



# Nebraska District Optimists



Sandra Allen, Governor

March, 2021

OI 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Theme

“Happiness”

## Mark Your Calendars!

**March 19, 2021**

Virtual Bingo Benefiting  
The Lincoln Food Bank – 7 p.m.  
Lincoln Friends Optimist Club

**March 20, 2021**

\*\*International Day of Happiness  
OptiForum - Music Makes  
People Happy 10 a.m.  
Happy (Virtual) Bingo 1 p.m.  
Happy (Virtual) Karaoke 7 p.m.

**March 27, 2021**

Club Oratorical Contests should  
be completed

**March 31, 2021**

LMS training deadline for  
**current** club officers

**April 10, 2021**

A&A Reports Due to District Chair  
Judy Winkler  
Coffee with the Governor  
9:30 a.m.

**April 15, 2021**

District Oratorical entries due to  
District Chair Dr. Gloria Epps

**April 24, 2021**

District CCDHH Contest  
Virtual event  
District Chair Mark Claussen

**April 30-May 1, 2021**

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference  
Virtual event

\*\* see article in this issue



Sandra Coaxum Allen

*“Spring: a lovely reminder of how  
beautiful change can truly be.”*  
Anonymous

I am so happy that spring is almost here! Now don't get me wrong. I have grown accustomed to the freezing Midwest temperatures. The winter brings the holidays and the promise of a new year. The snow can be amazingly beautiful! But there is something about spring that always makes me happy.

One of the reasons I like spring is that it represents a period of transition and new beginnings; a period of transition between the frigid winter and the long, hot days of summer. Fresh buds bloom on trees. Gardens begin to flower. Many animals are born in the spring when temperatures are warmer and food is plentiful. The earth seems to come to life again. Yes, spring is a time to renew and refresh.

In thinking about this, I remembered an OI program called “Renew, Refresh & Revitalize”. Through this program, clubs find ways to bring life back into their service. That is a challenge many of our clubs are facing right now as we transition from the way we did things in 2019 to the way we *will* do things in 2022.

The end of March will mark the midpoint of the 2020-2021 Optimist year. We still have a great opportunity to bring out the best in our kids, in our communities, in ourselves, and in our clubs. But we must first renew, refresh, and revitalize.

**RENEW.** According to the Oxford Dictionary, renew means “to resume an activity after an interruption.” Some of our clubs have not met together in almost a year. Now is a good time to optimistically make plans for meeting again in person. The beginning of spring might also be a good time for club presidents to make personal contact with individuals in your club, especially those you haven't heard from in a while. Invite them to attend the next club meeting – whether virtually or in person. Remind them of some of the activities your club will be involved in this spring. Ask for their help or their advice on a new idea you have for the club. Encourage them to renew their  
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commitment to help bring out the best in youth.

Every club president should have received a Nebraska District Directory. If you have not received one, please contact your Lieutenant Governor. Take advantage of this great tool.

**REFRESH.** The best place to start the refreshing process is among our club leadership. It's always appropriate to freshen up your leadership skills and to check-in to make sure you're keeping your club on the right track. OI has a fantastic training and refresher course in place. The LMS (Leadership Management System) includes online training modules for the Club President, Club Secretary/Treasurer, Club Foundation Rep, Lt. Governors, and for members at large. Registration is free for club officers and only \$6 for everyone else. March 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline that Optimist International has set for all club leaders to have completed their LMS Training. You can go to [optimist.tovuti.io](http://optimist.tovuti.io) or email [lms@optimist.org](mailto:lms@optimist.org) for more information.

**REVITALIZE.** We measure club health by more than just numbers, but declining membership is often a sign that your club is at-risk. Spring is a good time to do something about it. To revitalize means to give new life, vigor or energy to something. It means to restore to an active or fresh condition. Wouldn't it be great if all our Nebraska clubs could be revitalized this spring? Just imagine what an impact we could have on our local communities. At some point, we must accept the fact that we are never going back to whatever "normal" was before. But that's okay, because a *new normal* can be even better! Let's change our thinking and replace it with new, innovative thoughts that bring "new life, vigor and energy" to our clubs and to our district.

We all say we want new members, younger members, and more committed members. But are we willing to change our way of thinking? Are we willing to entertain and embrace new ideas? Sometimes the need for revitalization is so great that new ideas cannot be molded into old club structures. If we bring in new members but don't consider their new ideas, they will not be members for long. Perhaps your club should continue to have hybrid, i.e., combination virtual and live, meetings even after all the restrictions have been lifted. With everyone so busy these days, it might be time for your club to have an Assistant Secretary or an Assistant Treasurer to share some of the responsibilities.

Optimist International has kicked off a new initiative called W.O.W. (Welcome Optimists Worldwide). The purpose of W.O.W. is to increase club participation by focusing on the social side of membership. This is a great opportunity to revitalize your club while having fun doing it! Go to [www.optimist.org/memberhot-topics](http://www.optimist.org/memberhot-topics) for more information.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, we will be celebrating the **International Day of Happiness**. I hope you join in with us as the Nebraska District engages in some fun activities that day. Let's mark that day as the time for the Nebraska District Optimists to renew, refresh and revitalize. Happy Spring!

Governor Sandra Allen



## February 14 - Not Referring to Valentine's Day, but February's 14 New Members!!

### Blair

Elizabeth Elliott

Jordan Rishel, sponsor

### South Omaha

Alejandra Cortez

Charter Member

### Charles Isom

Charter Member

### Southwest Omaha

Gerardo Moreno

Marvin Wastell, sponsor

### Norfolk Noon

Alexander Strom

Mark Claussen, sponsor

### South Sioux City

Tammy Dunn Peterson

Diana Kincaid, sponsor

### Fairbury

Tracy Hightshoe

Jake Hightshoe, sponsor

### Kaitlynn Hightshoe

Jake Hightshoe, sponsor

### Louie Pascorella

Jake Hightshoe, sponsor

### Lincoln

Darla Atkinson

Jerry Salber, sponsor

### Earl Visser

Jerry Salber, sponsor

### Columbus

Emilee Higgins

Betty Earlely, sponsor

### York

Philip Northrop

Vicki Northrup, sponsor

### Lexington

Adam Dannehl

Jeremy Roberts, sponsor

## Growth

Eleven Optimists, newer as well as experienced Optimists, teamed up to form the Nebraska Growth Team. They are partnering with Lieutenant Governors to approach local club leaders to determine how we might work together to enhance our impact on youth and communities across the state. To do that, we must determine what your needs are, share ideas on what is working and what is not working in three critical areas:

1) Retain and activate our current members. For example, one club is sending cards and calling some members who are not as active as they used to be. Another club is making a real effort to make their meetings more fun and interesting.

2) Add and integrate new volunteers into the fabric and culture of our clubs. For example, some clubs are conducting W.O.W. events. Others have incorporated recruitment into new and existing projects.

3) Develop clubs in new areas. No activity has a bigger impact on youth and a community than a new club. It can even help reinvigorate your club. We have a new club in South Omaha and are looking forward to see it blossom.

While the past year has been a trying time for most of us, many are ready to get out, have some fun and serve. Let's share both ideas and concerns. Let's work together to see Optimism grow in Nebraska!

Richard (Dick) Raasch  
Growth Team Member



**If you haven't started looking for next year's officers, START NOW!**

## SAVE THE DATE Siouxland Optimist Summit

**Saturday, May 15,  
2021**

Registration  
9:30 – 10:00 AM  
Summit  
10:00 – 3:30 PM

Norfolk Public Library  
(308 W. Prospect Avenue)

### Cost

**\$20.00 per person**  
(includes lunch)

### Featured Presenters

Mark Weinsoff,  
*OI President (via Zoom)*  
Terry Gorman,  
*VP of Great Plains Region*  
Jim Boyd,  
*Director of Strategic Growth*  
Susan Fix,  
*Certified International Trainer*  
Jodi Ariola,  
*International Development Committee*

Meet in-person with Optimists from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota as we learn together and share why we "Choose Optimism".

## Nebraska Academic Decathlon (NEAD) State Final

The All Virtual NEAD State Final on Feb. 19 & 20 was handled very effectively by Vicki Deniston, Reed, the Executive Director, and 172 volunteers.



### » The volunteers from the Optimist Clubs were –

Sandra Allen, Kenneth Allen, Jerry Bexten, Tamara Bailey, David Catalan, Mark Claussen, Gloria Epps, Gwen Foxall, Lee Franz, Carla Gries, Eric Hansen, Jerry Hoffman, Cheryl Kraft, Bob Labedz, Beryle Lantz, Ardis Moody, Joyce Snowden, Mike Tabler, Corrine Wastell, Marvin Wastell and Linda Wheeler.

### » The Speech Test was judged by –

Toastmaster Club members, College and High School Speech teachers, and former decathletes with a Speech and Communication degree.

» **A special thanks** goes to all Optimist Club Presidents who made sure all of their members received the Call For Optimist Volunteers.

### The placements at the State Final are –

#### Large School Division (combining Large Schools and Medium Schools)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Bellevue East
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincoln Pius X
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Omaha Creighton Prep

#### Small School Division (combining Small Schools and Very Small Schools)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Elkhorn Mount Michael
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Omaha Brownell Talbot
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Nebraska City Lourdes

Bellevue East is the Large School State Champion, Omaha Gross is the Medium School State Champion, and Nebraska City  
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Lourdes is the Very Small State Champion.

Schools representing Nebraska in the US Academic Decathlon Online National Finals in April are: Bellevue East, Elkhorn Mount Michael, Lincoln Pius X and Omaha Brownell Talbot.

If any Optimist Club wants to help fund the scholarships earned at both the Regional level and the State Final level, a check can be sent to the Nebraska Academic Decathlon Program, 2175 North 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue Circle, Omaha NE 68164.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If your local high school is not participating in the NEAD Program, I would urge you to encourage the school's participation. All first-time participating schools will have the entry fee and enough study materials for the students paid by an Omaha corporation. Please contact me if you desire any information on the NEAD Program. The theme for the 2021-22 year is Water: A Most Essential Resource.

John Anstey  
Academic Decathlon  
Committee Chair

## Whatcha Doin' March 20<sup>th</sup>?

Are you going to sit in front of the TV and watch basketball all day? Or are you going out to work on your yard? Or are you going to do all the household chores that are part of your normal weekend routine?

No matter what you plan on doing on March 20<sup>th</sup>, instead, take a break and have some Saturday morning, afternoon, and evening fun compliments of Optimist International and your very own Nebraska District. If you are wondering why there will be a full

day of celebration, it is because March 20<sup>th</sup> is

## International Day of Happiness!

### Winter OptiForum

#### “Music Makes People Happy.”

The fun starts at 10 a.m. with the Winter OptiForum -“Music Makes People Happy.” The OptiForum is hosted by Optimist International. President Weinsoff said in an email to members, “It's going to be a fun look at musical happiness with Emmy award-winning actor and musician Bill Myers. We'll also see the finalists of the first Musical Happiness competition for youth.” To register, [click here](#)

### Nebraska District Fun Zoom “Happy Bingo”

The Nebraska District is celebrating Happiness Day with one hour of Zoom “Happy Bingo” at 1 p.m., and it's FREE! But wait, there's more! “Happy Bingo” is open to all of your Facebook friends! Encourage them to join the fun. To register for “Happy Bingo,” [click here](#),

### Zoom “Happy Karaoke”

If two hours of fun are good for the soul, try a third hour of fun at 7 p.m. The Nebraska District is hosting “Happy Karaoke.” Invite your Facebook friends to this FREE Zoom event! Like a popular gym says, this will be a “Judgement Free Zone” and we add that it will be a guaranteed optimistic “Fun Zone!” To register for “Happy Karaoke,” [click here](#).

Be sure and tell your Facebook friends they can register on the Nebraska District Optimists Facebook page. Separate registrations are required for both events.

It has been one year since our lives have changed due to the pandemic. Who could have imagined that we would still be dealing

with it, but there is light at the end of the proverbial tunnel and it is time to celebrate. Register today and be ready to safely celebrate International Day of Happiness by way of Zoom! Join your Nebraska District Optimist friends on March 20<sup>th</sup> with “Happy Bingo” and “Happy Karaoke”!

Betty Totten  
District Newsletter Editor



## International Day of Happiness

### Spread the News

Nearly all Nebraska District Optimist Clubs have Facebook pages, but most of the pages have not been updated recently. Some pages haven't been updated in a year or more!

Take a few minutes, at least once a month, and update the club page. Due to the pandemic, it has been more difficult to work with youth projects, but if your club sponsored a student to the Essay Contest or Oratorical Contest, post the information. If your club had an interesting speaker, post it. If the club has made a donation to a charity or community project, let the world know about it. This will show others that your club is active, and it will also be a shout-out for the charity or community project. It is a win-win situation!

Social media is available, it is free to use, and if it is active, people will read it. Let's show the world that Optimists are alive, well, and working to bring out the best in our youth, our club, and our community!

## “Choose Happiness” 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Conference Theme

The conference theme did not disappoint! Bobby McFerrin's video, “Don't Worry, Be Happy,” with Bobby McFerrin, Robin Williams, and Bill Irwin was the perfect opening to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Conference. Following the video, Governor Sandra reminded everyone that happiness is a choice, but “sometimes we need tools in our emotional arsenal to help us get by,” and the video provided the tool. Following her opening remarks, she introduced the keynote speaker, Doris Moore.

Ms. Moore is the founder and CEO of the Center for Holistic Development, Inc. in Omaha. She is a national board certified counselor and a licensed mental health practitioner. Following the conference theme, her topic was “Nurturing Happiness Using a Holistic Approach.” She cited various studies on happiness, including a study by James Montier on the Psychology of Happiness. He determined that 50% is due to the right genetics, 40% is due to the right intention or activity (what we have some control over), and 10% is the right circumstances in life.

Another study she cited was the Ness Labs Model of Psychological Well-Being. This study found six factors to happiness: self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relationships, and autonomy.

Other points of her presentation were roadblocks to happiness, and 15 ways to find happiness. Her five simple rules for happiness are: free your heart from hatred, free your mind from

worries, live simply, give more, and expect less. Ms. Moore ended her excellent presentation with a Pharrel Williams video, “Happy.”

Bingo, Optimist Foundation style, was next on the agenda. Instead of numbers on the cards, they were words and phrases related to the OI Foundation. As OI Foundation Rep Beryle Lantz called the clues, he briefly explained the clue. A fun game and a fun way to educate!

The business session included the financial report by District Treasurer Curtis Huston. Committee reports were given by: **Lana Urban, District Essay Chair** - As of February 27, she had received 13 essays;

**Dr. Gloria Epps, District Oratorical Chair** - Club contests should be completed by March 27<sup>th</sup>. The District Contest will be virtual;

**Mark Claussen, member of the Growth Committee** - They are planning on working with Lt. Governors to identify needs of the clubs in recruiting and retention; **Diane Siefkes, Marketing & Communications Chair** - She discussed filters that various email systems use to identify what they consider to be bad email addresses from senders;

**Cindy Von Fange, Zone Alignment Chair** - She said they have discussed restructuring, sister clubs/partnerships, and other options to strengthen relationships and communication.

The conference ended with a video presentation of the Optimist Creed. Each participant read a line of the Creed and spoke on what it meant to them. The participants were: Jessica Von Fange, Wayne; Calvin Schulz, Paxton (*To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind*); Fred Uhe, Papillion/LaVista (*To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you*

*meet*); Elissa Fuelberth, Lincoln Friends (*To make all your friends feel that there is something in them*); Mary Hatfield, OI Club Fitness Advisor (*To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true*); Bob Labetz, Omaha Miracle Hills (*To think only of the best, to work only for the best and expect only the best*); Ann Beckenhauer, West Point (*To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own*); Mark Claussen, Norfolk Noon (*To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future*); Linda Wheeler, Blair (*To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile*); Diana Kincaid, South Sioux City (*To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others*); Lana Urban, Seward (*To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble*). This was an amazing ending to an inspiring and fun conference.

Betty Totten  
District Newsletter Editor



### Don't Forget!

If you are planning on attending the OI International Convention in Atlanta, the early registration period ends May 1<sup>st</sup>.

The convention venue is the Atlanta Hyatt Regency. It is suggested that hotel reservations be made as soon as possible.

## Optimists at Work

### Looking Back

The **1991 version of South Omaha Optimist Club** hosted a Chicken Dinner and raised over \$1,500. Get this, 41 members showed up to help with the event! That has to be a record for nearly any club project!

Twenty-five years ago the **Omaha Aviation Optimists** presented a scholarship to a UNO aviation student at the annual banquet. The Keynote speaker was Dick Rutan. (Ed. Note: I was there and I remember Dick Rutan and what he was wearing! If you don't know who he is, contact me and I will tell you. It was an exciting night for me.)

In the early 1990s, the **Omaha Cornhusker Park Optimist Club's** Word of the Issue – "Virus" – it is a Latin word used by doctors that means "Your guess is as good as mine."

### Winter News

(All news is from Facebook)

**Gretna Optimists** celebrated Optimist Day with a Proclamation from the Gretna Mayor. The proclamation recognized the Club's service to the youth whose "... programs that have become an integral part of the town of Gretna..."

**South City Optimists** had a club Bingo Party at the local American Legion Club on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Fun time on a cold night!

Fourteen **Norfolk JOI** members sorted over three pallets of food donations that were given to the Salvation Army as part of Norfolk's local "Souper Bowl of Caring" efforts. In addition, checks totaling \$626, donations from Middle School students and staff, were presented to the Salvation Army.

One of the most active District Clubs has to be the **Lincoln Friends Optimist Club!** They sent LOVE (Valentine's Day cards and candy) to over 200 residents at Lancaster Rehabilitation Center! Another project came from a casual comment at a meeting. From that comment, a project developed and the club was able to make warm clothing donations to a local high school. "The LOVE from staff & students was overflowing!" They are once again hosting a ZOOM BINGO FUNDRAISER for the Lincoln Food Bank on March 19<sup>th</sup> with free-will donations to the Food Bank. To register, go to their Facebook page or [click here](#).

**Lexington Optimist Club** has recruited the Lexington Football players to sell their \$20 Saver Cards.

**Blair Optimists** are hoping for good weather on March 20<sup>th</sup> for their annual Easter Egg Hunt. The event is for kids up through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. There will be prizes and many excited kids on the International Day of Happiness!

### Optimists Spring Sports

(All news is from Facebook)

It will be a busy spring for **North Bend Optimists**. They have already had their sign-ups for Spring Soccer (PreK – 4<sup>th</sup> grade students), T-Ball (PreK – 4<sup>th</sup> grade students), and baseball and softball teams (beginning in 1<sup>st</sup> grades).

**Aurora Optimists** have held their registration for Spring Optimist Soccer. The program is for youth in grades K through 6. The six-week program divides youth into four categories by grade.

**Minden Optimists** are getting ready for their spring soccer. Soccer will be available for all youth, K-6th grade boys and girls. If it is Saturday, it is soccer day in

Minden! They are also looking to see if the area towns are interested in having 3-4th grade boys flag football and 5<sup>th</sup>-6th grade boys contact football.

The **Broken Bow Optimist** Spring Soccer games will be starting on April 6 and run through May 6. The program is for pre-school youth - 6<sup>th</sup> grade and they will be divided into three categories by grade.

Information for the **McCook Optimist** Spring Slam softball tournament for girls is out. It is an ASA sanctioned one-day (May 8<sup>th</sup>) tournament for girls, age 14 and under.

*Ed. Note: I enjoy reading the Facebook posts, BUT Governor Sandra and I would really appreciate being added to your respective club's email list. By adding [neoptimists@gmail.com](mailto:neoptimists@gmail.com), we both will receive your club communications. Thank you.*

*Betty Totten*

*District Newsletter Editor*

## SMONDAY

The moment when  
Sunday stops feeling  
like a Sunday and the  
anxiety of Monday  
kicks in!

Columbus Optimist Club  
Facebook page

If that is you on Sunday evening,  
You need a good dose of  
Optimism!



Promise yourself  
to look at the sunny side of  
everything and make your  
optimism come true.

## *To Be so Strong That Nothing Can Disturb Your Peace of Mind*

*Most of my ideas and values are from other wise people.*

*Winston Churchill, "I'm an optimist – it doesn't do much good being anything else."*

*Our nation says we have the right to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Through strength, hard work, determination, and character we can protect that freedom.*

*Patrick McGarry - "I often lose my temper and feel frustrated. When that happens, I learn that when I face up to what makes me feel bad and do something about it, I feel better. I like it best when people around me have their peace of mind too."*

*La Rochefoucauld – "When we are unable to find tranquility within ourselves, it is useless to seek it elsewhere."*

*I'll end with*

*O – Overcome fear*

*P – Positive attitude*

*T – Try your very best*

*I – Involve others*

*M – Move forward*

*I – Ignore skepticism*

*S – Show love and compassion*

*M – Make each day count*

*Be strong and keep a level head. Thank you and have a wonderful and blessed day.*

*Calvin Schulz*

*Paxton Optimist Club*