



# Nebraska District Optimists

Linda Wheeler, Governor

March 2020



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## Governor's Message

The Nebraska District Leadership team had pulled together a 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference full of information and activities. The JOI (Junior Optimists International) would have had their annual Convention alongside our Conference.

The OI Leadership sent a message which stated "effective immediately, all District Conferences and meetings should be postponed or cancelled through at least April 30, 2020." OI said clubs must consider the health of their members, family and friends. We are encouraged to emphasize proper hand washing and hygiene, avoid handshakes and hugs as greetings, and practice social distancing.

An Optimist from Colorado has moved to Sidney and is interested in starting an Optimist Club. Do you know someone in the Sidney area who may be interested in joining an Optimist Club? Please share that person's name and phone number so we can invite them to learn more about Optimists and the value that an Optimist Club can be in their community. Also, we will need

two (2) clubs willing to sponsor and support the Sidney Optimist Club once it is formed. The District leadership has considered and attempted to reach out to the Sidney area and I am hopeful that we will be successful in bringing an Optimist Club to this area. Please let me know at [lawheelz@netzero.net](mailto:lawheelz@netzero.net) if you have any potential members or would like more information on sponsoring the club.

Registration is now open for the OI Convention in Chicagoland. The early registration fee is available until May 1<sup>st</sup>.

There is still time to recognize a club member who "Makes A Difference" in your Club and community as well as to report your club activities since October 1 in the Pacesetter Engagement forms that are due March 31, 2020. If you have misplaced the forms, they are available on the Nebraska District website, ([nebraskaoptimists.org](http://nebraskaoptimists.org)).

The Club Officer-Elect Report (COER) can be found on the OI website ([optimist.org](http://optimist.org)) under Key Resources; click on General Member Resources, click forms, and it is the first form listed. All Club Officer Elections must be reported by May 20, 2020. If your club is not holding Officer Elections until the fall, please enter your current club officers in the Club Officer-Elect Report and update it following your club elections.

Unfortunately since the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference had to be cancelled, I hope all of you stay well, support each other and your community. Hopefully with all the

measures that have been put in place, the Coronavirus issues will be lessened and the District Convention will not be affected.

Linda Wheeler

## Dates to Remember!

**March 30, 2020**

Pizza Ranch Fundraiser  
South Sioux City  
4:30 pm – 8:30 pm

**April 3, 2020**

**Cancelled**

Huskers vs Heroes Basketball  
Game

**April 3 – 5, 2020**

**Cancelled**

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference  
&  
JOI Convention

**April 10, 2020**

A&A Reports Due

**April 15, 2020**

Deadline for clubs to submit  
Oratorical winners to  
District Chair, Jon Conyers

**April 18, 2020**

**Postponed**

**Tentatively scheduled for June 6,  
dependent upon location  
availability**

Siouxland Optimist Summit

**April 20, 2020**

Webinar "Utilizing Zoom as a  
Digital Communication Tool"  
7 pm

**April 26, 2020**

Nebraska District CCDHH  
Contest  
Clifton Center, Lincoln

## The “Whys” Behind the Proposal!

The Nebraska District Finance Committee is proposing increasing the District Dues \$1 per quarter which would raise the District dues to \$15 per year. There was to be a breakout session at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference to answer questions. The rationale for this proposed dues increase is the District has not increased dues in the past 23 years, but unfortunately the costs associated with the District have not remained as they were 23 years ago.

Many District Optimists have expressed concern about the rising cost of attending the District Conferences and Convention. As everyone is aware, the cost of food, gasoline, and lodging has increased over the past 23 years. Currently the conference centers and caterers are charging 18% gratuity on food and beverages plus 5.5% NE Sales Tax. One gallon of coffee or tea costs the District \$22.00 and with gratuity and tax, the cost is \$27.11. An average conference beverage use is 4 -5 gallons. Meals are also charged the same gratuity and tax. The District is charged for the number of meals that are given to the site **prior** to the event. If someone or a group who had made reservations but do not attend or stay for the meal, the District will still have to pay for those meals.

The District pays for the Governor, Secretary-Treasurer, Official District Guest and the Hospitality Suite, which is to be covered by the registration fees to the Conferences or Convention.

Not all conference centers provide microphones and projectors for free or have enough equipment for the District. The District has been fortunate in the past that several members loan the

use of their projectors, however no one has microphone equipment to loan to the District. Conference centers charge fees of \$50 to \$75 for equipment. To complicate matters, Optimist International rules for the Oratorical Contest require a lapel mike for the contestants. As a result, the District is looking at a rental fee or purchasing the equipment.

In addition to the previously mentioned items, there are other administrative expenses. Cut-backs have been made through the years, but as we all know, there are always expenses to running a household or an organization.

## And Your Officers Are???????

Are you talking among your club members and taking applications from them to run for club office in May?



**CLUB OFFICER ELECTION REPORTS (COER) ARE DUE TO OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL BY MAY 20.**

Completion of these reports in a timely manner is critical so that Optimist International and the Nebraska District have accurate officer information, as well as meeting time and place on file.

Now is the time to speak with club members, encouraging them to run for office. Be on the front line as we all strive to work to strengthen our kids and communities. For questions or assistance, Contact Carla Gries at [dcgries@cox.net](mailto:dcgries@cox.net) or at 402-658-2321.

Carla Gries  
Governor's Assistant

Don't forget to  
save pop can tabs!

## 9 Clubs Earn an A(&A)

First quarter reports were submitted by 9 clubs: North Platte, Lincoln West, Lincoln Evening, Lincoln Sunrise, Holdrege, Columbus, Omaha Breakfast, Wayne, and Seward. Please stay tuned for highlights from these reports in the next newsletter.

Second quarter (January-March) reports are due soon. Please send them to Chair Judy Winkler by the end of April. Extra points will be awarded to clubs submitting reports by April 10. If your club did not submit a first quarter report, you are welcome to include your October-December activities on your second quarter report. Report forms will be posted on the District website and Judy will send forms to club presidents and secretaries.

You might wonder why you should take time to fill out these reports: These reports are a great way for you to keep track of your clubs achievements.

- They help the district with planning.
- They may spark ideas for other clubs.
- They are fun to do!
- They only take a few minutes if you track your events (I use a spreadsheet to quickly record items each month, our meetings, youth events, district and zone participation, etc.)

Judy Winkler  
A&A Chair  
[jwinkler@neb.rr.com](mailto:jwinkler@neb.rr.com)

## February Was A Good Month!

We as a District brought five new members in to our organization. Congratulations to the members who introduced and encouraged these volunteers to "sign up." They were: Jordan Rishel, Garth Brown, Ann Beckenhauer, Vern Bright, and Spencer Holzfaster. Special recognition goes to Garth Brown, who recruited a new member 14 days after becoming a member himself. He is a Super Star!

It is with great sadness we must remove the name of a valued friend and member, Past Governor Roger T. Simmons of the Optimist Club of Lincoln. We are also sorry we have deleted from our rosters the names of those who have moved: Randall Lanning, South Sioux City Club; Brendan Moody, Lincoln Sports Complex Club; and Amy Woita, Lincoln Sports Complex Club.

To some, "recruit new members" seems a bit insensitive or harsh, like head-hunting; to make it seem less impersonal, "sponsor new members" has been substituted. This has been a little off-putting to newer members because their interpretation of the word *sponsor* denotes a financial obligation. That is easily understood since the dictionary lists synonyms as: subsidizer, benefactor, guarantor, backer, or underwriter and they are not prepared to make that type of commitment. So, maybe we should say what we mean, ASK/INVITE NEW MEMBERS and be credited as their INTRODUCER.

Regardless of what you call it, we need more members to serve the youngsters of our communities. Please do whatever you can do increase our numbers.

On that subject, did you know that you can recruit members for clubs other than your own and receive credit in your name? Invite friends, relatives, and colleagues to become members in their local club. Notify Optimist International of the new member's name and club number AND your name and club number or contact the District Membership Chair for assistance.

Judith Kluge  
Membership Chair

## Big Changes - Pitch, Hit, and Run

Major League Baseball has changed the structure of the Pitch, Hit, & Run contests by eliminating the Sectional contests. Invitations to the Team



contests will be based only on local results. ALL registration will also be done online. Each local host organization must apply online at <https://www.mlb.com/pitch-hit-and-run/host-a-competition>.

Once the host is accepted, MLB will ship kits and create a registration page each of your contestants will need to use, either in advance or at the contest site. You will still need to report the participant scores with their registration number.

This is another way clubs can provide opportunities for success at a minimal cost. It all starts by applying as a host!

Bob Grundman  
grundman@inetnebr.com

## "Thank You"

A big "thank you" goes to you for volunteering for the Nebraska Academic Decathlon Program. The Nebraska Academic Decathlon (NEAD) Program has only survived for 38 years because of the help of the thousands of volunteers at the Scrimmage level, Regional level and State Final level. Over the years, these volunteers remind me of a part of my favorite poem. The part is "Nothing in the world is yours to keep. You may have, but not hold. In the end, you receive only that which you have given." My wife and I believe you will receive a large return because of your willingness to help this educational growth program for high school students in Nebraska.

The 2020-21 year will have a new Lead Executive Director - Ms. Victoria Deniston-Reed. She will need the help of many volunteers. The State Final (which requires the largest number of volunteers) will be held on February 19th (evening only) and 20th on the campus of Creighton University.

The current Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator (Ms. Marguerite Hansen) has agreed to serve that role again in order to help Ms. Deniston-Reed. Therefore, if you want to save her some time in reaching out to individuals to volunteer, please consider contacting her via her email address, [redhead\\_712@hotmail.com](mailto:redhead_712@hotmail.com).

Thank you again for your assistance.

John R. Anstey, Ph.D,  
NEAD Executive Directorship  
Team Member

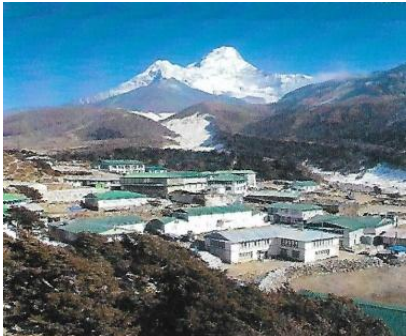
*Thank you John  
for your years of  
leadership!*



Q. How many pop can tabs in a foot?

## Did You Know Two Nebraska Clubs Have Gone International?

Yes, we do so many things well in Nebraska: ex. Husker Nation, Runzas, Kool-Aid, and so much more, but two of our Nebraska Clubs have expanded their horizons. They have sponsored two of the seven clubs in Nepal!



Last summer, the Lincoln West Optimist Club sponsored the Optimist Club of ILAM, which is located in Katmundo, Nepal. Early this year, the Omaha Miracle Hills Optimist Club sponsored the Optimist Club of Nawalparasi, Nepal.

Sponsoring an International club provides opportunities to:

**Learn** about a different culture connecting with like-minded people.

**Help** spread the mission of OI in areas where there currently is no presence.

**Open** the doors to new friendships through electronic media platforms, including Zoom, Facetime, and WhatsApp.

**Become** a mentor by providing guidance about project development and requirements.

As a sponsoring club, you will be expected to have a small committee charged with working with the new club overseas via an

electronic relationship. (No, you do not need to travel to Nepal.) Our Miracle Hills Optimist Club Zooms with the club from Nepal at 9:30 pm one Friday a month when it is 8:30 am in Nepal. Sponsor Clubs are asked to help the new club overseas by paying the annual affiliation of \$225 in US dollars and a commitment of 3 years is preferred. The sponsoring club is awarded new club building credit.

If you do not feel like climbing Mt Everest, there are clubs available to sponsor in other countries. The Optimist Clubs of Lincoln West and Omaha Miracle Hills invite you to **EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS!!**

Carla Gries  
Co-Editor Distric  
Newsletter

## Columbus Optimists Applied and They Recieved

In 2019, OI announced a Childhood Health and Wellness Grant designed to increase the physical activity of youth. The Platte County Lifestyle Coalition and the Columbus Optimist Club partnered with Angie Fehringer, and were awarded a \$500 grant.

The Marathon Running Club was started in the fall of 2018 at St. Isidore Elementary School by Angie Fehringer and other parent volunteers. The grant money was used for the Marathon Running Club and was expanded to include St. Bonaventure Elementary School. The program was designed for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders who met once a week to walk/run for 45 minutes after school.



A half mile course was mapped around the schools. After each lap was completed, the kids were given popsicle sticks to track their distance. At the end of each 45 minute session, the distance in miles was recorded and accumulated over the ten week session. Water bottles were provided to the students and stickers were given to them once the following distances were achieved: 6.2 mi, 13.1 mi (half marathon), 18 mi, and 26.2 miles (marathon).



There were 68 total kids who participated in the running club. Twenty-nine of the 68 kids achieved the Marathon goal! The total miles ran between the two schools was 1,550.5 miles. Perhaps one of the participants said it best when he said, "I like the challenge of the Running Club and really enjoy running with my friends."

If you are interested in starting a running club, contact Betty Earley at Columbus Optimist Club.

Betty Earley  
Columbus Optimist Club

**A.** 12 tabs = 1 foot  
63,360 pop tabs = 1 mile  
Can we get ½ mile  
of tabs by convention?

## A Brief History of Optimist International

**Part 4:** At the first quarter conference we looked back at the early history of our international organization and learned that the first Optimist Club was formed in Buffalo NY in 1911. Optimist International was formed in 1919 and the first convention was held in Louisville, Kentucky. The Creed was adopted in 1922, and from the beginning the clubs directed their major efforts in service to youth. The Oratorical Contest began in 1928 and the organization did well during the war years when millions of dollars were raised in war bond drives sponsored by the Optimists.

The history review for this quarter begins in the 1950's when clubs were becoming increasingly well-known for their efforts and youth service, and new programs were born:

- Optimist-sponsored boys' homes were created when a young clergyman in San Antonio called attention to the homeless and neglected boys who were sleeping under bridges and on the streets.
- April 1953 – Bike Safety Week began
- 1955 – the 1000<sup>th</sup> club was chartered.
- 1957 – Youth Appreciation Week began to recognize children and teenagers

During the 1960's a campaign was launched to work against pornography reaching school-age children through the mailbox; and it might be noted that now our programs are addressing internet safety.

- 1963 – Optimist Youth Clubs was expanded to include Octagon Clubs for high school students.

- 1964 – Stay in School program was created to help reduce the number of high school drop-outs.
- 1965 – Respect For Law program was undertaken to combat apathy toward crime and was created with cooperation from the FBI and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- 1968 – Golden Anniversary Celebration, appropriately in Louisville, KY where the first Convention had been held. Louisville was also the host city for our Centennial celebration last year.

In 1971 there were nearly 3000 clubs and 105,000 members.

- The Optimist International Foundation was put in place
- Tri-Star Sports Program was created
- President Nixon signed the first Youth Appreciation Proclamation

In 1972 the motto was changed to "Friend of Youth" to reflect service to both boys and girls

- The 3000<sup>th</sup> club was founded
- Society began to realize environmental issues were a concern and the Optimist response was the L-I-F-E program (Living Is For Everything)
- Optimists became the first service club to recognize the need to combat syphilis and gonorrhea by creating a program called AVOID
- In 1978 sponsorship of what is now Optimist Junior Golf Championships began
- Help Them Hear program began to provide support for people with hearing impairments

The April issue will feature "An Optimist Moment from Our History." The Brief History of OI will continue in the May issue by taking us into the 1980s and 1990s as we celebrate our 100 years of service to youth.

The above is from a presentation by District Historian Ardis Moody at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Conference.

### Meet the Fab Five - February's New Members

**Blair**

**Garth Brown**

Sponsored by Jordan Rishel

**Katie Henn**

Sponsored by Garth Brown

**West Point**

**Vincent Knight**

Sponsored by Ann Beckenhauer

**South Sioux City**

**Jessica Howe**

Sponsored by Vern Bright

**Paxton**

**Jared McFadden**

Sponsored by Spencer Holzfaster

### Keep on Pulling

Even though the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference was cancelled, keep saving the pop can tabs. for Ronald McDonald Houses. Many families cannot afford the \$5 for each night's stay, and this is where the tabs make a difference. The money received from recycling helps to defray the cost as no family is turned away for inability to pay.

Only the tabs are collected because they are made of a different and more valuable type of aluminum than the can and they are easier to store. If you haven't started pulling the pop tabs, now is a great time to start!

## Optimists Making a Difference

**Norfolk Noon Optimist Club** voted to donate \$500.00 to the family of an elementary student at Westside Elementary who is being treated at UNMC for brain cancer. The JOI Clubs will do a half-match (\$250.00). It was decided to offer a \$1,000.00 match to encourage high school students to give during the "Battle of the Sevens" fundraiser to be sponsored by JOI at the Norfolk Sr. High this spring!

**Norfolk Morning's** Valentines for the Elderly Is History. Chairpersons Jerry and Elaine Holmberg contacted public and private schools and asked 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to make Valentines for the Norfolk nursing homes, Norfolk Veterans Home, and the nursing homes in Battle Creek, Madison, Pierce, and Stanton and for Norfolk Assisted living facilities for this annual event. Over 600 Valentines were made. The Club sorted the Valentines and delivered them to the care centers.

**Fairbury Optimists** hosted a club social as way to honor the top three local essay winners and their families. The evening included a catered Italian dinner and "Let's Make a Deal." The event closed with the winning student reading her essay.

The **Ogallala Optimists** gave area youth a chance to shine on stage. The Club sponsored the

Missola Children's Theatre Production of "Beauty Lou and the Country Beast" and 64 area youth were involved with the play. The Optimist Club housed the actor/directors for the week and helped take tickets and announcements the day of the performances. The club donated the ticket sales and donations to the Ogallala Regional Arts Club. Club President Bud Morrell commented that it is always a fun time for the kids as well as the Optimists.

Each February, the **Seward Optimists** help the Seward Kiwanis sort food for the Kiwanis Back Pack program. The Optimists chose February as their month to help so they could pack boxes of Valentines for the children to have for their class Valentine parties. Lana Urban said that it is a fun and worthwhile project and the Optimists have the opportunity to meet "other servant leaders of the community in the Seward Kiwanis Club."

The **Optimist Club of Lincoln** and the **Lincoln Evening Club** donated a total of \$400 to a special PE unit on roller skating at Saratoga Elementary School. The vendor provided a covering for the gym floor, skates, helmets, and instructions for the students, many of whom never had the opportunity to learn to skate. According to everyone, the unit was a great success. The donation of \$400 was approximately half the cost of the entire unit.



## Lincoln Mayor Declares February Optimist Month in Lincoln

Lincoln Mayor, Leirion Gaylor Baird, felt one day was not enough to celebrate all that the Optimist Clubs do for the youth so she chose to declare February Optimist Month in Lincoln Nebraska. Witnessing the signing of the Official Proclamation were Aaron Drury, President of Lincoln Friends Optimist Club; Sean Erickson, Lincoln Sunrise Vice-President; Kailen Kluge, Optimist Club of Lincoln President; and Crystal Masters, Lincoln Evening President;

Judith Kluge



Front row – Aaron Drury  
Back row, l to r – Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird, Sean Erickson, Crystal Masters, Kailen Kluge



**If you made a hotel reservation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference, don't forget to CANCEL your reservation!**

## Zone Membership Scorecard

### October 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

Zone 8 = 232 vs. Zone 6 = 230  
Zone 2 = 136 vs. Zone 7 = 133  
Zone 4 = 148 vs. Zone 9 = 147  
Zone 1 = 198 vs. Zone 3 = 157  
Zone 5E = 32 vs. Zone 5W = 46

### January 1 -2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Zone 8 = 207- \* vs. Zone 6 = 212- \*  
Zone 2 = 124- \* vs. Zone 7 = 132- \*  
Zone 4 = 147- \* vs. Zone 9 = 145- \*  
Zone 1 = 198 vs. Zone 3 = 156- \*  
Zone 5E = 32 vs. Zone 5W = 44- \*

### February 1

Zone 8 = 209+\* vs. Zone 6 = 209- \*  
Zone 2 = 118- \* vs. Zone 7 = 133+  
Zone 4 = 147 \* vs. Zone 9 = 145\*  
Zone 1 = 198 vs. Zone 3 = 155- \*  
Zone 5E = 32 vs. Zone 5W = 45+\*

### March 1

Zone 8 = 209\* vs. Zone 6 = 196- \*  
Zone 2 = 115- \* vs. Zone 7 = 133  
Zone 4 = 146- \* vs. Zone 9 = 146+\*  
Zone 1 = 200+ vs. Zone 3 = 155\*  
Zone 5E = 32 vs. Zone 5W = 45\*

\*indicates – in membership since October 1

Red +/- indicates change from preceeding month

NOTE: Zones must be + in membership in order to competition.

Questions concerning the Zone Membership Scorecard should be directed to Judith Kluge, Membership Chair

## Message from MLB, Forwarded by Bob Grundman

**“Hello Partners, Parents and Community Leaders:**

**Due to the national emergency created by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have decided to cancel high-attendance, youth-focused events and activities through April 2020, including all local and regional Pitch, Hit & Run and Junior Home Run Derby competitions.** This decision, which does not come easily, was made in light of recommendations by federal and local authorities to postpone large group gatherings as our nation looks to suppress the spread of this disease. We will be in communication should there be any opportunity to re-schedule these events....

Sincerely,

Tony Reagins, Executive Vice-President, Baseball & Softball Development Major League Baseball”

Governor Linda received the following Thank You Note from Margaret Simmons.

Linda and Nebraska Optimists,

Thank you so much for the card with all the signatures. It was so appreciated and as were the ones that were able to be at the memorial service for Roger. He was an Optimist to the end even if he could not attend all of the meetings and events. Thanks again.

Margaret Simmons and Family