not just support their academic future but also provide them with essential skills for a sustainable living.*

What will kids learn at CI School?

Aforementioned, CI will be different from a conventional school in the sense that a lot of emphasis would be given to kids' holistic development. The learning at CI School would range from character development to learning various skills that go beyond the school textbooks. The major learning areas are:

- Moral values and Social skills
- Nepali and English Conversational skills
- STEAM based projects
- Basics of Agriculture
- Environment Preservation and Waste Management...."

COVID Isn't Stopping Optimists - News of Our Clubs

Norfolk Noon's 27th "Operation Christmas Tree" is in full swing. By now the referrals have been made, and the trees and decorations have been delivered to families who otherwise would not have a Christmas Tree.

The **Norfolk Noon Club** received a check for \$2,000 in the form of an **Elder Care Grant** from the Nebraska Community Foundation. The funds will be used to purchase Facebook portals for residents of The Meadows to use for communicating with family members. The funds will be passed through the OI Foundation and should be available for use in December!

Recently **Norfolk JOI** members promoted seat belt use among students at Norfolk Sr. High. Students were encouraged to always buckle up so in a crash, they won't "Kiss the Dashboard!"



I won't "Kiss the Dashboard" in a crash because I always wear my safety belt!

Sign here (write legibly)

Blair Optimists have their Christmas Toy Project in full swing. Collection boxes were placed around Blair for gift donations and the Angel Trees have been set up at Family Fare and Casey's.

North Omaha Optimists usually host a Fall Festival, but due to the pandemic they re-imaged the indoor festival to an outdoor Trunk or Treat event on Halloween. In addition to the usual Halloween treats, a few lucky kids went home with bicycles.

Members of **Lincoln Friends** showed their appreciation for teachers, staff and students, by

“chalking” the sidewalks of Goodrich Middle School, Elliott Elementary, School, and the Don Sherrill Education Center with optimistic messages. The Club appreciates the hard work and challenges the teachers, staff and students are facing during this very difficult school year.



Lincoln Friends President Elissa Fuelberth

The **Friends Club** also hosted a successful and fun virtual Bingo fundraiser for the Lincoln Food Bank on November 20th. As of that date, donations have provided for 1,000 meals, and donations were still being made. Even during the pandemic, this club is finding ways to help the community and to stay in touch with each other.

Fairbury Optimists celebrated Halloween by participating in the community Trunk or Treat event at the Downtown Historic Square. They had a trunk full of treats, but no tricks!

During November, the **Holdrege Optimists** hosted a four-week boys basketball program focusing on basketball fundamentals and player development. In the past the program has been for Phelps County boys in grades 3 – 6, but this year they added boys in grades 7 and 8. They also have their Christmas tree sales set up at Orschelns. The Holdrege Sunmart is donating their profits for tree sales at their store to the Optimist Club. (From Facebook)

The Minden Optimist Club has made plans to optimistically host their annual basketball tournament for boys and girls in grades 5 – 8 on January 23 and 24th. One change that has been made from previous years is that all teams will play on just one of the two days. (from Facebook)

McCook Optimists are also making plans to host their 30th Annual MAC Attack Youth Basketball Tournament for boys and girls in grades 4 – 8 on January 23 and 24th. Each team will play all of their games on one day. (From Facebook)

December is different for **Ogallala Optimists**. Due to the pandemic, they had to change their popular Polar Express tour to a drive-by “Holiday No Tour Home Tour.” Maps of decorated homes will be provided. The good news (being Optimistic as they are) is the “No Tour” tour will give the area residents the opportunity to tour at their convenience. (From Facebook)

Southwest Omaha Optimist Club donated items to be used for crisis packages at Project Harmony. These packages are used for children who have been temporarily placed with Project Harmony as a result of domestic crisis.



l to r: Mycki Nissen, Cub President; and Carla Gries, Club Secretary-Treasurer.

The **Metro Area Youth Foundation's** Autumn Smash

campaign was a success by anyone's measure! As of November 11th, nearly \$50,000 had been raised to “Smash” the negative financial effects childhood cancer has on families with children fighting the disease.” The goal was \$25,000. MAYF celebrated with a virtual celebration to thank everyone involved.

North Platte Optimists have their Christmas tree lot and are ready for customers. They will be selling trees through December 23rd. (from Facebook)

The **Norfolk Club** traditionally has a Christmas Candy Project for the Salvation Army, but again, plans had to be changed. The Salvation Army said a higher priority were hygiene items. The Board voted to use the funds earmarked for the project as a donation to the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army is seeing 9,000 people each month and they expect the need to grow as the COVID numbers grow.

The **Norfolk Club** traditionally adopts a family for a Christmas project. This year the Club will be adopting two families. The Club matches up to \$200 what is donated by club members.

Do You Have Some Thoughts You Would Like to Share with the Nebraska District?

If so, take the opportunity to submit a Guest Editorial to neooptimists@gmail.com. The editorial should be 425 words or less and be optimist in nature. Tell us about your club, or how the club has benefited you, or how the Creed has influenced you!

We are waiting to hear from you!