



Nebraska District Optimists



Sandra Allen, Governor
February, 2021
OI 2nd Quarter Theme
“Happiness”

Mark Your Calendars!

February 15, 2021

Deadline to File Form 990-N

OI Webinar – 7 p.m.
“Club Facebook Basics”

February 19 & 20

Academic Decathlon State Finals

February 27, 2021

2nd Quarter Conference
Zoom Event

February 28, 2021

Essays Due to
District Chair Lana Urban

March 13, 2021

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

March 15, 2021

OI Webinar - 7 p.m.
“What is your Club Marketing
Strategy”

April 10, 2021

A&A Reports Due to District Chair
Judy Winkler

April 15, 2021

District Oratorical entries due to
District Chair Gloria Epps

April 19, 2021

OI Webinar – 7 p.m.
“Take Me to Your
‘Next’ Leader”



Sandra Coaxum Allen, Governor

“I believe we will survive because we live in a time when people are searching for optimism right now. It is needed.” -- Jim Boyd, Optimist International Director of Strategic Growth

As we have been preparing for the Nebraska District 2nd Quarter Conference, we’ve been able to reflect on why we became “Optimists” in the first place. Our optimism has truly been tested as we strive to move forward, even though some clubs have folded, once-faithful members have resigned, and club bank accounts have almost depleted.

We were inspired by a recent article in the Wall Street Journal entitled “Optimist Clubs See Glass Half Full—Even in a Pandemic” yet it is sometimes difficult to exude optimism when the glass begins to look half empty instead of half full. It is especially challenging to live the Optimist Creed as we deal with sickness, social unrest, and fellow Optimists who are ready to

give up. Come on. Admit it. It’s not always easy to “look at the sunny side of everything.”

So what do we do about it? Well, we start by attending our District’s 2nd Quarter *Virtual* Conference on February 27th.

This quarter’s conference will focus on how we can keep moving forward with the same standard of excellence that we have always had. That is, to think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.

We will begin the conference by bringing out the best in ourselves. Our special guest will be Doris Moore, MS, NCC, CPC, LIMHP, the founder and CEO of Center for Holistic Development, Inc (CHD). CHD is a community-based, nonprofit organization that has provided behavioral health-care and education to the greater Omaha community since 2001. A *Friend of Optimists (FOO)* since 2018, CHD brings out the best in youth by conducting several programs that help middle school students develop their social and emotional skills. Doris will challenge us to tap into our individual potential for growth, self-dignity, and hope.

There will be Bingo games and other fun events throughout the day, and we will, of course, have our quarterly district Business

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Meeting -- one more reason for all of our club presidents to attend the conference.

The afternoon events will focus on bringing out the best in our communities. One way we do that is by making sure our clubs remain viable and effective. To that end, we are doing something different this year. Zone Meetings and Super-Zone Meetings will be held in the afternoon as an integral part of the conference. This will be an opportunity for you to interact with your Lieutenant Governor and to exchange community outreach, fundraising, and fun-raising ideas. Nothing can replace having this exchange live and in-person at a district conference, but it's a start. This will also be a great time to address some of the challenges that may be unique to your zone. If you have specific items you want to discuss, please contact your Lieutenant Governor within the next few days.

Our 2nd Quarter Conference will end with a special interpretation of the Optimist Creed as presented by our fellow Optimists. I look forward to seeing you at the Conference. You don't want to miss it!

Sandra Allen, Governor

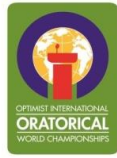
Grant Applications Due March 15th, 2021

Applications and information for matching Optimist International Foundation grants are available on the [OI Foundation website](#). The matching club grants are for NEW projects that will be completed between April, 2021 and March, 2022. The matching grant amounts requested can be \$250 to \$1,000.

The application deadline is March 15, 2021, so there is no time to lose! The winners will be announced on May 10, 2021.

OI Oratorical Contest Is on the Horizon

It is time for our Optimist Clubs to start getting ready for the first rounds of the 2021 Oratorical Contests. The topic, "Healing the World with Optimism" gives young people the opportunity to express themselves in a positive way. There are thousands of dollars of scholarship monies available to the winners.



This year, our clubs must have their competitions completed by **March 27, 2021**. If necessary, Zone runoff competitions should be completed by April 17, 2021. The District competition will be held on May 1, 2021. The Nebraska District must submit one candidate to the final competition by May 15, 2021.

Contestants can be no older than 19 as of October 1, 2020, and not have finished high school. There is no minimum age. Guidelines for Club, Zone and District competitions are available on the [Optimist International website](#). Flyers, brochures and promotion materials are readily available.

Each club that chooses to hold competitions (which can be held virtually), is encouraged to strictly follow the guidelines, while making the competition accessible to all qualifying youth. As a courtesy, clubs that intend to hold competitions are asked to notify the District Oratorical Contest Chair, Dr. Gloria J. Epps, so that she can provide as much support and encouragement to the clubs as possible.

Let's make **this** year, the year that Nebraska District Optimists, *Soaring with Optimism*, support a youngster who takes home the First Place Scholarship!

Dr. Gloria Epps
District Oratorical Chair

THE OPTIMIST International Junior Golf Championships Time to Start Looking for Junior Golfers!

The Nebraska District Qualifying Tournament for the Optimist International Junior Golf Championships (OIJGC) will be held at the York Country Club in York, Nebraska on **May 27th, 2021**. Winners (and other participants who qualify) in each age group will be eligible to advance to the International Tournament at Trump National Doral, Miami, Florida, home of Major PGA Tournaments for over 50 years. We may qualify up to 15 junior golfers from Nebraska to OIJGC, commonly called "The Optimist." Additional golfers from other states may qualify as well.

Fees for our Qualifier are \$65 per participant. Age classifications are: Boys--(10-11), (12-13), (14-15), and (16-18); Girls--(10-12), (13-14), and (15-18).

Clubs, businesses, and individuals often sponsor golfers, holes, etc. Plan now to have your local youth represented and competing in our Nebraska District Qualifier!

Updated additional details and registration information will soon be available on the [Nebraska District Website](#) or contact Dick Raasch, District Committee Chair at: rwraasch@cox.net or (402) 681-9438.

Dick Raasch
District Chair Junior Golf
Championships



Don't forget to
register for the
2nd Quarter
Conference!
Only \$10**

Marketing Minute

Clubs don't generally have a marketing professional to handle their marketing, and Optimist International doesn't have enough staff to handle marketing for every club. But there are resources available! Check out the [OI website](#) under Marketing and you'll find the tools you need. You can find your club logo; the OI Branding Guidelines; sample news releases AND your membership brochure too!

Not sure about social media? Check out the Social Media Strategy [Development Guide](#).

Another great tool is the Optimist International [Marketing Facebook group](#). It's a private group so you have to request to join. This is a place to get those cool photos you see other clubs and districts post to their social media and an avenue for discussion and to ask questions.

Finally, you have the Nebraska District Marketing & Communication Committee! Betty Totten, our newsletter editor, is looking for guest writers. Our Zoom coordinator, Jessica Von Fange is excited to help your club meet virtually until (and after!) things get back to "normal." When we receive news of note, our webmaster Nels Sorensen puts it on the website. And I work to keep our Facebook page interesting. Please don't hesitate to reach out to anyone of us. You can reach us all at neoptimists@gmail.com. See you at the conference!

Diane Siefkes
Marketing &
Communications Chair

****\$10 registration fee for 2nd Quarter Conference will go to help support the Optimist International Foundation.**

2021 Optimist International Convention

Registration for the 2021 Optimist International Convention is now available! Early registration is available until May 1st.



Also now available is the "1st draft" of the Convention agenda.* You will notice the Old Timers Breakfast has been combined with the recognition of the Past Optimist International Presidents and their spouses in the Heritage Optimists Brunch. This change is based on comments from previous conventions that it is too expensive to attend both meals.

The 2021 Convention Committee is working on finding ways to make this year's Convention memorable for all. You will be able to share ideas, meet new and old friends, attend workshops, attend a baseball game, and hear motivational speakers.

Optimist International Leadership is planning on meeting in person in Atlanta, Georgia, but will continue to monitor the guidelines for meeting safely. The 2021 Convention Committee is working with the staff of the Marriott Hotel to assure that there will be social distancing and measures in place to protect all attending. Please know that if the 2021 Optimist International Convention must be canceled due to a spike in COVID cases, you may cancel your registration and hotel reservations.

I plan on attending and hope there will be many Nebraska Optimists joining me in Atlanta Georgia.

Linda Wheeler, 2020-21
OI Convention Ambassador

*[Click here](#) to see the 1st Draft Agenda on the OI website.

COVID-19 Strikes Out the Regional PH&R

Bob Grundman, Tri-Star Sports District Chair, has announced that due to the continuing COVID situation, the Star City Optimist Youth Foundation **will not** be hosting the Regional MLB Pitch, Hit, & Run Competitions this year.

More Optimist Contests, More Opportunities for the Youth

Optimist International offers some newer contests, two of which involves youth ages 11 and under. These two contests, the Optimist Visual Arts Competition and Kids Speak Out should be fairly easy to run and have minimal expense. The topic for both contests is "Choose Happiness."

The **Visual Arts Competition** is at the club and international levels only. There are two categories: painting and drawing. Scholarships are awarded at the international level. First place in each category receives a \$250 scholarship, second place receives a \$150 scholarship and third place receives a \$100 scholarship.



The winners of the club competitions are to be sent to OI no later than May 1, 2021. The submissions will be placed online and Optimist members can vote for their favorite beginning on May 15th. The winning artwork will be featured at the OI Convention in June.

Kids Speak Out is a pre-atorical contest. The levels of competition are school (if you are working with a school), club, and zone. The goal is to prepare more students for the Optimist
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Oratorical Contest. Every chance a student has to speak in front of others helps to prepare them for success as adults.

The above contests can be as elaborate or as simple as you want. The main expense would be in prizes for the winners. For the complete guidelines, visit the OI website (optimist.org). Click on Member Resources, scroll down to Programs, and open Community Activities. Once you get to Programs, if you click on Visual Arts Contest, you can find the forms and access a video on YouTube.

Another contest for students of any age, up through high school, is the **Optimist Photography Contest**. This is a club level contest only. The photographs are to illustrate one line of the Optimist Creed. This is another contest that can be as elaborate or as simple as the club desires. The only major expenses would be prizes for the top winners. The complete instructions can be found on the OI website, Member Resources, Programs, and Community Activities.

A new **Musical and Vocal Competition** has just been announced by OI. Contestants must be between the ages of 11 and under 19 (as of October 1st, 2020) and who have not yet completed high school. This is a performance competition and the music performed must be either original or in the public domain (free of copyright and/or royalty free). The entries must be submitted through YouTube using #OptimistMusical-Happiness2021 no later than March 15, 2021. In addition, email the YouTube link to programs@optimist.org. Be sure to include the [entry form](#), and in the subject line #OptimistMusical-



Happiness2021. The musical submission must be no longer than three minutes.

Scholarships for each category, musical and vocal, are available at the international level. The 1st place winners will receive a \$250 scholarship; 2nd place winners will receive a \$150 scholarship and 3rd place winners will receive a \$100 scholarship. Winners will be announced on March 20th, International Day of Happiness. The topic for the competition is "Choose Happiness."

So, if your club is looking for an activity that can work even with the pandemic, try one of these. The judging of these activities can be done at in-person events or by Zoom. Give them a try!

Become a Certified Optimistic Optimist Club

"We're on a mission to convert Optimist International from a service club organization to an optimistic organization that focuses on service to youth," states President Mark Weinsoff. To achieve this mission, OI has developed a certification process to help every Optimist Club become certified as an Optimistic Optimist Club.

The certification process consists of a five-step pledge form. The pledge asks each club to fulfill five important steps to signify: Optimism, Purpose, Engagement, Relationships, and Accomplishment. To be certified as an Optimistic Optimist Club, make the pledge, take the steps, and your club will be certified Optimistic.

[Click here](#) for the pledge form.

OI in the WSJ

OI President Mark Weinsoff, OI Executive Director Benny Ellerbe, and Director of Strategic Growth

Jim Boyd were interviewed for an article in the *Wall Street Journal*. The article appeared in the print and online editions on February 6, 2021. The article focused on the loss of membership and clubs during the last 10 years and the change of focus for the future.

In addition to changes in society and the losses due to the events of 2020, Benny Ellerbe said that "many of our clubs die because they fail to stay fresh, allowing themselves to become stale in membership." Membership aging out was another reason given for the losses. The average membership age is in the 50s.

Jim Boyd is quoted as saying that "1088 clubs were lost in the past decade and 13 since October..." The losses this year are due to the pandemic. He continued by saying that 640 new clubs have been formed during the last ten years and of those, 17 have been since October, 2020.

OI President Weinsoff said the organization has "started a campaign to put optimism first, ahead of community and civil service." He sees the organization as promoting optimism as a way of life again. Jim Boyd feels the organization's mission has never been more important than it is now. He said, "I believe we will survive because we live in a time when people are searching for optimism right now....It is needed." To read the entire article, [click here](#).

The Nebraska District Family Adds a New Club!

On Thursday, January 21st, the **South Omaha Optimist Club** was chartered. OI President Mark Weinsoff and Governor Sandra Allen installed 22 members, officers, and directors. Mark
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Claussen of Norfolk Noon facilitated the organizing process. Club officers are David Catalán, President; Clifton McEvoy, Vice-President; Daniel Ybarra, Secretary, and Karen Pesek, Treasurer. Directors include Ross Pesek, Pesek Law; Jose Garcia, Mexican-American Historical Society of the Midlands; Richard Harrison, A Midsummer Mural; Ben “Felix” Ungerman, Deputy Chief of Staff for Congressman Don Bacon; and Kimara Snipes, South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance and OPS board member. The Club was sponsored by the Omaha Miracle Hills and Omaha Breakfast Clubs, represented by Al Penner and Dick Raasch.



One End of the Table

Governor Sandra (standing at the far end of the table) inducting new members into the new South Omaha Optimist Club.

The South Omaha Optimist Club will meet from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of each month beginning in February at Pesek Law, 4826 South 24th Street in South Omaha. Pesek Law has generously donated the use of their facilities for club activities and meetings.

David Catalan, President
South Omaha Optimist Club



The Other End of the Table.

l to r: David Catalan, seated at the table
Erik Lopez, Dick Raasch, Scott Sheehan
Standing l to r: Al Penner, Beryle
Lantz, seated Ross Pesek,
Photos by Jose Garcia

11 + 22 = 33 New Optimists In January

Blair

Curtis Kern

Paul Krause, sponsor

Katie Kern

Paul Krause, sponsor

Lisa Thompson

Jordan Rishel, sponsor

Omaha Breakfast

Angela Coleman

Robert Karcher, sponsor

Michael O. Wells

Michael McKee, sponsor

Southwest Omaha

Marvin Wastell

Corinne Wastell, sponsor

Aurora

James McCartney

Kelly Kliewer, sponsor

York

Josh Gillespie

Alex Hildebrand, sponsor

Vicki Northrup

Jack Vincent, sponsor

Ogallala

Corey Crandell

Bud, Morrell, sponsor

Dave Twomey

Bud Morrell, sponsor

South Omaha Optimist Club Charter Members

Gregory Barton-Perea

David Catalan

Ignacio Chavez

Jose F. Garcia

Soledad Godinez

Richard Harrison

John H. Jeanetta

Deana Lara-Perea

Erick Lopez

Clifton McEvoy

Val McPherson

Blanca Mejia

Marcos Mora

Rigoberto Perez

Karen Pesek

Ross Pesek

John Prouty

Donald J. Rashid

Scott Sheehan

Kimara Snipes

Ben “Felix” Ungerman

Daniel Ybarra

The Nebraska District is pleased to welcome all 33 new members. By joining an Optimist Club, either a new club or an existing club, you will be helping to make a difference in the youth and your community. Thank you for helping to share the Optimist Vision.

*Have you invited
someone to share
the joy of Optimism
at a meeting?*

Club News - Past, Present, & Future

Looking Back (old newsletters)

Recently I was looking through some old District Newsletters, and I read that in 1992, the **Optimist Club of West Omaha** periodically featured information on the history of their club in their club communications. Since I was enjoying my "Looking Back" I thought others might also.

In 1991, the **Grand Island Optimist Club** changed their meeting format. The Club President now had one minute, (yes, that is correct, one minute) to conduct the business portion of the meeting. According to the information, this had been an early practice of the club and they were returning to it in hopes of making the meetings more enjoyable and to increase attendance. It must not have worked as the Grand Island Club is no longer with us!

The **Omaha Optimist Club** (1992) collected 81 pieces of used luggage for Child Protective Service. So sad to say that children sometimes still need to be removed from their homes for their own protection nearly 30 years later!

Also in 1992, the **Omaha Riverview Club** hosted a "Bell, Book & Gavel Scavenger Hunt." (Do you remember this club? I admit that I do not.) The bell was the club bell, the book was the "Gray Book", and the gavel, was naturally, the club gavel. Unfortunately there were no sightings of Kim Novak or James Stewart.

Next month if space permits, I will "Look Back" again.

Betty Totten
District Newsletter Editor

Looking at the Present

Last month the **South Sioux City Optimist Club** honored the South Sioux City Police Department during Law Enforcement Appreciation Week by taking healthy snack items to them. (From Facebook)



l to r: Cheryl Malcom, Linda Brostadt, SSC Police chief Ed Mahon

Thanks to the **Holdrege Optimist Club**, with the help of community, through the Optimist Toys for Tots program they were able to serve 55 families and 125 kids during the Christmas season. It was reported on Facebook that this was the largest number ever served during their annual program.

The **Norfolk Noon Club** provided treats for families from the Little Panthers Preschool who came to view entries in the preschool's Snowman Building Contest. If you are thinking that snow was used to build the snowmen, you would be wrong! Anything BUT snow could be used. (Check out the pictures of the creative snowmen on Norfolk Noon's Facebook page. They are amazing!)

Norfolk Noon's Board of Directors approved a \$500 donation from their Childhood Cancer Campaign fund to help support the family of a local 3-year-old diagnosed with cancer.

Lincoln Evening Optimists donated \$1,000 to the Lincoln Food Bank. The \$1,000 donation will fund approximately 3,000 meals that can be given to area families in need.

Southwest Omaha Optimists were among the many members of various clubs who rang bells for the Salvation Army or other charities during the Christmas season. However, not many clubs can boast of having two past District Governors ringing bells at the same time.



l to r: Beryle Lantz (2018-19), Marvin Wastell (2015-16)

A Look at the Future

Lincoln Evening Optimists are being optimistic and are looking forward to and making plans for providing concessions at the Pinewood Bowl's theatrical production this summer.

Norfolk Noon is making plans for the implementation of "Prime Time Online" which will begin on March 23rd. Usually this is an in-person event and usually there are two or more offerings but due to the pandemic, this will be the only Prime Time offering in Norfolk this spring and one of just a few in the state!

Don't forget to register for the virtual 2nd Quarter Conference!