



Nebraska District Optimists

Linda Wheeler, Governer
September, 2020



Governor Linda Wheeler

Governor's Message

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 59th Nebraska District Convention via Zoom. There were 58 registered and five were first timers attending a District Convention. Our four guest speakers were well received.

Governor-Designate Sandra Allen introduced her Executive Committee and all were installed by OI President-Designate Mark Weiss. Cynthia Von Fange was elected Governor-Elect 2020-2021. Congratulations to Cindy!

In reviewing the Nebraska Optimist Club newsletters that have been shared with me, I was amazed that they are incredibly positive and optimistic. These clubs have re-imagined their own activities and fundraisers to be successful. The Seward Optimist Club has an annual run on July 4th, but this year it was re-imagined to a Virtual Run. They had 50 runners from across the USA. The Lincoln Optimist Club had a plan for purses which they could not follow due to COVID and re-imagined it into "Purses with a Purpose" for teens. The Lincoln Optimist Club received a

\$500 grant from OI for this new club project.

Norfolk Noon Optimist Club re-imagined their summer kid activities into activities that kids could do while self-isolating at home. One activity was creating chalk drawings on their home sidewalks. The drawings were judged and the winners received gift cards. If you have any re-imagined activities within your Club, please let me know so I can share your successes as well.

Thank you to all those Optimist members who have continued to invite friends and associates to join their Optimist Club. To date we have had 75 new members in the Nebraska District. Lincoln West has added eight new members. Norfolk Noon and Blair have each added five new members while Ogallala and O'Neil have each added four new members.

Please continue to encourage members to invite their friends and associates to attend a Club meeting, either in person or electronically. Also, invite your guest speakers to join. Ask your guest speakers if they can identify any community needs. Your club may find one that they can latch onto and assist other community service groups in holding a successful event.

Let us finish this Optimist year on a positive note in your Club and in our District

Linda Wheeler, Governor

Optimist of the Year guidelines are on the Nebraska District Website.

Dates to Remember

September 17, 2020

Optiforum – Zoom event
"Recognizing and Managing Unconscious Bias" 10:00 A.M.
Registration Required

September 30, 2020

Last Day of 2019-20
Administrative Year

October 1, 2020

First Day of the
2020-21 Optimist Year
"Soaring with Optimism"

November 13-14, 2020

1st Quarter Conference
Zoom event

February 26-27, 2021

tentative
2nd Quarter Conference
Norfolk

April 30-May 1, 2021

tentative
3rd Quarter Conference
Columbus

August 13-14, 2021

tentative
District Convention
Omaha

Correction

In the August issue I stated the winner of the World Oratorical Championship won \$17,500 in scholarships: District award of \$2,500, and a World award of \$15,000. I neglected to add the \$5,000 scholarship won for being a Regional winner. The total amount of scholarships for the world winner was \$22,500. Let's have a Nebraska winner in 2021!!

Betty Totten
District Newsletter Co-Editor

Updates OI Updates

No Cost of Living Adjustment

OI President Adrian Elcock announced there will be no cost of living adjustment in the 2020–2021 Optimist Dues. The dues will remain the same as 2019–2020.

Assistance with Financial Issues

OI President Elcock announced should any Optimist Club be having financial challenges due to their canceled or reduced fundraisers, please contact Benny Ellerbe at Optimist International. OI is willing to set up a payment schedule.

Optimist International Developed COVID Guidelines

Every Optimist Club was sent a copy of the OI COVID Guidelines for all Club and District meetings. The Guidelines should be modified to meet local health department requirements.

District Updates Engagement of Club Membership

Please continue to reach out to your Club membership to keep them engaged through meetings either in person, if viable in your area, or with Zoom or Facebook Live.

Also consider developing a calling tree with members calling those members who must continue to shelter in place. Human contact is important. It gives a feeling of self-worth and importance and even more important, it helps to lessen or even the avoidance of depression.

I have heard of some communities developing a group of volunteers who call shut-ins two or three times a week to check in with them. Perhaps your club could work with other service

clubs in your community to provide this service. Check with your community hospital or Public Health Department to find out if this is an issue.

Nebraska District Policies

The District Board of Directors (consisting of the Executive Committee and Club Presidents or the President-Designates of each Optimist Club) voted to approve the proposed District Policies.

Linda Wheeler, Governor

Optimist International Foundation

Optimist International Foundation has continued to support our Nebraska Optimist Clubs with their essay and oratorical scholarships, grants, new club projects and disaster relief throughout this challenging year.

As of July 30th, Nebraska Optimist Clubs and individuals have given \$6045.75 in unrestricted contributions, purchased 58 Dime A Day pins, and four members have renewed their President's Club status to Optimist International Foundation.

All Nebraska Optimist Clubs and Individuals are asked to submit their donations to the Optimist International Foundation before September 30th. Donations can be mailed to Optimist International Foundation, 4494 Lindell Boulevard, St. Louis MO 63108. Be sure to include your Club or Individual information and your club number along with your check.

Marguerite Hansen
District OI Foundation Rep



Help Wanted

Gov-Designate Sandra Allen is still looking for nine good Optimists to fill the following committee positions. Your pay will be the satisfaction of knowing that you will be helping to move the Nebraska District to new heights.

Open Positions

1. Lt. Gov Zone 5 (Beatrice & Fairbury)
2. Lt. Gov Zone 8
3. Parliamentarian
4. Activities
5. Hospitality/Supplies
6. Optimist of the Year
7. Oratorical Contests
8. Tri-Star Sports
9. Academic Decathlon

If you are interested in any of the positions, contact Governor-Designate Sandra Allen at sancoax@yahoo.com or 531-329-1559.

Presidents! The Importance of the Honor Club Tracking Form

By completing the Honor Club Tracking Form and submitting it to Jessica Von Fange, the District Club Fitness Chair, and to the Zone Lt. Governor, it will inform the District leadership how your club managed to succeed in continuing to serve the youth and community. This year has been especially challenging with the pandemic, but we know many clubs continued to bring out the best in themselves to serve others.

The form can be found on the District website or on the OI website: Optimist Leaders, under "Reports" for your club.

The August "7" The District Welcomes Seven New Members.

Lincoln Evening Chyrel Kritikos

sponsored by Crystal Masters

Lincoln Friends Elissa Fuelbert

sponsored by Angela Tintori

Courtney Roth

sponsored by Elissa Fuelberth

Rhonda Fuelberth

sponsored by Angela Tintori

Lincoln Sunrise Brady Torpin

sponsored by Robert Grundman

Lincoln West Tonya Brandt

sponsored by Angie Birkett

Norfolk Noon

Lynn Gronenthal Reynolds

Membership Opportunities

Honoring Unsung Heroes

Are you aware that if a First Responder joins your club between August 17th and December 31st of this year, his or her membership dues for the first year are \$30. In addition, his or her District dues are waived for the first year. OI defines First Responders as, "...any Police, Fire, Medical, ETM's, 911 Operators or other civic service providers that provide immediate aid and assistance."

In honor of their service, Optimist International invites these special citizens to become members of a local Optimist Club. Every day, every month of every year the First Responders are here for us. Many times they may be putting

their lives at risk in order to provide aid and assistance. This year the pandemic, social issues and natural disasters have raised our awareness of these dedicated professionals, including members of volunteer fire and rescue departments.

Maybe instead of paying more than \$30 for a plaque to honor one of these heroes, your Club might consider bestowing a membership on them. Perhaps a member or members would like not only to sponsor, but "adopt" one or more of these fine people by paying the \$30 dues for one year. It is hoped every club in the Nebraska District finds some way to honor First Responders and takes the opportunity to "JUST ASK!"

Don't Forget about the Teacher Heroes

Another hero is the teacher who not only faces the possibility of contracting anything, from the common cold to the coronavirus; whose lesson plans now include a complete second set for students choosing to study via virtual learning. Clubs could show their appreciation by nominating or awarding an outstanding teacher with a \$30 membership for their first year.

As a member, the teacher would learn "who we are and what we do" and imagine ways that we could possibly provide assistance to them. This is an opportunity for the Club to serve at a time when it is difficult to perform traditional projects for youth. JUST ASK!

There are many heroes, volunteers, and potential members among us these days. Invite them to join our organization. Give them a copy of the Creed which is very timely. JUST ASK!

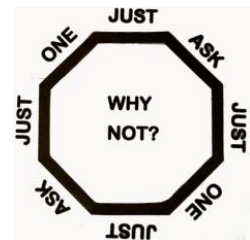
Optimist Prospect Referral

In the next few days, Club secretaries will be receiving an Optimist Prospect Referral for each member of their Club. They will be asked to distribute these to members, who in turn are asked to complete and return them with names of individuals whom current members consider good, prospective members.

Each Club should have a Membership Chair and committee comprised of individuals who are willing and able to contact these suggested individuals. If every member asked just one person, your Club could potentially double its volunteer base and service to youth and community.

JUST ASK!! JUST ONE!!

Judith Conway Kluge
District Growth Chair



Soar Like Eagles

The recent District Convention closed with an address by Gov-Designate Sandra Allen. The response to the address was so positive that she has been urged to re-record it. She commented she was humbled by the requests. Plans are now being made to re-record the message and make it available to all Nebraska District Clubs and members hopefully in time for their first meetings in the new Optimist year.



We Met, We Planned, We Played At the

District Convention

Over 55 Optimist members met Saturday, August 29th for the first ever Nebraska District Zoom Convention! Governor Linda and her committee put together an excellent program under the very unusual circumstances. Like the OI Zoom Convention, participants who had never attended a convention before, were able to participate comfortably from their own homes. The price was right (\$10), the place was right and the food was right (whatever you prepared for yourself).

Leading the list of distinguished speakers was OI President-elect Mark Weinsoff who spoke about his vision for Optimist International 2020-2021. Dan Mills from the Michigan District challenged us to talk positively to ourselves.

Michelle Turner created excitement about the new Learning Management System that has been developed by a team at OI; this application allows club and district officers and committee chairs to log on to receive vital information about their positions. This is very exciting because it brings the information right to you at home; you can also explore other positions in the event that you would like to assume one of those positions in the future. Leadership is so much less scary when you have the information before accepting a position.

Dr. Linda Thompson energized us by reminding us that "Everyone Can Lead Because Everyone Can Serve," even if you cannot attend meetings you can still participate in service projects.

Highlights of the convention included a video of children reciting the Pledge of Allegiance during the Opening Ceremonies. These children proved to all of us in a very touching manner that the future of our great country will be in very good hands. An excellent slide presentation of past governors was enjoyed and will be updated each year by the District Historian. Tribute was also made to the Optimists who have passed away during the 2019-2020 year during the annual Memorial Service.

Another highlight was when Angela Tintori from the Lincoln Evening Optimist Club drew the winning name for the beautiful quilt that was designed and made by her mother. The proceeds went to the Childhood Health and Wellness program to assist families who have a seriously ill child with cancer or another catastrophic disease.

Congratulations to Cindy Von Fange, member of the Wayne Optimist Club, who was elected Governor-Elect for 2020-2021!!!

Kudos to the Lincoln Sunrise Optimist Club and Zone 6 for winning the traveling Attendance Banners.

Thank You Governor Linda for leading us to Re-iMAGINE MORE than we ever thought possible. Who could have predicted that we would have to Re-iMAGINE almost everything that we have done during this extraordinary year!!!!

Carla Gries
Co-Editor District Newsletter



District Convention Memorial Service - Optimists Who Were Remembered

Dr. James A. Hanson
Omaha Southwest

William "Willie" Nagengast
West Point

Ernest C. Volkmer, Jr
Norfolk

Hans H. Wagner
The Meadows, Norfolk

Donna Weed
The Meadows, Norfolk

George Lester Beasley
Fairbury

Theodore "Ted" Scherbarth
Fairbury

Roger Thomas Simmons
Lincoln

Mary Ann Boman
Lincoln West

Robert A. Garrett
Minden

William "Bill" T. Johnson
Minden

Robert "Bob" Nicholson
North Platte

David A. Lawler
Paxton



The above was compiled in form of a video by Jessica Von Fange and narrated by Marvin Shimmel. The video was shown during the virtual District Convention.

Brief History of OI Final Part

During our first and second quarter conferences we looked back on the history of the organization from its beginning in 1919 and on through the 1970's. As part of our convention program we took a "zipline" trip through the last five decades.

In 1980, a club was formed in Kingston, Jamaica with 48 members, and became part of the Florida District. During the 80's Optimists were among the strongest promoters of the "Just Say No" program and other attempts to reduce drug and alcohol abuse among youth. The chicken mascot "Mr. Resister" was very effective in communicating with children.

In 1983, the Essay Contest began. A change occurred in 1987; which had a huge effect on the organization; without it there would have been 36 fewer members registered for our convention this year. It was then, that for the first time, females were accepted into a previously all-male club.

The Optimist International Foundation of Canada was established in 1988 and it was that same year that more than 30,000 youth joined to create Junior Optimist Octagon International (JOOI) clubs.

Optimists in Action Day was established in 1992 to unite our clubs with other community volunteers and organizations for a day of youth service. The "Get Real" program which encouraged good nutrition and exercise and the avoidance of steroids was also started that year.

By this time Jamaica had added 24 more clubs and became the new Jamaica District. Just four

years later, in 1996, more clubs had been added in Jamaica and the surrounding islands and the name was changed to create the Caribbean District, which has remained a strong and vital part of the organization.

Alpha Clubs designed for youth in grades 1-4 were added to JOOI.

The 75th Anniversary was observed in Louisville, KY in 1993, just as the 25th and 50th Celebrations had been. That same year, Optimists in Action was conducted as a world-wide event to help those in need and included painting houses, cleaning up neighborhoods and conducting projects for youth.

"Always Buckle Children" (ABC) began in 1996 to provide education about safety for children riding in cars; and to provide assistance in acquiring, installing and using child safety seats.

Optimist International Junior Golf Championships (OIJGC) was covered by ESPN in 1997; making it the first time a service club had ever conducted an event that was televised world-wide. In 1998 the Optimist entry in the Tournament of Roses Parade won the "National" Trophy; theme for the float was "Hav'n Fun."

The Childhood Cancer Campaign began in 2001, with a \$1,000,000 commitment to Johns Hopkins for childhood cancer research.

Friend of Optimist (FOO) membership category was begun in 2005 to welcome those who were interested in supporting programs and activities without taking part in the traditional club meeting structure. OIJGC expanded in 2005 to provide a Tournament of Champions competition for golfers 14-18 years of age.

Ronnie Dunn of Texas became the first female president of the organization in 2006. She was followed in 2007 by Theo Golding of Jamaica, who became the first president outside of the US and Canada.

JOOI of Reading began in 2006 and the Internet Safety program began in 2008. The first Oratorical World Championships were held in St. Louis in 2016.

At the 100th International Convention in Ottawa, Ontario, President Rebecca Butler Mona reminded us:

"Each of us has an Optimist story – a favorite memory that tugs at your heartstring of a child's face or a parent's grateful words of thanks following a club project. Many of us have memories of the positive impact being an Optimist has had on us as individuals as well, not just on those we serve. Sometimes we do not even know the impact we have, but it matters, even if it makes a difference in just one."

Childhood Health and Wellness was introduced in 2018 to expand support to families beyond those dealing with cancer. JOOI dropped the "Octagon" and became Junior Optimist International (JOI).

In July of 2019, members flocked to Louisville again to celebrate the centennial of the organization. This brings us to the present and reminds us that the future is really up to us. We have a strong and proud history; it is our responsibility to carry that forward and continue the commitment to strive to give our best to the organization and each other.

The above is from a presentation by District Historian Ardis Moody at the 2020 Virtual District Convention.

Clubs Are Still

Finding Ways to Serve!

What may well have been the busiest club in August was the **Blair Optimist Club**. On August 7th, 26 couples participated in the Club's Glo-Golf fundraiser. The event included golf, dinner, raffle, and more golf. Prior to starting, the golfers were able to purchase Mulligans just in case they might need one!

On August 15th the **Blair Club** sponsored the Washington County Bike Rodeo. The rodeo included games, an obstacle course, a "Fix-it-Station", prizes, and each child received a helmet. In addition the State Patrol Persuader (a rollover simulator) was there and the youth were able to feel and see what a rollover accident is like and how important seatbelts are.



Helping the Optimists sponsor the rodeo were the Blair Chamber of Commerce, Blair Police Dept, and Washington County Sheriff's Department.

Blair Optimists weren't done yet! On August 31st they sponsored the 4th Annual First Responders Appreciation Cook-Out with the help of other businesses and organizations and volunteers.

The **Norfolk Panther JOI Clubs** received \$600.00 from the Youth Philanthropy Contest to help sponsor the STOMP Out Epilepsy & SUDEP event which will be held on September 19th. **Norfolk Noon** will also help sponsor the event. The Optimist logo will be on the t-shirts and the Optimists will have a table to display

Optimist information, and the Optimists will be helping to set-up and helping with registration.

The **Lincoln Friends OC** designed and made cards of encouragement for the patients and staff in the COVID units at the two Lincoln Hospitals. They also included a \$100 gift card to purchase cookies for the staff at both units.

The **Fairbury Club** bought 100 masks from Shumsky's and donated them to Fairbury Public Schools. A great way to promote the organization as well as to help stem the virus.

South Sioux City has received a Childhood Health and Wellness matching grant of \$500. With the grant, the club was able to give \$1,000 to a family whose child has leukemia. Along with the funds were items such as books, crayons, puzzles and so on donated by the Optimist Club members for child to keep him occupied during his hospital stay and recovery time.

The **Lincoln Evening Club** purchased and donated children-sized disposable face masks to Christ Academy Pre-School & Childcare. They donated reusable adult-sized face masks to the employees of the Children's Center in Lincoln.

Broken Bow Optimists have started their annual Youth Football program for students in 1st grade – 4th grade. The season will consist of four weeks of games.

The **Ogallala Optimist Club** is once again making their presence known in their community. They have recently made an \$11,000 donation to support the Collister Park Renovation - Unity Project.. The park will be a fully accessible

playground for all youth. It will include all-inclusive surfacing, and water features during the summer months.



Pictured left to right are Project Committee members Luis Juarez, Tim Vap, Suzy Vap, Lore Beckius, **Doug Davis** (also an Optimist Board member), Sherry Ramig, and Optimist Board members Morgan Delezene, Bud Morrell, Shelly Witt, and Kendall Hickam.

Optiforum: Recognizing and Managing Unconscious Bias

On Thursday September 17th, at 10 AM, Optimist International is hosting a Zoom panel discussion on unconscious bias. The goal is to educate and make Optimists and our communities aware of unconscious bias and instill a new perspective.

The notice announcing the Optiforum states, "For too long we have shied away from difficult and sensitive conversations for fear it would create a divide within our communities. Contrarily, pretending these differences don't exist is what creates the divide."

The panel will consist of panelists and will be moderated by OI President Adrian Elcock. The forum will last for one hour.

The Optiforum is free to Optimist members and \$10 for non-Optimists. If you haven't registered, check your email inbox for notification that was sent to members earlier this month. The email is from President Adrian Elcock.

Addendum:

Zone Membership Scorecard

Bragging Rights

Remember the Zone challenges?? You have until the end of the month to help your Zone earn the "Better Zone" of two in your competition. The win goes to the Zone that has the bigger INCREASE in MEMBERS, **not the number totals**; Zones must be positive.

With 23 days to go, the current standings are: Zone 1, -04 vs. Zone 3, -04 (tie)
Zone 2, -28 vs. Zone 7, -02
Zone 4, -14 vs. Zone 9, -12
Zone 6, -28 vs. Zone 8, -23
Zone 5E, -6 vs. Zone 5W, -3

**There are several Clubs with positive membership status.
Congratulations to:**

Zone 1 Blair and "Big O"

Zone 4 Norfolk-Noon and O'Neill

Zone 7 David City

Zone 9 Paxton

Zone 3 Plattsmouth

Zone 6 Lincoln West and Lincoln Friends

Zone 8 Lexington

Kudos to the LINCOLN WEST OPTIMIST CLUB who is currently reigning as the largest Club in the Nebraska District with 90 members, followed by Gretna with 88 members, Minden with 64 members, and Lexington and Ogallala tied with 61 members each. A couple new members here or there could shake things up a bit. Look over the incentives , then JUST ASK!

Suggestion: Try to report your new members to Optimist International by September 27 as the computers may crash at the last minute.