



Nebraska District Optimists



Sandra Allen, Governor
May, 2021
OI 3rd Quarter Theme
“Rally”

Mark Your Calendars!

May 17, 2021

OI Webinar

“Creating Content for Social Media” 7 p.m.

May 20, 2021

Club Officer Election Reports due to OI

May 21, 2021

2021 Golf Classic Scramble
Sponsored by the Omaha
Breakfast Optimist Club

May 27, 2021

District Qualifying
Tournament for OI Jr. Golf
Championship
York Country Club
Dick Raasch, District Chair

June 21, 2021

OI Webinar
“Facebook Page
Management” 7 p.m.

June 30-July 3, 2021

International Convention
Atlanta, Georgia

July 10, 2021

A&A Reports due to District Chair
Judy Winkler

July 14– 29, 2021

2021 Optimist International Junior
Golf Championship dates

August 20-21, 2021

District Convention
Omaha



Sandra Coaxum Allen, Governor

*“Eagles soar because they
always focus on their goal.”*
Author Unknown

We have selected the winners of our District’s Essay, CCDHH and Oratorical scholarships. District committees are meeting and working steadily toward our goals. We’ve realigned our zones for future success. We’ve welcomed new members and said goodbye to a few old friends. We’ve watched each other on miniature TV monitors and have learned to communicate as though we were in the same room. We’ve held successful 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarter district meetings. We’ve continued to serve our youth and the communities in which we live. We’ve managed to do all these things while in the midst of one of the most challenging times in American history. Whew!

Yet we still have work to do to meet the goals we set back in October. How do we recruit 150 new members over the next 5 months while retaining the faithful Optimists who are actively involved in our clubs? How do we build two new clubs within our district while making sure that our current clubs continue to thrive? How do we develop and implement a succession plan for future District leaders? Well, I’m glad you asked. We do it by rallying together! Together we are an unstoppable, undeniable force capable of accomplishing almost anything! American poet and Pulitzer Prize winner Carl Sandburg said, *“The time for action is now. It’s never too late to do something.”* So let’s do something.

In our 3rd Quarter Conference, we reviewed our district goals, and I shared my opinion as to how much progress we have made toward reaching those goals. A Nebraska District “report card”, if you will. Here are a few highlights from that evaluation.

Develop a leadership succession plan -- What is succession planning? And why is it important to the Nebraska District? Succession planning is a strategy for passing on leadership to ensure that the Nebraska District continues to run smoothly after key persons have moved on. To stay relevant, our district must be *(continued on the following page)*

positioned for change and ready to adapt while preserving our rich history and heritage. A succession plan aids in identifying and training effective leaders, ensuring the continuity of effective district leadership and service to our local communities – the kind of service that embodies the tenets of Optimist International. Service that is given generously and with excellence. Service that brings out the best in our youth, in our communities and in ourselves.

Retain at least 80% of our current members --- So far, so good. We have retained over 88% of the members that were in place on October 1, 2020. That's quite an accomplishment, especially since some of our clubs have not been meeting at all, we haven't been able to engage in community activities, and many of our fundraisers have been cancelled or postponed. We've learned that it is more important than ever that we keep our members engaged and interested. Consider doing things a little different than you did pre-pandemic. Implement some new ideas. Shake things up. Revitalize, refresh, and renew. Be creative.

Add 250 new members to the Nebraska District --- As of the end of April, we had 98 new members. It's a start, but we still need to recruit at least 150 more. So how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

We currently have 44 active clubs in our district and over 1100 members. There are several paths that can get us to 150 new members over the next five months.

- The district adds 30 new members per month
- Each of our zones add 3-4 new members per month

- Each of our clubs add 4 new members by the end of September
- Each club adds 1 new member each month

Let's stay focused, taking one day at a time. Instead of focusing on the forest, let's look at the trees. Let's be creative. Let's rally together. The time for action is now.

#Soaringwithoptimism

Governor Sandra

3rd Quarter Conference

Following the invocation by District Chaplain Kenneth Allen, the **Lincoln Friends Optimist Club** received Honor Club recognition for the 2019-2020 year! They were the **only** Nebraska club to receive the honor. Club President for the 2019-2020 year was Aaron Drury. The club did not let the pandemic stand in their way of finding ways to help others.

Governor Sandra addressed the attendees by reviewing the 10 goals that were set by the District Executive Committee for this year. **#1 - To develop a culture of empowerment and engagement.** She feels we are doing pretty good, but she wants to know how members feel. Surveys will be sent to members. **#2 – To develop a District Succession plan for potential governor-elects and lieutenant governors.** It is on track. **#3 -To establish a 1-3-5-year strategic plan.** It is on track. **#4 - To retain at least 80% of individuals who were members on October 1, 2020.** As of April 29th, we had an 88.30% retention. **#5 - To add 250 new club members to the District.** Only 98 new members have been added, but she believes this is an achievable goal. **#6 - To build at least 3 new District clubs and two international clubs.** To date, we have

one new club and two new international clubs. **#7 - To have a club foundation representative for each club and each club to make a contribution to the OIF.** Currently of the 44 clubs, 39 have OI foundation reps, but only three have made a contribution to OIF. **#8 - To have committees that collaborate with each other and serve as resources.** Governor Sandra said she is seeing a lot of cooperation between committees. **#9 - To have at least 50% of club presidents, secretaries/treasurers and foundation reps each complete the OI Learning Management System training.** So far only nine presidents, eight secretary/treasurers, and four club foundation reps have completed the training. **#10 - To bring fun back!** There has been an effort to include fun in each of the conferences and she cited the Day of Happiness activities. In summary, she feels we have done OK so far, but there is still a lot of work to do.

Business Session

District Treasurer Curt Huston, reported the District is in good financial shape, mainly due to no in-person meetings.

Committee Reports:

OI Jr. Golf Dick Raasch: (See article elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Oratorical Contest Dr. Gloria Epps: There were 12 entries in the Oratorical Contest which was being held that afternoon. (See article elsewhere in this newsletter for complete results of the contest.)

CCDHH Mark Claussen: There were five contestants in the contest that was completed on April 24th. (See article elsewhere in this newsletter)

Candidate Qualifications Linda Wheeler: She reported that one governor-elect candidate for the (continued on the following page)

2021-22 year was approved by the committee, but there is still time for nominations by clubs or self-nominations. Letters of recommendation and a resume are to be forwarded to the committee. The deadline for nominations is July 1st.

Other Business

Governor-Elect Cindy Von Fange asked the board to approve Curt Huston as district treasurer and Betty Totten as district secretary for the 2021-22 Optimist year. The motion was approved.

Two options for zone alignment were presented by the Zone Alignment Committee, chaired by Governor-Elect Cindy. The two options have been publicized at the Governor's Coffee and on the District website. The option that was approved was described as Option A at the coffee and on the website. The new zones and a list of their clubs are on the last page of this newsletter.

An excellent video "Today's Volunteers" with Tracy Huxley, Sean Mueller and Danny Rogers was shown. The participants discussed the difference in expectations between the different generations. The generations represented were Millennial (Sean), Generation X (Tracy), and the Boomer generation (Danny). The video is available upon request. Contact Governor Sandra by email at sancoax@yahoo.com.

The conference ended with an Optimist Jeopardy game and the reading of the Optimist Creed. The District Convention on August 20-21 will be an **in-person event** in Omaha! We hope to SEE you there!



What is PDP?

The Professional Development Program (PDP) offers every Optimist the opportunity to advance through 10 levels of professional development and growth. To get started, [click here](#). Download the form and begin your journey. Contact Tamara Bailey @ redvirgo1959@aol.com if you have any questions.

The Growth Challenge

With less than five months remaining in the Nebraska District Optimist year, we face some significant challenges in assuring a successful year end. While some clubs are reviewing meeting guidelines to include in-person sessions, others have not resumed scheduled meetings and have no immediate plans to do so. Club activities which attract member engagement and participation are in a "wait-and-see" mode.

Your Growth Committee has met to aggressively meet these challenges. The Committee members have partnered with their corresponding zone lieutenant governors to conduct personal club visits. Such visits will develop the survey data needed to determine the needs necessary to jump-start growth strategies. These strategies translate into action plans in such areas as communications, activities, partnerships, as well as fun events.

With the support and encouragement of club leaders, our enviable record and history of overcoming growth challenges will make us stronger, resilient, and eager to succeed. Let us all make a personal commitment to contribute to that success!
David Catalan
District Growth Committee Member

CCDHH a Success

The Nebraska District Communication Contest for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) was held on Saturday, April 24th, in collaboration with the Regional Programs for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The five students from across the state gathered on Zoom to share their thoughts about "Healing the World with Optimism" and competed for one of two \$2,500.00 college scholarships.



The winner of the Chet Arnett Memorial Scholarship provided by the Optimist International Foundation was Noah Ziegler, a junior attending Aurora High School. The winner of the Katie Gurnsey Remembrance Scholarship provided by the Nebraska District with support from the family of Katie Gurnsey and Hamilton Relay, was Lauren Sitzman, who is a junior attending Omaha North High School. The other three participants, all seniors, were Grace Galbraith (Blair High School), Adinijah Gonzales (Scottsbluff High School) and Zachary Wheatley (Ralston High School). Speeches can be seen in their entirety on the Nebraska District website.

Thanks to the following Optimist Clubs who contributed in support of our second scholarship: Aurora, Lincoln, Lincoln Evening, Lincoln Sunrise, Norfolk Morning, Norfolk Noon, Omaha Miracle Hills, Papillion-LaVista, Seward, South Sioux City, Southwest Omaha and West Point.
Mark Claussen,
District CCDHH Chairman

Party Bus reservations to Atlanta must be made by May 20th. Contact lawheelz@netzero.net

THE OPTIMIST

International Junior Golf Championships

Did you know that Jr. Golf has been an Optimist Youth Program since 1978 (43 yrs.) and that over 6,500 youth annually compete in a variety of events around the world? Some of the greatest names in the PGA came up through "The Optimist". The International Tournament will be held in July at the **Doral Resort & Spa** in Miami, Florida.

Did you know that five current Husker Team golfers played in our Nebraska Optimist Jr. Golf Event in the last few years? This year's Nebraska Qualifier will be held at **The York Country Club in York, NE on Thursday, May 27th**. Up to 16 Nebraska Jr. Golfers can qualify for "The Optimist" at the Doral. Additional golfers from other states may qualify as well. More importantly, these young golfers can have fun while developing personal values and friendships through their golfing experience that will carry throughout their lives.

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 to assure that local youth are represented and competing in our Nebraska District Qualifier!

In addition, many help sponsor the event by becoming a Birdie Sponsor @ \$100, an Eagle Sponsor @ \$150, or a Double Eagle Sponsor @ \$200. We prepare signs and put them on holes around the course. It is meaningful to have the contestants, their parents, their grandparents, and other spectators see the breadth and scope

of Nebraska Optimist support! Here is a picture of a sign on the course:



Send your sign wording and checks made payable to "Nebraska District Optimists" to the address below.

Additional details, online registration, and materials for you and the golfers are available at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/neoptimistgolf/tournament-information> or contact Dick Raasch, Chairman, 5734 N 78th Ave, Omaha NE 68134 (402) 681-9438, or email rwraasch@cox.net.

Dick Raasch
District Chair
OI Junior Golf Championships

Grants Are Available for Childhood Health & Wellness

The Childhood Health & Wellness Program replaced the highly



successful former Childhood Cancer Campaign. Nebraska District Clubs now have the opportunity to initiate projects and services to improve the quality of life for children in their communities across a broader spectrum of needs.

Childhood Health & Wellness will include four focus areas (not limited to the examples below):

Healthy Lifestyles

Child Obesity, Healthy Eating, Physical Fitness, Happy Heart

Advice, March of Dimes

Chronic Diseases

Childhood Cancer, Juvenile Diabetes, HIV, Multiple Sclerosis, Muscular Dystrophy, Sickle Cell Anemia

Mental Health

Depression, Bullying, Abuse

Disabilities – Physical, Intellectual & Developmental

Autism, Special Olympics

The Optimist International Foundation has made available a matching grant program in support of club projects that address these focus areas. Clubs may apply for funds up to \$1,000. For details of this grant application and to access it, [click here](#).

For further information or to answer any questions, contact Childhood Health & Wellness District Chair David Catalan, at 402-850-1941 or dcatalan@cox.net.

David Catalan
District Chair
Childhood Health & Wellness

Soaring for Excellence With Club Fitness

Only five months are remaining in our 2020-2021 year. Have you reached out to your youth, your community and yourself as you had envisioned for your club?

There is still time to engage your youth through sports, like Pitch, Hit, and Run, scholarships, a safety program or contest, and many other ways to reach out. Partnering with other community groups can assist with manpower, sharing the cost, and energizing your club members and your community.

Remember our children are still experiencing stress from this pandemic, just like we are. If help is needed, turn to your local counseling and mental health pros. Invite some to speak at your
(continued on following page)

next club meeting. Keep checking on your club members who are not engaging with meetings or activities. Reach out with a phone call or card.

OI President Mark Weinsoff has extended the deadline for completing the club president, club secretary, club treasurer and club foundation representative training on the Learning Module System (LMS) until September 30th. Governor Sandra shared that only nine club presidents, eight secretaries and treasurers, and four club foundation reps have completed this training year-to-date. LMS is free to those officers. If you have lost your login information, I can email the instructions to you. If you are having difficulty logging in, contact Optimist International at LMS@optimist.org.

The Learning Module System training only takes 1 to 2 hours. If you do not have that much time, you can log out and your work will be saved. You can resume at another time. It also has a library of webinars and podcasts that you can access. There is also training for concussions in sports, youth protection, and succession planning. New members will be invited to access a 5-part program "Orientation to Optimism." To access video, [click here](#). It is also available in the Library of LMS. Anyone is welcome to view.

As Optimists we know we are not happy all the time, but we always have hope that things will be better. So, keep planning for that day because if time sneaks up on you and you are not ready, it might be a missed opportunity. Exercise mightily the muscles of hope and gratitude.

Linda Wheeler
District Club Fitness Advisor
lawheelz@netzero.net
402-452-4371

Rally Around April's New Members!

South Omaha

Linda M Garcia

David Catalan, sponsor

Southwest Omaha

Lee Kilgas

Marvin Wastell, sponsor

Plattsmouth

Rebecca Stoskopf

Bob Hahn, sponsor

Auburn

Connie Usher

Heather Pemberton, sponsor

Amanda Drier

Daryl Obermeyer, sponsor

Fairbury

Jasmine Snyder

Timothy Rempel, sponsor

Lincoln Evening

Sue Honnor

Pat Driver, sponsor

Lincoln Friends

Haley Waggoner

Angela Tintori, sponsor

Oratorical Results

Nebraska District Optimists sponsored its Virtual Oratorical Contest on May 1, 2021. We had 12 young people accept the challenge to address the Oratorical theme: ***Healing the World with Optimism!***

The first-place winner was Gretna High School freshman, Nivriti Varanisi, who was sponsored by the Omaha Breakfast Optimist Club. Nivriti's amazing performance garnered first place votes from all three judges. Second-place winner was Maya Huber who was sponsored by the Gretna Optimist Club. Our third-place winner was Daniel Vinton who was sponsored by the Lincoln West Optimist Club.

The other nine contestants were awesome as well and represented their sponsors, their parents, their grandparents, and themselves with esteem. Their names and their sponsoring clubs were:

Grace Roberts - North Omaha
Carter Richardson – North Bend
Daniel Richardson – Southwest Omaha

Shelly Merritt – South Sioux City
Maddox Dietz - Norfolk Noon
Laci Havlat - Hickman
Rory Nolan - Seward
Addison Zook – David City
Noah Fields – North Platte

Nivriti won a \$2500 scholarship, Maya won a \$1500 scholarship, and Daniel won a \$1000 scholarship. Nivriti's name will be submitted to the Optimist International Regional level at Saint Louis University to compete in the Optimist International Regional/World Championship for an opportunity to win an additional scholarship of \$5,000 or up to a \$15,000 scholarship. Like the district contest, the Regional/World Championship Oratorical Contest will be virtual on July 21-23, 2021.

Each of our participants will receive a certificate while the first, second, and third place winners will receive a medallion or plaque. Thanks again to the speech coaches, encouragers, parents, and sponsors of these fantastic young people. They are indeed evidence of our Soaring with Optimist!

Dr. Gloria Epps
District Oratorical Contest Chair

The kids Visual Arts competition wants your vote! The entries are on the OI website and voting is open until May 30. Each category will be awarded 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place scholarships of \$250, \$150, & \$100 respectively. The winning artwork will be displayed at the OI Convention, and featured on the OI website.

Clubs Keep on Working!

The **Lincoln Friends** and **Lincoln Evening Clubs** held the Optimist Visual Arts Contest for two Lincoln elementary schools. The clubs worked with the art teacher who serves both schools. Both clubs donated art supplies to the schools. Over 95 "Choose Happiness" entries were submitted by each school. A separate art show for each club was held and members served as judges. Prizes were awarded to the top three winners from each school. The top entry from each school was submitted to OI.



Pictures everywhere! Table, Chairs, Walls, Shelves I to r: Dottie Williams, Angela Tintori, Pat Driver

The new **South Omaha Optimist Club** is already making a difference in their community. Recently the Omaha City Council approved the South Omaha Business Improvement District (BID) and the leadership team consists of four people, three of which are members of the South Omaha Optimist Club. The Club has pledged to be a partner with the BID for projects to benefit and revitalize their community! The first project is a Spring Planting and Clean-up Day along the commercial corridor. (From Facebook)

The **Holdrege Optimist Club** held their annual Pitch Hit & Run Contest on May 1st. In normal years they usually have around 45 participants, but this year, due to other activities, they had 15 participants. (From Facebook)

The **Gretna Optimist Club** had two special visitors at a recent

meeting. Sydney Vavra, a Girl Scout accompanied by her mother Nicole Vavra, brought Girl Scout cookies for the Optimists in appreciation for the work the Gretna Optimists do to support the youth of their community. The club responded on Facebook, "Thank you Sydney! Youth like you are the "why" for what we do!"



I to r: Sydney Vavra, Nicole Vavra

The **Norfolk JOI** members who make up the "Teens in the Driver Seat" at Norfolk Sr. High used Distract-a-Match with Fatal Reaction to demonstrate how much more difficult even simple tasks are made when distracted. They hoped to demonstrate how much more complicated it is to drive a motor vehicle when distracted. (From Facebook)

Norfolk Noon Optimists hosted a "Kids Speak Out" on May 4th. Ten 5th/6th graders (four of them JOI members) shared their thoughts on why it's important to "Choose Happiness." Norfolk JOI members who are part of the Norfolk Sr. High Speech Team served as the contest officials (e.g. judges & timer). Gift cards to Culver's were provided to all the students by the Norfolk Panther JOI Clubs.

McCook Optimist Club sponsored Circus Fantastic on May 5th (From Facebook)

Seward Optimists helped to sponsor the Plum Creek Literacy Festival. The festival attracted 14

out-of-state authors. The authors traveled to 30 different schools and reached over 5,600 students.

The **Fairbury Optimist Club** met with members of the Alexandria Fishing Club to discuss the joint Family Fishing Day which is scheduled for May 22nd. Registration has also started for their annual softball and baseball T-ball programs.

South Sioux City Optimists are taking a break from their work selling concessions - COVID style! (From Facebook)



Humphrey Pond Spring Cleanup 2021 has been completed. In addition to **Ogallala Optimist** members, the Ogallala High School football coach and 26 of his players helped with the project. (From Facebook)



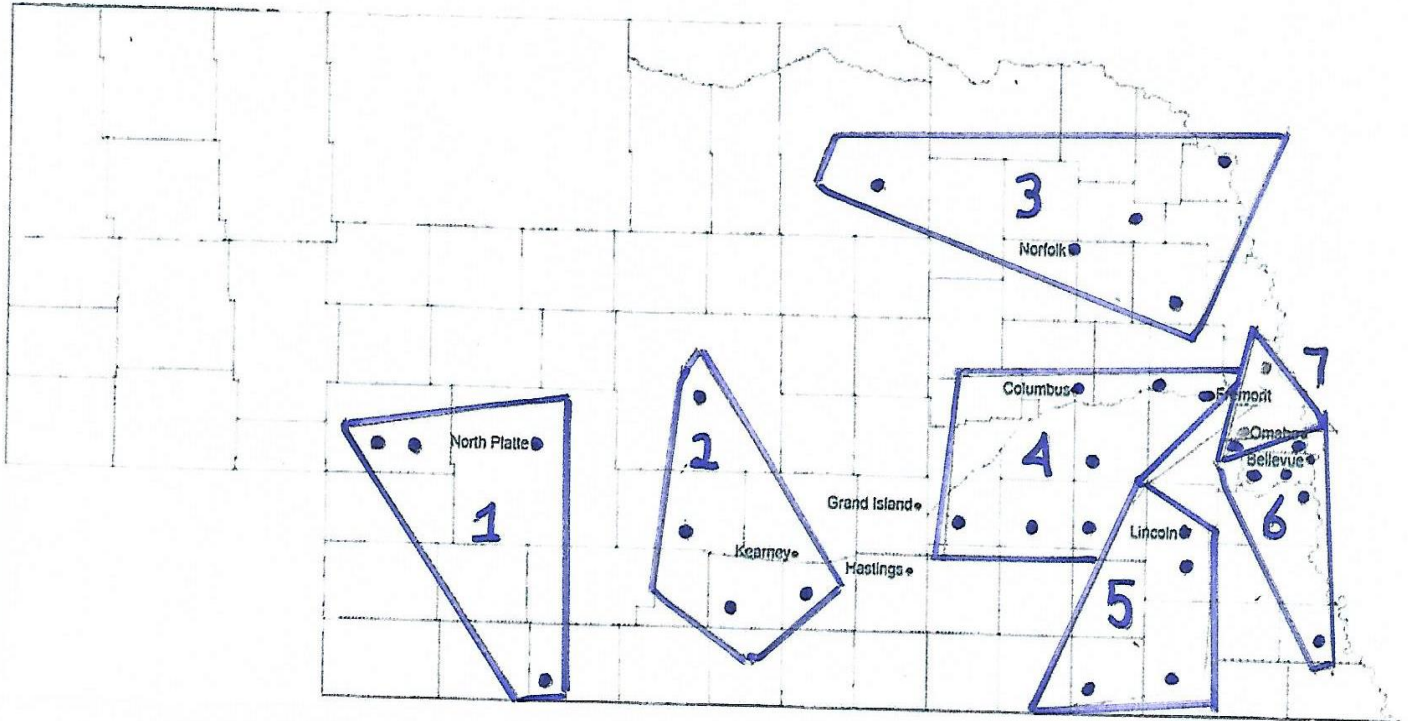
Getting clean-up instructions

Auburn Optimist Club participated in Auburn's Birthday Festival. After their Saturday morning meeting, they enjoyed pancakes with the Pancake Man and they ended the day by selling popcorn at the evening's festivities!



Continue to next page to see the new zones and their clubs!

Introducing the NEW Zone Alignment



Zone 1

Ogallala
Paxton
North Platte
McCook

Zone 2

Broken Bow
Lexington
Holdrege
Kearney
Minden

Zone 3

O'Neill
Norfolk
Norfolk Noon
Wayne
West Point
South Sioux City

Zone 4

Aurora
York
Seward
David City
Columbus
North Bend
Fremont

Zone 5

Lincoln
Lincoln Evening
Lincoln Friends
Lincoln Sunrise
Lincoln West
Hickman
Fairbury
Beatrice

Zone 6

Auburn
Gretna
Omaha Breakfast
Papillion/LaVista
Plattsmouth
Ralston
Southwest Omaha

Zone 7

Blair
Elkhorn
North Omaha
Omaha Miracle Hills
Omaha West
South Omaha
Omaha