



Twin City Area Optimist Club

P.O. Box 475

Festus, Missouri 63028

www.twincityoptimist.org

Follow us on Facebook

Affiliated with Optimist International

Serving Youth and Community since 1919

May 2026 News Making a Difference For Kids

President Cathy Elliott

Dear Optimists,

As summer schedules begin to fill up, it may look like our Club is taking a little break over the next couple of months — but don't let the quieter calendar fool you! Behind the scenes, plans are already underway for an exciting season of service, fellowship, and community impact ahead.

Summer is a perfect time to recharge, enjoy family and friends, and reflect on the incredible difference our Club continues to make. Optimists know that even during quieter seasons, hope keeps moving forward.

Please be sure to mark your calendars for our upcoming events and activities. We have several opportunities ahead to reconnect, serve our community, and continue bringing out the best in kids and in each other.

More details will be shared soon, but for now, keep these dates in mind and stay tuned!

- Quilt Raffle – June 18 at the noon meeting
- Old Bag Lunch – July 23 at the noon meeting
- NOW/WOW Meeting – July 30 at the evening meeting
- Rock 'n Roll BINGO – August 8

Thank you for all you do to keep the Optimist spirit alive. The sunshine may be warm, but the warmth of Optimism shines even brighter.

Stay positive, stay connected, and enjoy the summer!

Yours in Optimism,

Cathy Elliott, President – Twin City Area Optimist Club



ANNOUNCEMENTS & BOARD UPDATES

We will have a Quilt raffle June 18, 2026 for a beautiful 94"x94" Missouri Pattern quilt. Chances are \$10 and can be purchased from Karen Huskey. For other purchase options, see the flyer on the [Twin City Area Optimist Club Facebook page](#), the [club website](#), or in this newsletter.

The planned bike playground at Larry Crites park has a name: Optimist Bicycle Playground.

The Twin City Area Optimist Club voted to join the Jefferson County Growth Association.

We received a check from Optimist International for \$250 as part of an incentive program to bring in more members to our club.

We received notification from Optimist International that a Grant for \$1,000 to be used for the Sunscreen Project has been approved!

The Bottleneck Bridge Ride which includes the kids' Bike Rodeo that was scheduled for Sunday, August 16, 2026 has been changed to Saturday, October 10, 2026, from 12:30 pm to 2 pm. This event will be in conjunction with the Festus Main and Mill Street Fest. The location will still be the Festus library parking lot.

We need a chair person to run the GEO Cashe event searching for the 10 Constitutional Amendments. If interested, contact Jean Naeger or Cathy Elliott.

The New Project Committee approved to have a Pickleball Tournament in October as a fundraiser for the Optimist Bike Park Project. The Board of Directors approved \$1,000 budget with the hopes of making \$5,000 to use for the bike park. The Pickleball Tournament is scheduled for Saturday, October 3 thru Sunday, October 4, 2026. More information to come later.

Submitted by Cathy Elliott and Carolyn McKinney



Member Spotlight Pat Doenges



While not an official charter member of the Twin City Area Optimist Club, Pat Doenges joined within two months of the club's formation after being invited by a friend and charter member. The mission of helping children spoke strongly to Pat and she has been an active and dependable member since! This is clearly evidenced by her record of maintaining Perfect Attendance for 38 years!

Pat, with the steady support of her husband David, her family, and her friends, has bravely beaten breast cancer twice. Last year, she faced another heartbreaking challenge when David passed away just three days shy of their 69th wedding anniversary. Throughout their long life together, David was always her biggest advocate. Even while battling bladder cancer himself, he insisted that Pat keep

attending her Optimist meetings and her bowling league because he knew how much joy those activities meant to her.

David spent his career as a Construction Supervisor, but he and Pat also raised cattle and put up hay season after season. Though no longer in the cattle business, Pat and her sons still manage the hay, selling it, trading it, or simply giving it away. Their family has stayed close: son Dan lives next door, while son Doug is just three miles away. Pat's two grandsons and their families—including four great-grandchildren, ages 6 to 16—all live within 24 miles, keeping her surrounded with love and activity.



Pat has participated in countless Optimist events throughout her years as a club member, always ready to lend a helping hand. Some of her favorite projects are the Head Start holiday parties, Coats for Kids, and shopping for Head Start holiday baskets. She shows up when help is needed and always is willing to pitch in, no matter the task. Last year she even put her large truck to work for the Art Show, using it to haul art entries and contest supplies!

Pat has two quiet roles within the club that some of the newer members may not realize she fulfills. She serves as the Friendship Chairperson, thoughtfully recognizing member birthdays with cards from the club. In a typical year, Pat sends as many as 200 cards, covering not only birthdays, but also get-well wishes, sympathy notes and “thinking of you” messages. It’s a responsibility she takes to heart, preparing cards well in advance so no one is overlooked. During a hospital stay one year, cards still went out right on schedule thanks to David, who faithfully mailed the cards Pat had already carefully organized.

The other behind-the-scenes role Pat carries is caring for our Club Banner. She carefully adds each badge that the club earns, making sure our accomplishments are proudly displayed. Over the years, our club has earned so many badges that Pat has had to start a second banner!

While Pat doesn’t point to one favorite line of the Optimist Creed, her life reflects its message in every thoughtful act and every steady contribution she makes. Through her kindness, her resilience, and her quiet dedication, she shows us what it looks like to live optimism—not just recite it.

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney

**With husband David and
the whole family**



**Keeping busy with club
activities and events**





38 years of Perfect Attendance!



May 7, 2026 Oratorical & Essay Winners

May 7 was a day full of celebrations. Along with honoring our Essay and Oratorical winners, we shared with Cheyenne Parrish her excitement as she prepares to welcome her baby boy, Gabriel. Barb Schmidt presented Cheyenne with a card, flowers, and a gift card—a sweet moment of support from her Optimist family!

To begin the student presentations, Mary Kay Scott introduced the three essay winners:

- 1st place - Erin Farley, Senior at Hillsboro High School
- 2nd place - Olivia Kearns, Senior at Festus High School
- 3rd place - Halayna Loyd, Senior at Jefferson R-7 High School

The essay topic for this year was "How My Acts of Service Help Me Understand What My Community Means to Me." In the essays, the students read aloud as they reflected on their involvement in organizations such as Special Olympics, National Honor Society, and Student Council. As they spent more time serving, what may have begun as responsibility blossomed into genuine opportunity.

Phyllis Neff then introduced the three oratorical winners:

- 1st place - Olivia Blair, Junior at Herculaneum High School
- 2nd place - Katelyn Blair, 8th grade at Senn-Thomas Middle School
- 3rd place - Cody Hunt, Sophomore at De Soto High School

The topic for this year's oratorical contest was "The Moment I Realized I Belonged — My Definition of Community." The students spoke about building "safe spaces" through teams, friend groups, and family—places where they felt accepted for being

their true selves. These are the spaces where they can make mistakes, be imperfect, and never feel the need to perform in order to belong.

Throughout the essays and the oratorical speeches, the students reminded us that community grows through service, support, and spaces where everyone can be themselves.

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney



Left to right: Erin Farley, Livi Kearns, Halayna Loyd, Olivia Blair, Katelyn Blair, and Cody Hunt

May 14, 2026
Atlas Youth Outreach

Jeff Elden and Annie Caputa, founders and directors of Atlas Youth Outreach, spoke with us about the free help they provide to adolescents ages 11-18 in Jefferson County.

The vision of Atlas is to create a safe place for adolescents in Jefferson County to participate in psychoeducational support groups and social engagement programs. These programs support social and emotional growth and provide new opportunities for them to gain knowledge for successful futures. Youth are made aware of the organization through the Family Support Division of Missouri, social workers, school guidance counselors, and word-of-mouth.



Annie Caputa and Jeff Elden

The organization was named Atlas after the Greek god who carries the weight of the world on his shoulders.

Two programs they spoke about are the Navigate Program and the Connect Programs. The Navigate Program provides mental health services in small groups. The groups meet at their office in Arnold but also in schools throughout the county. They serve all students with no restrictions. The Connect Program is a teen advisory board to help plan, organize and run teen events around the county. Some of their events include movie nights at an Arnold theater and an upcoming Teen Trunk or Treat in Arnold City Park. Currently, Atlas is serving about 300-350 adolescents a year.

One of their prime objectives is to build community connections for individuals to provide a foundation for teens as they progress through the sometimes-tumultuous years of adolescence.

Atlas Youth Outreach is funded by donations, fundraisers (music bingo, golf tournament) and grants. They receive grant money from the Jefferson Foundation and Jefferson County Mental Health Fund Board. The Twin City Area Optimist Club provided a \$500 donation at the end of the presentation.

For more information on Atlas Youth Outreach, refer to their website: <https://www.atlasyouthoutreach.org/>

Submitted by Karen Huskey

May 21, 2026 Tri-County Veterans in Need

Tri-County Veterans in Need

The speakers at the May 21 meeting were Fred and Kathy Waldrop from Tri-County Veterans in Need. This organization supports veterans in Jefferson, Ste. Genevieve, and St. Francois counties. Its goal is to help veterans with their benefits and to assist

with immediate needs such as rent or mortgage payments, car payments, and free haircuts. Fred shared that many veterans live on less than \$900 per month so the extra assistance is truly needed.

Tri-County Veterans in Need was founded in 2019 after Fred—a Vietnam Veteran—spent 50 years fighting to receive the benefits he was owed. Despite steady employment and health insurance, the system repeatedly worked against him. His eventual success traces back to the long-overlooked impact of Agent Orange exposure during his Vietnam service. His experience inspired him to help other veterans who also were trying to navigate that struggle.

The Tri-County Veterans in Need partners closely with other local veteran resources, strengthening the network of support available in the area. Fred serves on several veteran-focused boards, including the Jefferson County YMCA and the Elks. In addition to guiding veterans through the benefit process, the organization connects individuals with specialized services, such as The Kaufman Fund for dental needs currently not covered by VA benefits. Tri-County also hosts a Veterans Resource Fair in the fall, bringing agencies and services together to make support more accessible.

The organization is funded through grants, donations, and fundraisers. Their annual fundraisers include Trivia Nights and the ever-popular Mouse Races. Each year, the amount of money they provide to veterans has grown. For 2026, an ambitious goal of \$30,000 is planned to enable Tri-County Veterans to continue meeting the needs of those who served.

Tri-County Veterans in Need has a few upcoming events in 2026:

- June 6: Veterans Helping Veterans Annual Mouse Races
- June 14: Cutting Americas Heroes. FREE Haircuts for Veterans
- October 10: Veterans Resource Fair
- A trivia night fundraiser is also being planned for later in the year.

For more information on Tri-County Veterans in Needs organization or their upcoming events, contact is currently by email or phone:

- veteransinneedteam@gmail.com
- 314-574-6273

Optimist Creed

As part of our ongoing deep-dive into the Optimist Creed, Ruth Ann Adams discussed the line “To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievement of the future”. She then presented a choice of nine scenarios for each table to select and discuss. The scenarios were situations that we all may have experienced at one time or another such as judging someone’s actions without knowing the whole story, feeling embarrassed after a project did not go well, or keeping an idea to yourself only for someone else to suggest it to overwhelming acceptance.



FROM THE OPTIMIST CREED

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

The guided discussion included regrets a person might feel, lessons learned, positive actions for next time, and how to “press on to the greater achievements of the future” with the lessons learned.



Key Takeaway

We don't ignore mistakes.

We learn from them.

We set down the regret.

We press on to greater achievements!



Thank you, Ruth Ann, for another thought-provoking activity!

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney and Cathy Elliott

May 28, 2026 African Adventures!

At the May 28 meeting, Kirstie Zych and Karen Huskey treated us to a tour of their African adventures. Both traveled to Tanzania last year, with Karen's journey also carrying her into Kenya. They walked us through the sweeping savannas of the national parks they visited and unforgettable close-ups of wildlife encounters.

The presentations sparked smiles and questions – everything from “How close were you to that lion?” to “How was the food?”. Their stories added to the visuals and gave us a true sense of the awe, excitement, and once-in-a-lifetime moments they experienced.



Submitted by Carolyn McKinney



Kirstie's Safari map from April 2025



Karen's Safari map from September 2025

FOUNDATION UPDATE



May 2, 2026

**First Quarter Report (Jan-March)
2026**

**The Foundation of the Twin City
Optimist Club**

Please note that the fiscal year of the Foundation is January-December so our "quarters are not in sync" with the Twin City Area Optimist Club.

The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors was held in January, 2026. Business was discussed regarding future officers and board members. Recommendations were made for new board members (2027) by the current board. At this time it was agreed that Foundation members should be Twin City Area Optimist Club members. It also was agreed that officers would be drawn from the current board.

Gerty O'Leary has resigned from the board due to personal reasons. Kim Elbl has agreed to take her place on the board for the remainder of 2026 and going forward. Carolyn McKinney will join the Board in 2027. This will give the Board seven members.

At the March meeting, authorization was granted to enter into a contract with American Ramp Company for the design of the Bicycle Playground. The contract was reviewed by attorney Justin Cardwell. The Contract is in the amount of \$9,500 and 50% was submitted to American Ramp Company with the signed contract.

The Board agreed to not have a membership fundraising campaign this year. The reason being that members will have an opportunity to contribute to the Capital Campaign for the building of the Bicycle Playground later this year.

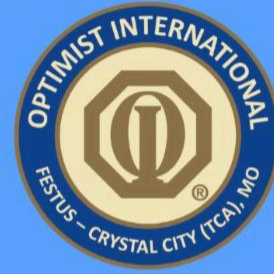
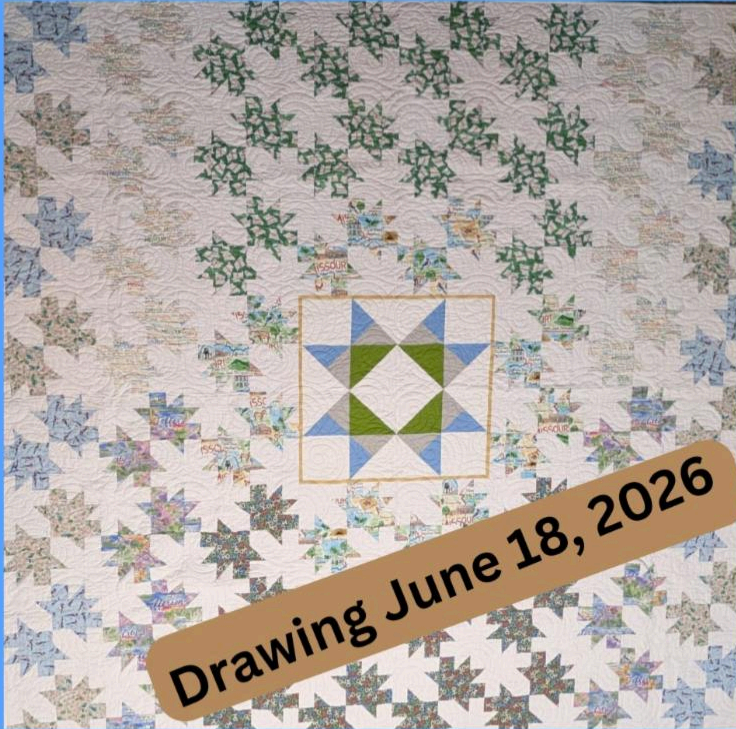
A grant request was submitted to the company Logotech, for \$500 worth of promotional products. A grant request to Festus Tourism for \$2,500 to support a pickleball tournament this fall as a fundraiser for the bicycle playground was also submitted.

The Foundation will continue to make a quarterly report to the Club Board of Directors and provide a quarterly update for the newsletter.

Carroll Metzger, President
The Foundation of the Twin City Optimist Club

CLUB FUNDRAISERS

Quilt Raffle



**Purchase raffle
chances for
94"x94" Beautiful
Missouri pattern**



<https://givebutter.com/TCAOquiltraffle>

**One entry for every \$10 donation: CASH, Pay
with GiveButter using QR code/link, or check to
TCA Optimist Club, P.O. Box 475, Festus,
MO 63028**

(include your name and phone number)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Saturday, August 8

Doors open at 6 pm

Bingo starts at 7 pm



ROCK N ROLL BINGO

Raffles/50-50

\$25/person or \$200/table
after July 16

\$30/person or \$240/table

beer & soda provided

Tables of 8



Use QR code to reserve online

<https://givebutter.com/c/MBOG9Z?source=qr&version=1>

Fundraiser Hosted by

Twin City Area Optimist Club

**Place: Amvets Post 42
555 Joachim, Herculaneum, MO**

CLUB PROJECTS

Homeless Youth Initiative

Pat Parsons met with Robin Scott of the Homeless Youth Initiative on May 9 to donate ten \$100 Walmart gift cards to the organization. These gift cards will provide meaningful support to ten homeless youth in Jefferson County, allowing them to purchase the essential items they need to continue their education.

This contribution reflects the Twin City Area Optimist Club's ongoing commitment to lifting up young people in our community and ensuring every student has the



resources they need to succeed.

Submitted by Pat Parsons

Hillsboro Homecoming

The Hillsboro Homecoming Festival brought energy and excitement to Hillsboro's Main Street on May 17, and the Twin City Area Optimist Club was proud to be part of the celebration. Our club participated with a booth as part of our ongoing Community Networking Project, offering a friendly space for visitors to stop by, learn about our mission and connect with the work we do for local youth.



This year's festival theme, "Celebrate America 250," brought the community together for a weekend of fun, entertainment, and shopping. It also gave our club a great opportunity to connect with attendees and engage children through a rock painting activity.

The Hillsboro Homecoming Festival Project was a great success, thanks to the volunteers who generously gave their time and brought a positive attitude as we welcomed community members and shared the Optimist philosophy with festival attendees.

Committee

Chairperson: Jan Buechting

Youth Volunteers: Zach Casey, Mason Gynard, Chase Buechting

TCO Volunteers: Shannon Carter, Barb Schmidt, Katie Huck, Carroll Metzger, Marian Bozak, Peggy Scott, Donna Arnold, Danelle Winters, Carol Schanz, Donna McKinley, Jennifer Gynard, Jan Buechting.

Submitted by Jan Buechting



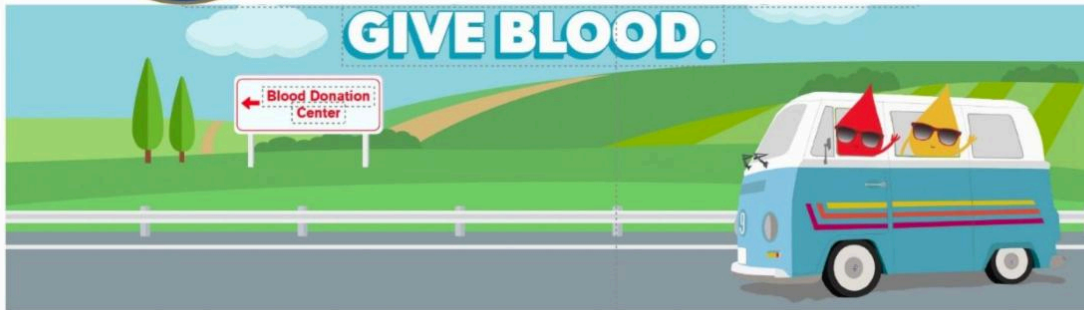
Optimist booth with Marian Bozak, Katie Huck, Jan Buechting, and Shannon Carter.







American Red Cross



Blood Drive

Sponsored by

Twin City Area Optimist Club

Jefferson County Family YMCA-Gym

1303 YMCA Dr.

Festus, MO 63028

Friday June 19, 2026

11:00 am- 3:00 pm

Please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: JeffCoYMCA to schedule an appointment or use QR Code



Select the **June 19th** date for
TCA Optimist donation day

Join us in making a difference by signing up to donate blood! If you are a frequent donor, please keep this timeline in mind to ensure you are eligible and ready to give.

When registering, please double-check that you have selected the **June 19th** drive. While the YMCA lists several upcoming donation dates, we are aiming for a strong club turnout on this specific day.

Contact Project Chair Marian Bozak if you have questions.

Submitted by Jean Naeger

Dime -A- Day

The Dime-A-Day Program

What is Dime a Day? An annual contribution level to the Optimist International Foundation, (OIF) which is the charitable fundraising arm of Optimist International. The amount represents a donation of **one dime (\$0.10) per day** for one Optimist year (365 days) = **\$36.50**. Individual members who contribute at this level are recognized with a special **"Dime-A-Day" lapel pin**.

What the Funds Support

The unrestricted funds raised through the Dime-A-Day campaign are critical because they enable the OIF to support the core programs that reach millions of children each year.

- **Scholarship Contests**
- **Youth Programs**
- **Club Grants**
- **Administrative Support**

Peggy Scott is the club's OIF Representative and can provide you with a copy of the Dime-A-Day donation form or you can download a copy: [dime-a-day-form.pdf](https://www.optimist.org/dime-a-day-form.pdf)

Submitted by Jean Naeger

EAST MISSOURI (EMO) OPTIMIST DISTRICT



EMO Third Quarter Conference

The East Missouri (EMO) Optimist District Oratorical Contest took place on **May 2, 2026**, as a central highlight of the District's 3rd Quarter Conference held at the Hilton St. Louis Airport.

As one of the cornerstone programs of Optimist International, the event brought together top young speakers from across East Missouri who had already advanced through local Club and Zone competitions.

This year, contestants prepared and delivered a powerful 4-to-5 minute speech centered on the official 2025–2026 international topic:

"The Moment I Realized I Belong – My Definition of Community"

The contest gives students under the age of 19 a platform to build public speaking skills, perfect self-expression, and gain vital self-assurance. Backed by the Optimist International Foundation, the EMO District awarded college scholarships to the top three finishers:

- **1st Place: \$2,500 Scholarship**
- **2nd Place: \$1,500 Scholarship**

- **3rd Place: \$1,000 Scholarship**

Beyond the financial reward, the first-place district winner earns a coveted spot to represent East Missouri on the global stage. The winner will participate in the **Optimist International Oratorical World Championships**, which are coming up right down the road at **Saint Louis University on July 16–17, 2026**, where they will compete for additional scholarships totaling up to \$22,500.

Submitted by Jean Naeger



EMO District Oratorical Chair **Karl Tyminski** with First Place Winner Kaitlyn Green (Marble Hill Club) Second Place Winner Anna Johnson (Jonesburg Club) and Third Place Winner Gannon Seyer (Ashland Club) with EMO Governor **Jennifer Daw Bagwell**

TCA Club earns 2024-2025 Distinguished Club Award

2024-2025 TCA Club Secretary Kathy Todd and 2024-2025 Club President Cathy Elliott accept awards from Immediate Past EMO Governor Jean Naeger. Becky Francis (not present) also received an award as club treasurer.

Optimist International doesn't just hand this out for showing up. To earn Distinguished status, a club must hit rigorous benchmarks over the course of the fiscal year. It requires a perfect storm of growth, service, and administrative excellence. Thanks to all our officers and members who exceed expectations in all that you do.

Thank you,
EMO 2024-2025 Governor Jean Naeger





Club members attending third quarter conference: Katie Huck, Mary Kay Scott, Kathy Todd, Past EMO Governor Phyllis Neff, Debbie Hogenmiller, Peggy Scott, First Timer Susan DeClue, President Cathy Elliott, EMO Immediate Past Governor Jean Naeger, Marian Bozak, and Barb Schmidt.

Kentucky Derby theme -- Another win for TCA Club



Big Winners Kathy Todd won both the 50/50 drawing and the lottery board. Katie Huck won the lottery tree.



A Pinterest idea comes to life with the help of Barb Shmidt.



Derby inspired desserts by Jean Naeger, Katie Huck, and Kathy Todd. Thanks to Cathy Elliott, Susan DeClue, Marian Bozak, Phyllis Neff, Barb Schmidt, and Peggy Scott for adding fruit, vegetables, cheese and snacks.



Thanks to Beth Watts for loaning her Derby decorations. Together with gathering other items we were able to pull off another beautiful hospitality buffet.





CONFERENCE / CONVENTION DATES

EMO District Convention

August 21, 22, 23, 2026
Installation of Officers
Governors' Choice Awards
Comfort Suites
Rolla, Missouri

108th Optimist International Convention

June 28 - July 1, 2026
Hyatt Regency
Jacksonville, Florida

JOI CLUB

There was no JOI Club meeting in May.

Debbie Schumaker
JOI Adult Advisor

Carol Schanz
JOI Chair



SAVE THE DATES



Note upcoming events. To assist with projects, please contact Committee Chair.

June 2 Board Meeting
June 4 Board Updates
June 5 Jr. Golf Tournament
June 11 Meeting
June 18 Meeting - Quilt Raffle
June 19 Red Cross Blood Drive
June 25 Evening Meeting
June 28-July 1 OI Convention, Jacksonville
July 2 NO MEETING
July 7 NO BOARD MEETING
July 9 Meeting
July 16 Meeting
July 23 Old Bag Lunch
July 30 WOW Meeting
August 6 Board Updates
August 8 Rock 'n Roll Bingo
August 13 Meeting
August 20 Meeting
August 21-23 EMO 4th Quarter Convention
August 27 CARE Meeting



Members meet every Thursday from Noon - 1 p.m. at Taytro's. Please RSVP by 8:00 a.m. on Monday by contacting Kathy Todd.

The last Thursday of the month is an evening meeting held at the United Methodist Church in Festus. Members are invited to bring their own dinner at 5:30 to socialize. The meeting starts at 6:00 p.m.

Our Club will continue looking at the sunny side of everything and being committed to bringing out the best

Board of
Directors
2025-2026

President
Cathy Elliott
573 883 0924

President Elect
Donna Masters

Past President
Peggy Scott

Secretary
Marian Bozak

Secretary Elect
Jessica Korte

Treasurer
Becky Capps

Treasurer Elect
Ellen
Bridgewater

in our area youth.

Board Members

2024-2026
Mary McDowell
Debbie Kettler
Carolyn
McKinney

2025-2027
Becky Francis
Megan Siracusa
Donna Long



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visit our website.

Visit our website



Twin City Area Optimist Club | P.O. Box 475 | Festus, MO 63028 US

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