

Optimist

First Quarter 2023-2024

Optimist International
President Tracy Huxley

Optimism
with a capital "O"



Optimist
INTERNATIONAL

106th

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION



NIAGARA FALLS

Sheraton Fallsview and Crowne Plaza, Niagara Falls, ON, Canada

DATE UPDATE:
June 22-26!

Kicking off with the Opening Celebration on Saturday evening, June 22, and wrapping up on Wednesday, June 26, with optional events, including breakfast with 2024-25 International President Jan Oord Graves in the morning and tours in the afternoon.

Visit optimist.org/convention
for a full schedule and more information.



MISSION STATEMENT

By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities, and ourselves.

VISION STATEMENT

Optimist International will be recognized worldwide as the first volunteer organization that values all children and helps them develop to their full potential.

PURPOSES OF OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

To develop optimism as a philosophy of life utilizing the tenets of the Optimist Creed; to promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs; to inspire respect for the law; to promote patriotism and work for international agreement and friendship among all people; to aid and encourage the development of youth, in the belief that the giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life, and the world.

THE OPTIMIST CREED

Promise Yourself-

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet.

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.

To think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.



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Optimist

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On the Cover

Tracy Huxley, her partner Nigel Small, her canine companion Mr. Balou Magoo and children Talia, Kevin, Ada, Noelle, Cameron and Addi. Photo by Katie Gordon Photography.

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Meet your 2023-2024
Optimist International
President, Tracy Huxley

Optimist

with a capital “O”

by **Eric Neyens**
Southwest Ontario District

Not many people live and breathe everything Optimist quite like President Tracy Huxley. If you were to ask her, “What is the first thing that comes to mind when the word Optimist is mentioned?” she would reply with: “Opportunity.” Opportunity to “Give Back.” Opportunity to “bring out the best.” Opportunity to spread hope and positivity by being an optimist ... an Optimist with a capital “O.”







International. While attending 10th grade at North Lambton Secondary School, she participated in the 1992 HOBY Eastern Ontario Leadership Seminar at the University of Toronto. This event and others helped Tracy set her sights on making a positive difference in many lives, young and old! Her father, Ron, became a member of the Ausable-Port Franks Optimist Club in 1983. Watching her dad do great things for the community inspired Tracy to join the same club in 1996.

Over the last few years, President Tracy has gained a passion for personal development. As an Optimist Certified International Trainer, Tracy takes her love of helping others and her desire to see Optimist International succeed very seriously. Through training, Tracy discovered her passion for public speaking, which went beyond taking a microphone and standing in front of an audience; it rippled into helping others reach their full potential. She says, "I loved developing training material that centered around personal development like "Bringing Out the Best in Ourselves," "Members: Our Most Valuable Assets," "Recognition, Motivation, and Inspiration," and her very first workshop, titled: "We Work So Hard, Why Do We Let You Go?"

With every new role she has taken on, Tracy has been drawn to bringing others along for the ride. When she was Club President, she worked on expanding the responsibilities of the Board and membership to allow new people to do their own roles and created an opportunity for mentoring and job shadowing. When Tracy was Lt. Governor, she created a fun "Pat on the Back" award for Clubs to find a way to recognize a member each quarter that was not typically identified, helping every member realize how they are making a difference in their work. When she was Governor, she continued this ritual by looking for hidden treasures of members in clubs and again each quarter asking Club Presidents to recognize members for the great things they were doing. She considers herself a relationship-based leader, once stating: "When I see someone on my team become a stronger and more productive version of themselves, I feel accomplished in my role as a leader. We are all leaders in our own right, it's just finding that thing that makes you tick to help make a difference."

President Tracy believes that to embrace a better future for everyone, you need to embrace what it means to be an Optimist with a capital "O." To her, saying that you want to do great things for the youth in our communities isn't enough. There are multiple organizations with youth as their focus, and anyone can align themselves with an organization to make a difference in the life of a child.

Let's get to know Tracy a bit more. She resides in London, Ontario, with her loving partner, Nigel, and their Australian Shepherd, Balou Magoo. She is a devoted stepmom to Daniel and Sabrena and a hard-working goldsmith who makes beautiful jewelry. She keeps busy in her down time as a Certified Professional Dog Trainer and Certified Trick Dog Instructor (CPDT-KA and CTDI). She has attended several 'HOBY' (Hugh O' Brian Youth) seminars as both an ambassador and a board committee member, has served on the Children's Health Foundation of Southwestern Ontario, has visited seven different countries, and has more than 15 different email addresses! That's all before she even starts volunteering with Optimist. I don't know about you, but I'm tired just reading that résumé!

Tracy was born in London, Ontario, to parents Ron and Debbie Huxley, but she grew up in Port Franks, Ontario, for most of her childhood. Since she was a child, she has been involved, in one way or another, with Optimist

So why be an Optimist? Because we're supposed to be just that, Optimists! Optimistic people. We have a three-tiered mission statement: By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, their communities, and themselves.

Her ideal vision for the future of Optimist International is that we are identified by peers for being a youth-centered organization that values its members so much we bring out the best in them! That by living the Optimist Creed, the community around us is drawn towards us as if magnetically. Instead of being a club that feeds off drama and gossip or focuses too intensely on holding power or receiving credit, she sees a future where each member knows how to put things into perspective, focuses on solutions instead of problems, and lives closely by the fundamentals of the Optimist Creed!

If we start CARE-ing for ourselves and our members, we will set an example in our communities, especially with the youth, on how to live life as an Optimist. When we start seeing more Optimists with capital O's, we can start serving more youth and more communities.

Tracy's all-time favorite memories of involvement with Optimist International would have to be each time someone comes up to her and mentions that her efforts during COVID with virtual social events gave them hope when isolation was unbearable. A favorite event she held was called "Guessing Jams in Our Jam Jams." At first it was a personal way for her to stay positive; to see friends when they couldn't gather in-person was exactly what she, and many other people, needed. Noting that this was how so many others were feeling too, she reached out to her best friend who lives 800 km (500 miles) away and said, "Let's start something where, if nothing else, we're hanging out together on a weekly basis! Best-case scenario, others are joining in on the awesomeness too!" Events with some music, a little healthy competition and of course a lot of laughs are her favorites. She was a beacon of light during a very dark moment in our lives.

Her best accolade, by far, was being elected to the highly prestigious role of Optimist International President, even though she was not excited at first to run in an election. Elections have not really been a tradition until recently, but she stepped up to the challenge!

Tracy's biggest fear is not living up to her full potential, even though she says that is the "best motivator a person can have." But hey, this isn't a one-woman-show, just as it's not possible to accomplish success in one year. Success is only possible with a team of dedicated Governors, International Committees, Board Directors, professional staff, and most importantly, members. Constant growth and momentum, the ability to see needs, feel purpose, and drive ideas into action will result in an upward trajectory for all involved.

As an Optimist, President Tracy wants to see our membership retention increase by 5 percent, with more attention to the 3rd pillar: 'Bringing Out the Best in Ourselves.' Finally, she wants to see more communities worldwide being serviced by Optimists who are living life as Optimists with a giant capital "O."

President Tracy doesn't just have goals for her life as an Optimist, she has some lofty life goals as well. For example, she really wants to travel and see more of the world, get a puppy in the fall of 2024, eventually own her own property in the country so she can have a sprawling litter of beautiful puppies (with Nigel's buy-in of course), and take over the reins of RG Huxley Jewelers, allowing her parents to successfully retire.

President Tracy has always had a great respect for the rich 106-year history of our organization. At the same time, she has her eyes laser focused on our future, and



with this focus will come change. “Tweaks and adjustments” has been the phrase she’s been saying often with her team over this last year. Our President believes success is possible, saying, “With dedication, patience, and teamwork, we can set a direction for Optimist International that raises the bar and highlights our impact in all the communities we serve.” This clearly must be a team effort. An OI team effort. Because who is “OI?” Who makes the decisions and is the driving force in the future direction of this organization? Every member of every Club.

President Tracy’s goals and plans for the next year of Optimism may seem a little lofty in places. To increase retention; develop a stronger sense of Optimism and what it means to be an Optimist with a capital “O;” increase revenue streams outside of dues revenue; look at different opportunities for true-blood optimists to be Optimists with a capital “O” and join our movement in one form or another. Now it’s time for all Optimists to come together and join this movement, with a semblance of the level of enthusiasm most often displayed by President Tracy, so that we are the perfect example for the youth of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

From improving the website to celebrating the Canadian International Centennial, President Tracy Huxley has set some ambitious goals for her term, aiming to significantly increase revenue, retention, growth and convention attendance over the next year.

2023/2024 President’s Goals:

- Garner \$20,000 in additional, non-dues revenue through the Optimist Store and Optimist Institute.
- Increase baseline retention by 3 percent via C.A.R.E. program.
- Increase new member growth 13 percent to pre-COVID levels through new membership options, non-traditional club models, expanding in underserved locations, and the creation of a program to bridge the gap between Junior Optimist International and adult Optimist Clubs.
- Increase Junior Optimist International summit attendance 20 percent.
- Foster 20 percent Club participation per District in the C.A.R.E. program, in the first year, through C.A.R.E. facilitator training and outreach to Club officers.
- Educate and assist Districts and Clubs on differing impacts of external marketing and internal communications.
- Enhance the Optimist International website to be more externally facing.
- Encourage Clubs, Zones and Districts to elect new members in leadership roles avoiding the reliance on repeat leadership.
- Aim for a minimum of 800 registrations for convention by offering more value and recognizing that the annual Optimist Convention needs to offer more to attendees than meetings and training.
- Make convention registration available no later than February 2024.
- Make a training and workshop outline for the convention available no later than April 1, 2024.
- Encourage all Clubs and Districts, not just Canadian Clubs and Districts, to plan and host celebrations and tributes to the Canadian International Centennial to recognize the diversity of our organization.

A Little Bit About the Author

Eric Neyens first became involved with the Optimist Club of West Lorne, Ontario, when he was 11 years old. Tracy met him that same year, at his first Oratorical District Competition in Southwestern Ontario. She watched him come back for many years to compete, and their friendship began.

Eric is a 5-time SWONT district Oratorical finalist. In 2016, He won the SWONT District Essay contest scholarship. In 2015, Eric attended the HOBY Western Ontario seminar and continued to be involved with HOBY for many years after. Eric also continues to be involved with his local Optimist Club at different events.

Today, Eric is 23 years old, has completed his education in TV and Film Production at Fanshawe College, and is becoming a professional photographer, videographer and advanced drone pilot. He hopes to travel the world full time, make fascinating documentaries as a content creator, and to inspire others along the way. In his spare time, Eric loves making art and can usually be found deep in nature, getting his next eye-catching wildlife photo.

Letter from the Editor

Hope Lives Here

By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves. We've all said these words, our mission drives everything we do, but what is hope? Webster's definition of hope is "to cherish a desire with anticipation; to want something to happen or be true". Hope is essential for our existence, it helps us navigate challenges, overcome obstacles and maintain a positive outlook on the world around us.

But did you know hope cultivates optimism? Hope leads us to a greater sense of satisfaction and happiness. By being an Optimist, you spread and share hope not only with each other but those outside of your club, including those who benefit from the work you do in your community.

I especially like this quote from Magic Johnson regarding kids and hope:

"All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them."

How powerful is it to think about hope as a gift you're giving to other people, especially the youth of our communities? Hope is a force multiplier; it inspires us to set goals and work to achieve them; hopeful people often radiate positivity to those around them and encourage stronger relationships and it can even lead to better health. But that's not all. Hope can lead to greater academic achievement and even greater career success because it fosters persistence and proactive behaviors.

As we move through this year, let's center ourselves on the hope we provide by being Optimists, and even more importantly the hope we can provide others through the work we do and how we choose to do it, with hope and optimism, after all, Hope Lives Here!



Cheryl Brenn
Executive Director



Calendar

A look at what's coming up for Optimist International

OCTOBER

- Optimist New Year
- Q1 Oct/Nov/Dec



NOVEMBER

- Optimist Junior Golf: Tournament of Champions
- World Kindness Day
- Giving Tuesday
- Webinar: A New Year... New Opportunities
- Optimist International Board of Director's Meeting



DECEMBER

- Optimist Junior Golf: Hugh Cranford All Scholastic Scholarship Application opens
- First Quarter Magazine release
- Webinar: Sharing the Gift of Optimism
- Club of the Year submissions due

JANUARY

- Q2 Jan/Feb/Mar
- MLK Day of Service
- Webinars: Making Club Gatherings FUN! and Educating, Inspiring and Engaging ALL Members
- Registration and housing open for the 2024 International Convention

FEBRUARY

- Optimist Day
- Second Quarter Magazine release
- Random Acts of Kindness Day
- Webinar: Communicating Across Generations
- IRS Annual Filing due for all U.S. Optimist Clubs, the IRS annual 990 series returns are due
- Junior Optimist Reading Month



MARCH

- Optimist International Board of Director's Meeting
- Regional Vice Presidents and Governors-Elect Conferences
- International Day of Happiness
- OIF & CCOF Club Grant deadline
- Webinar: A New Way to Build New Clubs

of Events

2023-2024

APRIL

- Q3 Apr/May/June
- Deadline for Districts to submit Winners for Essay Contest
- National Volunteer Week
- Global Youth Service Day
- Webinars: Staying Optimistic in Difficult Times and Adding Officers via the Club Officer Elect Revisions (COER) Form in Optimist Leaders

MAY

- Optimists in Action Month
- Third Quarter Magazine release
- Optimist Junior Golf: Hugh Cranford All Scholastic winners announced
- Webinars: Celebrate Community: Developing Community Partnerships and Updating Bylaws in Optimist Leaders
- Deadline for Districts to submit winners for Oratorical Contest
- Early bird registration deadline for International Convention



JUNE

- Webinar: Everything You Need to Know before Attending the International Convention 2024
- National Children's Day
- Optimist International Board of Directors Meeting
- Deadline for Districts to submit Winners for CCDHH
- Deadline for Clubs to submit winners for Visual Arts Competition
- Optimist International Convention



JULY

- Junior Optimist International Summit
- Q4 July/Aug/Sept
- World Oratorical Contest
- Optimist International Junior Golf Championship



AUGUST

- Fourth Quarter Magazine release
- National Nonprofit Day



SEPTEMBER

- Webinar: Professional Growth and Improvement (PGI) and Professional Development Program (PDP) Revamped!
- International Day of Charity
- Deadline to submit Club Pride Report
- National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
- Closing of the Optimist Year
- Celebrate Community 2024



Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the first Optimist Club formed outside the United States in Toronto, Canada. We invite you to join us in Niagara Falls, Canada, June 22-26, to celebrate the nations that are now providing Optimism around the world.

**How can your Club or District celebrate this milestone of Optimist history throughout the year?
Here are a few community service project ideas:**

- Collect 100 cans of food for a food pantry or 100 coats for children in need.
- Do 100 hours of community service.
- Gather 100 Optimist members & local volunteers for a trash pick-up day.
- Host a centennial silent auction and use the proceeds for community projects.
- Help 100 needy families throughout the year.
- Organize a centennial beautification project somewhere in your community.
- Build 100 feet of wheelchair ramps for underprivileged disabled people.
- Paint a park bench to celebrate 100 years of Optimist International.
- Plant a tree in the community with Centennial placard.
- Work with your local Chamber of Commerce to declare an Optimist Day of Service. Publicize the proclamation at schools and businesses, in newspapers and on websites and social media.
- Coordinate a 100-mile bike rally, walk-a-thon or run with a centennial theme.
- As part of a community project, plant a centennial vegetable garden.
- Organize a book drive and read to children at your local school or library.
- Host a service project marathon. Pledge to volunteer 100 hours.
- Hold an Optimist bake sale at local flea market.
- Host an Easter Egg Hunt for 100 special needs children.
- Have members donate 100 pints of blood to the Red Cross.
- Host a Centennial lunch or dinner and feed 100 Veterans.
- Sponsor 100 special needs children to attend a week-long summer camp.
- Sponsor a Heritage Day demonstrating all types of vintage crafts. Invite children.
- Host a picnic for 100 Families and promote your club.
- Purchase 100 toys for foster children.
- Place 100 Flags throughout your city or town on Flag Day.
- Give away 100 care packages (toiletries, snacks, etc.) to the homeless.



Celebrate + Address + Recognize = Excel

The new **C.A.R.E. program** is a structured plan for clubs to celebrate accomplishments while resolving issues and strengthening membership. The four-step annual program is designed to help keep Optimist Club membership healthy, strong and engaged, while allowing everyone to feel they have a voice in their Club's direction.

Celebrate

Host an annual party for your Club members. Send out invites and ask a fellow Optimist to facilitate the program. Celebrate the Club's accomplishments and discuss the impact you have had in your community over cake.

Send out anonymous member surveys through Survey Monkey or JotForm two weeks before the event. It's important that the survey be anonymous so that members can give honest feedback.

Include these four questions:

1. What do you think went well this year?
2. What do you feel the Club needs to work on?
3. What makes you happy to be a member of your Optimist Club?
4. Do you have a new idea for a Club community service project, youth activity or fundraiser?

Address

Have the guest facilitator review the survey responses and have an open, unbiased discussion. Be sure to ask a person who is not a member of your Club to be your facilitator. Some facilitator suggestions include a past or current Governor, Lt. Governor or member of a nearby Club.

Address any reasons why members might leave the Club and make a list of potential improvements.

Recognize

Recognize any issues, areas for improvement and ways to strengthen membership, then create an opportunity to recognize members for their accomplishments, exceptional work and efforts throughout the year. Honor members with appreciation awards or a Member of the Year award.

Excel

Plan to move forward together as a stronger Club.

Visit optimistinstitute.org for C.A.R.E. forms and other resources.



Optimist Institute

A Member Benefit

Optimist Institute is a free subscription giving all Optimist members access to the quickly growing content. Your subscription is renewable annually and you can contact your District Governor for registration information.

What does the Optimist Institute include?


- Leadership skills development courses
- Technical skills development courses
- Optimism courses
- Videos and other motivational items
- International Convention videos and handouts
- Optimist International New Club Series
- Optimist International Club officer training
- Optimist International Professional Development Plan
- Optimist International Personal Growth and Involvement Plan
- Video, recorded webinars, and motivational blog posts

The content will continue to grow and serve as a great resource and learning tool for all Optimist Members! Did we mention the fee is now \$0 for all Members?!

optimistinstitute.org



Follow the Optimist
Institute on Facebook



2023-2024 Webinars

Save the dates for our leadership webinars! Webinars are held on the second Monday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., Central Standard Time. Registration information is available on the upcoming events page of the website, so mark your calendars! Send an email to leadership@optimist.org for more information.

► **Monday, January 8, 2024**

Making Club Gatherings FUN!
Presented by Edie Harris

► **Monday, January 29, 2024**

Optimist Institute: Educating, Inspiring,
and Engaging ALL Members
Presented by Heather Myers

► **Monday, February 12, 2024**

Communicating Across Generations
Presented by Pam Moehl

► **Monday, March 11, 2024**

A New Way to Build New Clubs
Presented by Staff and Volunteers

► **Monday, April 8, 2024**

Staying Optimistic in Difficult Times

► **Monday, April 29, 2024**

Adding Officers via the COER Form
in Optimist Leaders
Presented by Leadership Development
and Club Support Staff

► **Monday, May 13, 2024**

Celebrate Community: Developing
Community Partnerships
Presented by EDs/CEOs of Optimist,
Lions, Kiwanis, and Rotary

► **Wednesday, May 29, 2024**

Updating Bylaws in Optimist Leaders
Presented by Leadership Development
and Club Support Staff

► **Monday, June 10, 2024**

Everything You Need to Know before
Attending Convention 2024
Presented by Convention Chair Lyle Merriam
and Host Area Chair Michelle Stokes

► **Monday, September 9, 2024**

PGI and PDP Revamped!
Presented by Deanna Morrow,
Jan Oord Graves, and Heather Myers

How to update your Club Roster

To update your Club roster online go to the Optimist Institute website: optimistinstitute.org
Simply choose "Quick Reference Guides" on the left-hand side, scroll down to the fourth and fifth row of modules, and click "View" for the module you need (Completing a Club Roster Adjustment (CRA) Addition Online, Completing a Club Roster Adjustment (CRA) Deletion Online, or Editing a Club Members's Information Online).

Welcome New Members

More than 500 Optimist Clubs around the world participated in our latest Member drive, and about 30 percent of them added at least one new Member. That's a lot of new Members, and each of them brings fresh, new ideas to our organization. If you're one of them, welcome!

Welcome to Optimist International, a community-service nonprofit committed to creating a more optimistic future through our many innovative programs. You are joining a global network of more than 50,000 Optimists who share your passion for making a difference.

We hope you enjoy your Membership! Remember, you're not alone in your journey. Our international staff is here to answer your questions, provide marketing and communications support, and help with any issues you encounter. Together, we can bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves. Thank you for being an Optimist!



Here are some highlights of what Optimist International has to offer:

- **Scholarship Programs:** Optimist International sponsors several scholarship contests for students, such as the Essay Contest, Oratorical Contest, and Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. These contests provide opportunities for young people to showcase their talents and win educational scholarships. You can help organize and promote these contests in your local community and support the winners as they advance in their academic and professional careers.
- **Junior Optimist International:** Junior Optimist International (JOI) is the youth branch of Optimist International, which empowers students to become leaders and volunteers in their communities. JOI Clubs are typically sponsored by Optimist Clubs but operate independently, with their own officers and projects. As an Optimist Member, you can mentor and guide JOI Members and help them develop their skills and potential.
- **Optimist Junior Golf:** Optimist Junior Golf is one of the largest and most prestigious junior golf events in the world, attracting thousands of participants from more than 40 countries. Optimist Clubs host

qualifying tournaments for junior golfers, who can advance to the annual Optimist International Junior Golf Championship in Miami, Florida. You can get involved in this program by volunteering at local tournaments, sponsoring golfers, or playing in our parent-child tournament.

- **Leadership Development:** Optimist International provides various resources and opportunities for personal and leadership development. Through the Optimist Institute, you can access online courses, webinars and workshops on topics such as communication, teamwork and project management. You can also take on leadership roles at the Club, District, or international level and gain valuable experience and recognition.

These are just some of the programs that Optimist International offers. We hope you also participate in our other community activities, and we look forward to seeing you at our next International Convention, scheduled for June 22-26, 2024, in Niagara Falls, Canada!



PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES



Childhood Health and Wellness

The Childhood Health & Wellness Program builds on the highly successful Childhood Cancer Campaign to expand our impact. Clubs and Districts will 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.

Optimist Photography Contest

Photographers for the contest should be students at any age up through high school and prior to post-secondary education. Students are asked to submit photos that illustrate/exemplify one of the ten verses/lines of “The Optimist Creed”. This contest’s purpose is to expose young people to “The Optimist Creed” and our philosophy of Optimism and to assist them with developing an interest in the area of photography.

A Kaleidoscope of the Performing Arts

The term “performing arts” refers to forms of art in which artists use their voices, bodies, or inanimate objects to convey artistic expression. The performing arts include a range of disciplines which are performed in front of a live audience. Performing arts may include dance, music, opera, theater and musical theater, magic, illusion, mime, spoken word, puppetry, and even circus arts. Talent showcases highlighting these performing arts are not only fun, but innovative, giving young people the opportunity to express themselves using their own unique talents.

Optimists Spark Fun in the Park

This Optimist International event is staged at the club level annually where clubs can choose any date to host their event. This fun and exciting event has been designed to target JOI and College Club members, working with adult Optimist Club Members. The event will further facilitate camaraderie between JOI, College Club Members, adult Optimist Members, and the community at large, while providing an avenue for meaningful interaction and care for children with differing abilities by our Optimist Members at all levels. It is a fun way of sharing our philosophy of Optimism to a wider cross section of the children we serve globally.

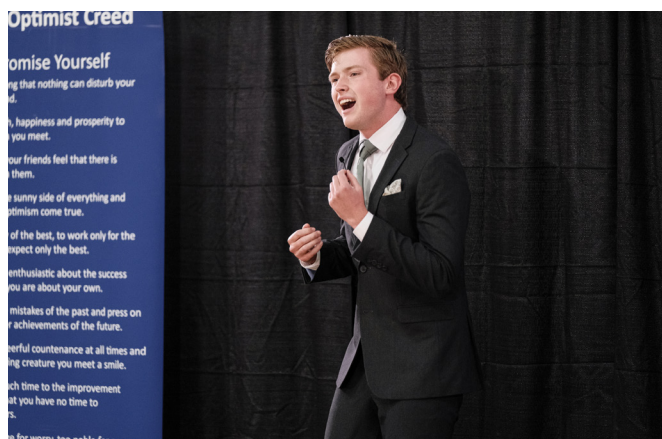
Youth Appreciation

Optimists recognize youth for a variety of reasons, including their achievements at school, dedication to community service, improvement in their grades and doing their best in sports or the arts. This activity allows Optimists to build the self-esteem of the youth in their community and show them that their efforts and hard work really do make a difference.



Tri-Star Sports

This is an optional activity Clubs can sponsor that focuses on three skills competitions in each of the following sports: basketball, baseball, soccer, football, hockey, golf, volleyball, and curling. More detailed information about Tri-Star is available in the Tri-Star Planning Guide.



Optimist International Oratorical World Championships

The Optimist Oratorical Contest offers youth the opportunity to speak to the world. More than \$150,000 in college scholarships funded by the Optimist International Foundations is awarded annually from this program. First conducted in 1928, this is the second most popular Optimist International Program. Nearly 2,000 clubs participate in this program each year. The winners at the Club level receive medallions and Zone winners receive a plaque. Districts have the opportunity to provide a first place scholarship of \$2,500, a second place scholarship of \$1,500, and a third place scholarship of \$1,000.

International Day of Happiness

The International Day of Happiness in March is an annual activity that encourages Optimist Clubs and Members to host an event showing how their Optimist Club shares happiness with the youth and their community.

Avenue of Flags

Share your Optimism and patriotic spirit in the community with an Avenue of Flags project. This Fundraiser can help support youth programs and scholarships in your community!

Respect for Law

Optimist Clubs participate in activities to inspire respect for law enforcement among young people and to educate them on the jobs these brave men and women perform. Events are also held to promote a sense of well-being in the community such as child ID events, poster or essay contests on alternatives to violence and various family-friendly activities.

Youth Safety

This activity focuses on teaching youth about important safety issues that they encounter every day, such as traveling in a car or on the school bus and riding their bike. Optimist events such as a bicycle rodeo can make learning safety skills fun for everyone involved.

Kids Speak Out

The 'Kids Speak Out' program is broadening its scope to engage children in our primary/preparatory and elementary schools to compete with peers from their own and neighboring schools. All young people can compete in the Optimist Oratorical Contest. The "Kids Speak Out" contest is a "pre-Oratorical" program that provides a competition for younger speakers.

Essay Contest

The Essay Contest is sponsored by Optimist International to give young people the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the world in which they live. The approach can encompass a young person's personal experience, the experience of their country or a more historical perspective. Participants also have the opportunity to win a college scholarship! One District Scholarship of \$2,500 is awarded.

Communication Contest for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

This contest offers youth who are deaf or hard-of-hearing the opportunity to gain skills and confidence from their experience presenting in front of a large audience. Patterned after the Optimist Oratorical Contest, the contest offers youth the chance to compete in speech or sign language with the chance to win a college scholarship. One District Scholarship of \$2,500 is awarded.



2024 Optimist International Visual Arts Competition

This exciting competition is designed to encourage and celebrate youth visual art skills and gives the youth we serve another outlet for their creativity! The contest is held for youth 11 or younger (as of Oct. 1, 2023) at the club level and international level. The topic this year is Hope. Drawings can be submitted until May 1, 2024. Cash prizes are awarded for the drawings selected. Send inquiries to communications@optimist.org.

Optimist Programs and Activities are updated and added often, so be sure to visit the Optimist website and/or subscribe to our quarterly Optimist magazine for any changes and new program and activity announcements.

INTERNATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS



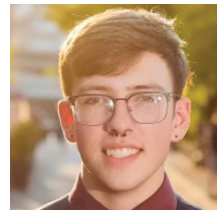
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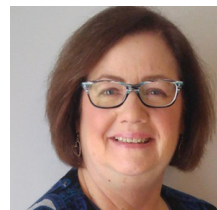
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Save the date!

Optimist Day

Feb 1st 2024

What is Optimist Day?

Optimist Day is the first Thursday in February. Optimist International Clubs and Members celebrate Optimist Day to encourage positive thoughts and actions and bring awareness to their community projects.

How do Communities Celebrate Optimist Day?

In addition to our Clubs and Members, many local governments issue proclamations to celebrate the volunteers who share their enthusiasm, skills and talent to make tomorrow a vibrant and peaceful one.

How can you honor and celebrate Optimist Day?

You can celebrate Optimist Day by volunteering in your community, teaming up with your local Optimist Club, or doing something that brings out optimism in yourself or others.

The next Optimist Day is Feb. 1, 2024

Members of Optimist International around the world encourage everyone to make random acts of kindness every day and especially on Feb. 1, 2024, as we all celebrate Optimist Day!

It is also a great day to promote the Optimist brand by wearing Optimist shirts, pins, hats and other attire, post photos of your volunteer activities on social media and tag Optimist International or use the #OptimistDay and #OptimistDay2024 hashtags. You can also send your photos to: marketing@optimist.org, and they could be featured in future publications.





Upper Left: Dwight Phillips (Riverside Optimist Club) and Shane Poisson (Reach for the Stars Optimist Club) sanding head-boards and foot-boards; Middle: Various Kiwanis, Community and Sleep in Heavenly Peace members sanding side rails; Right: Marlene Phillips (Riverside Optimist Club) presenting \$4,500 donation to Sleep in Heavenly Peace President, Brian Cyncora. Lower Left: Riverside Optimist, Windsor Kiwanis and Sleep in Heavenly Peace Banners; Middle: Tima Poisson and Denise Romanovich (Reaching For the Stars Optimist Club) finish sanding the head-boards and foot-boards before assembly; Right: Lori Stillwell (Kiwanis member) and Dwight Phillips (Riverside Optimist Club).'

Celebrate Community 2023

The Optimist Club of Riverside, Windsor Optimist Club, Optimist Club of South Windsor, and Reaching for the Stars Optimist Club of Windsor and Essex County participated in a Celebrate Community project Sept. 24 to build beds for underprivileged children.

"Today was a good day! Twenty-seven beds built thanks to our region's Optimist Clubs," the Clubs wrote on Facebook.

The Optimist Clubs worked with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a Canadian nonprofit, to build the beds. The Kiwanis Windsor Club and University of Windsor Circle K International also participated in the project.

Mark your calendars for Celebrate Community 2024, September 8-14

During Celebrate Community week, members of Optimist International, Lions Clubs International, Rotary International and Kiwanis International shared ideas and collaborated on projects. In addition to projects like those in Windsor, efforts focused on issues related to health and wellness, food insecurity and hunger, education and literacy, and the environment.



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Hello fellow Junior Optimists!

My name is Mason McSwegin, and I am honored to serve as your Junior Optimist International President for the 2023-2024 year. I am from Dayton, Ohio, and I am currently a Junior at the Dayton Regional STEM School. I have been in this organization for over seven years and have served the roles of Club President, Lieutenant Governor, and International Board of Directors.

One goal for this year is to improve communication from the International level down to Districts and Clubs. One of the ways we will achieve this is by maintaining our Quarterly Meetings, which serve as a vital platform for sharing essential updates, ideas, and strategies across our organization. Another one of my goals is to improve member retention. This is a very important goal of mine because attracting new members is essential, but nurturing and retaining existing ones is equally important. One of the ways to help with retention is by providing more support options for clubs and districts that might be going through a rough patch. If your club notices another one in your local community struggling, reach out and offer a helping hand because we are all in this together.

One of the main ideas that Past International President Fatima and I came up with to help with member retention is to expand the YPOC program. For those who do not know, YPOC stands for Young Professionals Optimist Club. This will serve as a bridge between the youth and adult clubs, which aligns with this year's theme of "Building Bridges with Optimism." The YPOC program not only empowers young adults to stay connected with the Optimist organization, but it also helps to seamlessly integrate them from the youth side of the organization to the adult-oriented programs and responsibilities within the organization.

I'm incredibly excited to collaborate with my board to make these goals a reality. I can't wait to work with each and every one of you to make this year truly amazing. I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to every JOI member and advisor because, without your unwavering support, none of this would be possible. I'm looking forward to advancing our organization and working alongside all of you throughout the year. If you have any ideas, questions, or anything else you'd like to discuss, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your input is invaluable, and together, we'll make this year a fantastic optimist year!

Mason McSwegin
Junior Optimist International President, 2023-2024



Visual Arts Calendar Contest

If you missed the chance to purchase a bundle of 10 calendars from the online store, or are not interested in purchasing that many, you are in luck. Contact marketing@optimist.org and submit a request for the number of calendars you need at \$8.50 each plus shipping.

The 12 young artists to have their artwork featured in our upcoming calendar are:

1. Jax Chase, Optimist Club of West Lorne, Ontario (cover winner)
2. Ambrie Cotnoir, Optimist Club of Tri-Town of Mechanic Falls, Maine
3. Mia Erickson, Optimist Club of Prior Lake-Savage, Minnesota
4. Kaylee Fletcher, Optimist Club of Hickory Flat, Georgia
5. Mila Heggemeyer, Optimist Club of Prior Lake-Savage, Minnesota
6. Jordyn Jones, Optimist Club of Green Valley-Sahuartia, Arizona
7. Kaden Leighty, Optimist Club of New Ulm, Minnesota
8. Kadee McClurg, Optimist Club of Chesterfield, Indiana
9. Amelia Legut-Petersen, Optimist Club of Ausable-Port Franks, Ontario
10. Kennedy Phillips, Optimist Club of Hickory Flat, Georgia
11. Paisley Rennie, Optimist Club of Tillsonburg and Area, Ontario
12. Noriah Womack, Optimist Club of Tuscaloosa County-Metropolitan, Alabama

Please encourage anyone you know 11 years old or under as of Oct. 1, 2023, to submit to next year's visual arts contest.

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Hello Superheroes,

I chose my theme this year “Be A Superhero.” The definition of a hero is “distinguished courage or ability admired for their brave deeds and noble qualities” and when you add “super” to that the hero becomes someone with special powers that are used for helping people. I want to thank all of you that donate to the foundation for being a “Superhero.” As Optimists we can support the foundation by having an open mind and heart to listen and understand what the OI Foundation is about, what and how it supports our clubs and districts and ultimately our youth and communities.

I think it is important to communicate and educate about the importance and value of becoming a donor to the OI Foundation to include all the ways the Foundation supports clubs through the Scholarship Programs, Club Grant Programs, Childhood Health and Wellness and much more. We are all Philanthropists because we donate our time, experience, skills and talent to help create a better world. For some of us that includes donating money. My goal is to increase our donations from 8% to 15% through education and communication. Communicating especially with our District and Club Foundation Reps who in turn will communicate with our members.

Optimists can first and foremost support the Foundation by having an open mind and heart to listen and understand what the foundation is about, what and how it supports our clubs and programs through many Foundation Programs. The easiest way to support the foundation is to become a Dime-A-Day member with a \$36.50 donation. But in reality, any amount that a member is able to donate supports the foundation's efforts. In addition, support can come from fundraising done by the club and put into the club's yearly budget. There is a great quote by Jesse Jackson that says, “If my mind can conceive it, and my heart can believe it, then I can achieve it.”

I am honored to be President of the foundation and will be working with a dynamic and dedicated Board of Directors and Foundation staff that are dedicated and passionate about this foundation which supports Optimist International.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Teri Davis".

Teri Davis
Optimist International Foundation President 2023-2024



William H. Harrison Society

The Optimist International Foundations introduced the William H. Harrison Society in 2001. The organization is named for Optimist International President William H. Harrison, the organization's first leader, whose drive and determination helped propel Optimist International into a premier service organization. The Foundations' Boards of Directors created this society as a special way to recognize their major donors.

To become a Member of the William H. Harrison Society, life-to-date giving to the Optimist International Foundations must be \$10,000 or more. Annual contributions of \$1,000 are required to maintain membership.

Members of the William H. Harrison Society will be invited to attend a recognition event with the Foundations' Boards of Directors at the International Convention.

In 2018, the Optimist International Foundation created the level of Lifetime Member of the Harrison Society. These individuals have been leaders in pushing the OIF cause to new heights and donated a minimum of \$100,000. At the convention that year in Ottawa, Canada, the inaugural members were introduced by then Optimist International Foundation President Sandy Williams.

The first group of Lifetime Members were:

- Gary Addison
- Ron Graves
- Patricia Beuoy
- Karen Monville
- Bob and Toni Garner
- Herb Strather

At the 2023 Optimist International Convention in Arlington, Virginia, two Harrison Lifetime Member inductees were introduced: Bill and Kelly Stone

We congratulate Bill and Kelly for their outstanding leadership and gracious support of the Foundation.



Bill and Kelly Stone



William H. Harrison

The William H. Harrison Society was created by the Optimist International Foundation and the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation to honor the legacy of Optimist International President William H. Harrison. Harrison was unanimously elected to serve as the first President of the new organization in 1910. He served two terms as President. Harrison, through his leadership and strength, was instrumental in uniting the new organization and developing it into the outstanding civic organization it became.

We honor William H. Harrison's memory through the Harrison Society.

CANADIAN CHILDREN'S OPTIMIST FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Fellow Optimists,

It is my honour and privilege to bring greetings on behalf of the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation, its Executive Director, its staff, and the dedicated members of its Board of Directors for this 2023-24 year.

We are so proud to continue supporting all Canadian Optimist International scholarship winners, including the recent Optimist International 2023 World Oratorical Champion and Regional winners. It is with these thoughts that I would like to introduce my theme for 2023-24, **"Building for Community."** I feel this is about bringing people together with a common cause, creating a sense of togetherness in support of youth in all our communities, and creating a legacy for tomorrow!

Building your communities with club grants or outsourcing projects contributes to the legacy of your clubs and members and the educational legacy of our scholarship winners, and it puts smiles on children's faces when they attend your community celebrations and activities.

As a team, both Optimist Foundations, Canadian and American, can accomplish great objectives and lay the foundation for our future, leaving a legacy for our youth and communities. Let us continue to build on those legacies with your continued philanthropy as a dedicated contributor to the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation. Support us through **Building for Community!**

In closing, thank you to all Optimists who have supported the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation over the last 35 years! I look forward to celebrating with you during our 2024 International Convention in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Respectfully,

Tim G. Bell
2023-2024 President,
Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation



Canadian Children's
Optimist Foundation

CCOF is proud to welcome Denise Nacev on its Board of Directors.

Optimism has been a lifelong journey for Denise. Her Dad's Optimist Club (Moore) sponsored an Octagon Club in November 1986, of which Denise was a charter member. Once she settled with her husband, Denise was the charter President of the New Vision Optimist Club and is now a member of the Optimist Club of Burlington in Central Ontario. She has served in many Club, District and International positions, including as Distinguished Governor in 2018-19. Denise's whole family are Optimists, with her son Mathew serving as Junior Optimist International President in 2017-18, and she is often heard to say that Optimism is her family business. Denise is very proud to be following in her mother, Nina Strickland's, footsteps with CCOF, and she can't wait for the adventure of being a CCOF Board Member.

John Reel

1992-1993 Optimist International President

John Reel, who served as the President of Optimist International and as an air traffic control supervisor, died on Aug. 14, 2023, at Countryside Meadows in Avon, Indiana. Reel was born on July 26, 1934, in Sullivan County, Indiana, to Albert Reel and Doris Skinner Luellyn. He joined the United States Navy in 1952 and served for four years on the U.S.S. Bon Homme Richard helicopter carrier, where he learned the skills that would shape his career.

Reel is survived by his wife, Carolyn Moss, with whom he celebrated his 70th wedding anniversary less than a month before his death. He is also survived by his daughter, Cynthia Fancher (Larry); his son, J. Randall Reel; his granddaughter, Taylor J. Reel-Miller (Jake); and his sister, Carol Crawley.

After his naval service, Reel was hired by the Federal Aviation Administration and worked as an air traffic controller and supervisor at the Indianapolis International Airport Control Tower for 38 years. He received recognition from the FAA in Washington, D.C., for aiding a young lost pilot in recovering her plane from its tailspin and landing safely.

Reel was also active in his community of Plainfield, Indiana, where he served on several boards, including as the police commissioner.

Reel was passionate about his local Optimist Club and was involved in many projects, such as coaching youth baseball and soccer. He served as Governor of the Indiana Optimist District and was elected President of Optimist International in 1992-93, during which he and his wife traveled to various countries promoting optimism and service.

Reel was instrumental in creating a baseball and soccer complex for special needs children in Plainfield, which was named the “Miracle Field” and bears his name. He also helped organize and chair the Optimist International Jr. Golf Tournament in Florida, where young men and women from all over the world compete annually.

Reel received awards from many organizations and was honored with the Sagamore of the Wabash award, the highest distinction given by the governor of Indiana.

Reel had a large extended family and an “almost family” of close friends who celebrated holidays and birthdays with him for decades. He loved to say “Cindy, you are my favorite daughter and Randy, you are my favorite son and Taylor, you are my favorite granddaughter,” his family said.

Reel passed peacefully with family by his side. His family expressed their gratitude to the staff of Countryside Meadows for their caring and compassionate service.



John Reel, Optimist International President and Air Traffic Controller, Dies at 89

2020-2021 Club of the Year

St. Cloud Morning Optimist Club



Youth Appreciation Awards breakfast



Volunteering at Kids Fighting Hunger food packaging event.

The St. Cloud Morning Optimist Club is the 2020-2021 Optimist International Club of the Year. Founded in 1974, the club has donated more than \$2.5 million to youth programs in the St. Cloud area and is a Diamond Benefactor to the Optimist International Foundation, the first club to achieve a lifetime OIF contribution of \$75,000.

Some Club highlights include partnering with two local elementary schools to offer the Elementary Youth Speak Out Contest. In 2021, eight club members served as judges and 120 students participated in the contest. The club also partnered with the Higher Works Collaborative to provide bounce machines for the community's Juneteenth celebration and gave out candy and flyers to youth interested in the club's programs. In 2021, the club even sponsored the second-place winning contestant to that year's Minnesota Sings Contest.

Another popular program is the Club's Youth Appreciation Award, presented to a local young person who has demonstrated outstanding leadership.

"The mayor presents a local Proclamation for Youth Appreciation Week for our community and takes a picture with each youth winner," club President Don Berger said. "It is amazing to hear all of the great things that these youth do for our community while also going to school full time and often working at a job."

Club members also volunteer their time to local food banks and donate toys to local children for the holidays.

"Our officers and board decided that we needed to focus on the needs of our club and our current local communities," Berger explained. "We decided to do more outreaching within our current communities into areas that we have not been involved with in the past."

That decision has already led to more diversity among club members and new partnerships with organizations that serve more diverse communities.

"We are optimistic that involvement with these new areas within our community will lead to more local club members within our club and the sponsorship of two or more Junior Optimist Clubs and the possibility of a new club-within-a-club opportunity," Berger said.

In addition to building membership at home, the club has even sponsored a new international club in Springer City, Nepal.

"The St. Cloud Morning Optimist Club has completed a very successful year," Berger said. "We increased our membership. We reached out to inactive members. We reached out to new members who were younger and more diverse than our current club membership. We donated almost \$170,000 to meet the needs of financial assistance to numerous youth and community organizations. We tried new ways of doing things such as Zoom and combined virtual and in-person meetings and activities. We encouraged members to reflect on and live the tenants of the Optimist Creed."

2021-2022 Club of the Year

Optimist Club of Brookings, SD



27th Annual Optimist Trout Extravaganza is a free event for youth 14 and younger.



Dakotas-Manitoba-Minnesota District Governor, Don Berger and Immediate Past Governor, Nicole Kringsstad accept the award on behalf of the club.

The Optimist Club of Brookings, South Dakota, is the 2021-2022 Optimist Club of the Year. The long-standing Club has been making a positive impact on the Brookings community for more than 50 years.

Since 1972, the Club has strived to be the best service club in Brookings, and remains dedicated to serving the community through projects such as:

- The Brookings High School Choir and Band booster programs, which in 2022 volunteered nearly 4,000 hours and donated more than \$12,000 combined to the school music programs.
- The annual Optimist Trout Extravaganza, a youth fishing event that drew more than 400 participants in 2022.
- The Optimist Kite Festival, which draws more than 1,000 children of all ages and their families each June to fly kites and watch professional demonstrations featuring massive 60-foot kites.
- The annual Jazz Festival, a partnership with the South Dakota State University jazz program, featuring hundreds of local students and dozens of instrumental and vocal ensembles.

New community efforts in 2022 included a youth craft fair, which encouraged children to explore creativity and entrepreneurship, a partnership with the Brookings County Youth Mentoring Program, a \$1,000 sponsorship of the Brookings High School Bowling Club, and a \$10,000 donation to the Brookings County Food Pantry, among many others.

In total, the Club raised more than \$78,000 for community projects, events and programs in 2022, and members volunteered 6,240 hours of their time in order to make their community a better place to live.



The Brookings Optimist Club sponsors the annual Optimist Kite Festival each June. Huge, professionally flown kites, like this one of a blue whale, draw more than 1,000 children and their families, who are encouraged to fly their own kites as well.

What Makes Strong Clubs: *Survey Results*

Optimist International conducted a Club survey in July and August 2023 to find out what makes a Club strong. All 1,768 Clubs (outside of the OFC Pilot Project) were invited to give us their feedback. We received 224 responses – nearly a 13 percent response rate. Seventy-seven percent of responding Clubs were in the United States, 19 percent were in Canada, and the remainder were in the Caribbean, Nepal or Uganda.

Club Size, Participation and Demographics

The majority of responding Optimist Clubs have between 11-40 members, with the single largest response coming from Clubs with 11-20 members. About 8 percent of responding Optimist Clubs have fewer than 10 members (21 percent of all Clubs have fewer than 10 members), and fewer than 5 percent (1.4 percent of all Clubs) have more than 100.

Most US-based Clubs reported that about a quarter of members participate in 75 percent of meetings, projects and activities. Clubs with fewer than 10 members reported 50-75 percent participation in nearly all meetings, projects and activities, while larger Clubs, those with 51-100+ members, reported that just 10 percent of members participate in nearly all meetings, projects and activities.

Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964 make up a plurality of Optimist members at nearly 40 percent,

followed by Gen Xers born between 1965 and 1980 at nearly 23 percent, and members of the Greatest / Silent Generation, older than 77, at almost 22 percent. That leaves fewer than 19 percent of Optimists who are Millennials or younger, born after 1980.

Large Clubs reported more GenX representation, while smaller Clubs had more members from the Silent Generation on their rosters. About 37 percent of members have been involved for more than a decade, and the average membership tends to last 5-10 years.

Age demographics are largely consistent across U.S. and Canadian Clubs. International Clubs, however, tend to be much younger, with more than half their members under the age of 44. Developing countries, where many international Clubs are located, are in general much younger than developed ones, and Uganda in particular is the second youngest country in the world, with a median age of just 15.



PEOPLE

PURPOSE

ENGAGEMENT

Club Operations and Membership Development

Nearly all Clubs communicate by email, making it by far the most popular communication tool, followed by social media and text messages, which about half of Clubs use. The primary social media platform for Clubs is Facebook at nearly 85 percent, with Instagram the only other platform to break 10 percent.

Most Clubs meet in person monthly, either over lunch or dinner, however larger Clubs tend to meet more frequently. Of responding Clubs with more than 50 members, most said they hold weekly meetings.

The survey also showed that 77 percent of Clubs bring in outside speakers, and nearly 88 percent recite the Optimist Creed at their meetings. The most common topic for outside speakers was “community activities.” In addition, about half of Clubs said they bring in speakers to talk about current affairs or personal development and wellness, while only 40 percent invite speakers to cover optimism-related topics, and less than a third do so for professional development. More than three-quarters of Clubs are aware of the Optimist Institute, which offers online courses and important member resources. However, nearly a quarter of Clubs – including a plurality of Clubs with fewer than 10 members – do not participate in annual officer training.

The survey showed that about half of responding Clubs have a growth plan, but most Clubs said their President or Board of Directors is responsible for growth, suggesting a lack of delegation or involvement by other members. Larger Clubs, those with 40 or more members, relied on NOW programs as their primary recruitment strategy.

Nearly 58 percent of responding Clubs have a member recognition program, such as Presidential Citations or Optimist of the Year awards. Just 4 percent have a Club within a Club, but those that do report higher member participation rates.

Club Focus and Community Impact

Nearly three-quarters of Clubs reported having a particular focus area, with about two-thirds citing education/schools or other youth programs. Most Clubs take on 3-10 projects per year, depending on their size. The survey also showed that 76 percent of Clubs have a single project they are known for in their community.

Most Clubs said they work with local schools to identify opportunities for projects within their community, while about 43 percent work with other local organizations, and about a third reach out to local leaders to discuss community needs. Two-thirds of Clubs say they repeat their standard projects every year.

The survey revealed the most popular signature programs with Clubs are the Optimist Essay Contest, Optimist Oratorical Competition, Junior Golf, JOI and CCDHH, in that order. Most Clubs do not participate in any Optimist International community activities, but of those that do, Tri-Star Sports was the most popular.

Club Priorities

Clubs ranked “making a positive impact on the community” as their first priority, followed by “having fun,” “meeting new people / making new friends,” “attracting new members,” “learning new skills / personal development,” and, finally, “being recognized by Optimist International.”

The survey also asked Clubs to rank the factors they believe Clubs should be recognized for. “Impact on youth and community” also made the top of this ranking, followed by “membership engagement and retention,” “charitable giving,” “Club leadership and administration,” “membership growth and recruitment” and “new Club building.”

What Makes Strong Clubs?

There is no single factor responsible for a Club’s strength. It’s a combination of factors, with the most important being people and purpose.

Making a positive community impact is most Clubs’ top priority, however, that requires people. The smaller the Club, the more reliant they are on individual members participating in all or most of their projects and activities. This makes smaller Clubs, especially those with 10 or fewer members, far more vulnerable when they lose a single member. The balance shifts for Clubs with 11-50 members, and even more so for Clubs with 50-100+.

But numbers alone aren’t enough. Member engagement and recognition is crucial for keeping people involved. A Club’s goal should be to provide opportunities to engage all members, without relying on every member for every project, which leads to burnout and member fatigue.

Having a project or program that a Club is known for, coupled with a strong Club focus, provides that Club’s members with purpose. It’s not surprising that the percentage of Clubs known for a single program increases proportionally with Club size. However, a larger percentage of small Clubs tend to have a particular focus area.

The strength of our organization lies in its people and its purpose. Stronger Clubs allow for greater impact, locally and collectively. No single action by any one person will strengthen your Club, but many small actions will, and it is certainly worth the effort.

Rewind

A look at more than 100 years of Optimist International memories



Photo: May 1944 issue of *The Optimist*. Optimist International Photo Archives, Peake and Whittingham Photo.

They Founded Optimism in Canada

Optimist International was founded in 1919, but it didn't truly become an *international* organization until the chartering of the Optimist Club of Toronto, Ontario, in 1924. Of the 30 original Members, twelve are pictured here in a photo taken for the Club's 20-year anniversary. Seated, left to right, are Harold Skilling, Charles Ward, Les Dobbin, Herman Kallmeyer and Vance Smith. Standing in same order are Bill Gray, Al Griffin, Rolly Rollaston, Charles Jackson, Alex Peake, Art Grant and Ross Workman.

In their first 20 years, the Toronto Optimists sponsored 16 other Canadian Clubs, and Canadian Membership grew to more than 1,000 by 1944. Today, there are over 10,000 Optimists in Canada, including 2023-2024 International President Tracy Huxley. Toronto Optimist Bill Tamblyn was elected the organization's first Canadian President in 1937.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Optimism in Canada, next year's International Convention will be held in Niagara Falls, Canada. It will also be the 90th anniversary of OI's first *international* Convention, held in Toronto in 1934.



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