



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

January 2026 News Making a Difference For Kids

President Cathy Elliott

Dear Ladies,

January is a time for personal reflection and fresh starts. While it may seem that our club has taken a brief pause, a great deal of planning has been happening behind the scenes as we prepare for an exciting and active February!

We invite you to help us continue making a difference in our community:

- Do you know someone who would like to join our club and help support youth in our area?
- Do you know an individual or business that might be interested in sponsoring our programs?
- Do you know someone who would enjoy coming out to support our fundraising events?



Your involvement and connections help us grow our impact and strengthen our community. We truly can't do it without you!

Our Optimist Creed theme this month is "To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true." Our members shared meaningful reflections on how positivity can emerge even from unexpected illness or challenging moments. These experiences remind us that optimism is not about ignoring difficulties, it's about choosing to seek growth, gratitude, and hope in the midst of them.

Let's continue to look for the positive in our lives and share that optimism with others.

Warmly,
Cathy Elliott

WINTER WEATHER



Reminder to all Optimists

If the **Festus School District** does **NOT** have **buses** running due to inclement weather, the Optimist meetings, day or evening, will be **cancelled**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GREAT NEWS!!! During the Optimist year 2024-2025, we earned the **Distinguished Honor Club Award!** It has been 15 years since the club qualified for this honor!

February 1, 2026 - There is a price increase for our **Taytro's** lunch. Effective **February 1**, lunch will be **\$17 per member**.

February 5 - The noon meeting will include taking a group photo for Optimist Day.

Friday, February 6 and Saturday, February 7 - the **2nd Quarter EMO District Convention** will be held virtually.

Monday, February 9-Visual Arts Program - Last day to turn in children's artwork. See Patty Meyer for questions and/or information.

February 19 - NOW Meeting. If you know someone who might be interested in becoming a member, please send their name and address to Chair Amy Baum.

February 21 - Wine Tasting/Auction. Tickets are on sale for \$60 per person - see Kathy Todd. Please make sure you let people know in person and on your Facebook posts that all reservations **MUST** be turned in by February 14.

February 26 – The evening meeting will include a **Chili Cookoff with prizes!** Snack bags for **Brenden's Backpacks** also will be packaged at this meeting.

Monarch Jewelry Donations. The club will continue to collect unwanted or broken jewelry for Monarch Jewelry. You can either bring it to a meeting or to the Leader's Celebrating Women event on **March 6**.



Member Spotlight
Alicia Cummiskey





Alicia Cummiskey has been a member of the Twin City Area Optimist Club since May, 2022. At that time, she was working as an elementary school secretary, but had started looking for something to do in retirement that would allow her to give back to the community. She was familiar with the Optimist club and its presence in the Twin City area, so it only took a little encouragement from Debbie Hogenmiller to convince her to join up!

Since becoming a member, Alicia has retired from her full-time secretarial position, and now works as a part-time realtor. She enjoys helping families move into the next phase of their lives, especially, enthusiastic first-time buyers as they look for their

first homes.

While keeping busy with realty, crafting, and volunteer work, Alicia's favorite retirement role is being mom to her two children, Jordan and Jennefer, and grandma to her three grandchildren, Bailey, 7 years old, Jase, 4 years old and Peyton 5 months old. She and Pat, her husband of 20 years, have recently taken up camping and enjoy taking the grandchildren with them in their RV. In addition to her local family, Alicia also has two step grandchildren in Florida, Kaden, 18 years old and Kiley, 15 years old.

Alicia loves singing Christian music. She has sung competitively and with a Christian Rock band. She is currently an active member of the Faith Baptist Church choir.

As a member of the Twin City Area Optimist Club, Alicia is an active participant in many projects and activities. Two of her favorite projects are the Head Start parties, in which she has volunteered for the past two years and the delivery of dictionaries to third graders in the fall. She enjoys interacting with the children, seeing their excitement at the parties or as they receive their new dictionaries. She also enjoys the camaraderie of working with other club members, specifically mentioning her time spent with the 2025 Rock 'n Roll Bingo planning committee.

Alicia's favorite line of the Optimist creed is "To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true". Five minutes spent talking to Alicia clearly shows she lives this line to the fullest. She brings a spark of positivity to everything she touches, and our club is all the brighter because of her optimistic glow.

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney



Alicia with the grandkids and hubby Pat.



Officer installation.



At our first blood drive.



Participating in meeting activities!



January 8, 2026 Board Updates

Board Updates

Our current member count is 133 after starting the Optimist year on October 1 with 144. Three members were removed in December, three members passed away, two moved away, and two transferred to another club.

There is a price increase for our **Taytro's** lunch effective **February 1, 2026**. Lunch will be **\$17 per member**. This is the first increase since we started having lunch at Taytro's in the summer of 2020. Taytro's continues to provide a large discount for us as anyone else who would rent the room for lunch for the same number of attendees would pay at least \$800 or more! Also, we do not pay any gratuity or room rental.

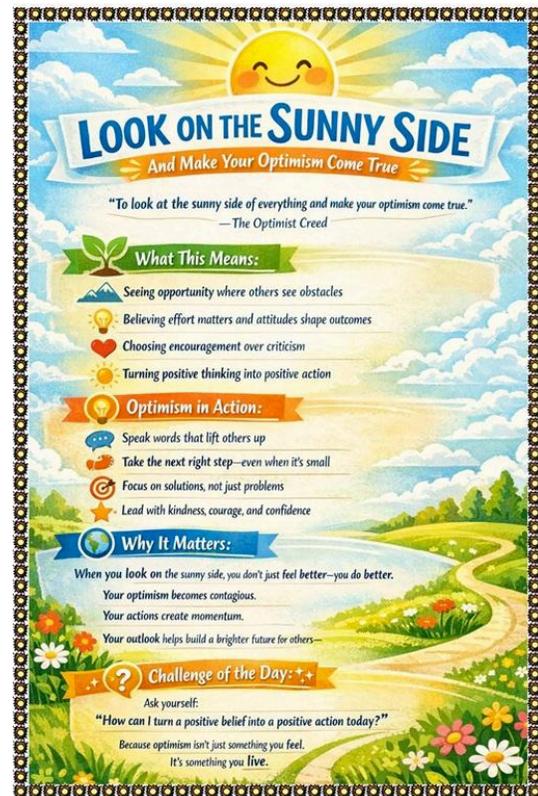
To date, we have given out 485 coats and hoodies combined through the Coats for Kids project!

Visual Arts Program: Art should be submitted no later than February 9 to Patty Meyer. Club prizes will be \$50 for 1st place, \$25 for 2nd place, and \$10 for 3rd place for each group.

In recognition of Optimist Day on February 5, we have the opportunity to volunteer with some of our partners on February 2 and 3. Our February 5 noon meeting will include taking a group photo!

Optimist Creed

Ruth Ann Adams distributed a handout about the fourth line of our creed “To look at the sunny side of everything and make you optimism come true”. She then introduced an activity for us to practice the habit of looking for the good in every situation. Each table was assigned a real-life challenge, ranging from job loss and health setbacks to overwhelming projects and even project failures. Members were then asked to identify something positive within the experience. Afterward, groups shared their insights with the room, presenting strategies for addressing setbacks such as focusing on growth or unexpected opportunities. As a bonus, members heard positive approaches they may not have considered themselves. Thank you, Ruth Ann, for this experience!



Submitted by Carolyn McKinney

January 15, 2026 Jenny Michaud, Monarch Jewelry

The guest speaker today was Jenny Michaud from Monarch Jewelry. Jenny shared the history of Monarch Jewelry and how they help victims of sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

Monarch was started by Kay Bach in 2011. At the time, Kay led a small jewelry ministry, making jewelry to fund church mission trips. After learning about trafficking and exploitation, she felt the need to pivot that ministry toward helping trafficking survivors. Six months later, Monarch partnered with Crisis Aid International, a



global nonprofit organization that rescues girls in Africa and Cambodia who are victims of sex trafficking. The U.S. Federal Government had asked Crisis Aid to open a safe home in St. Louis. The first home, Refuge, was opened in 2012.

Child Anti-Exploitation Partnership (CAP), was started to help children before trafficking begins. CAP offices are located in police stations. Advocates work with families to address trauma, stabilize homes, and prevent exploitation. Since 2011, CAP has served 7,277 clients.

In 2024, Crisis Aid opened House of Hope, a 20,000 square foot home for survivors in Michigan. A Grand Rapids church built the 8-million-dollar home at no cost. The house is for emergency placement, long-term care, education, therapy, and healing. Survivors are transported from different locations to Michigan, often by a group of pilots who provide the transport for free. The length of time spent at the House of Hope depends on each girl's need, but even after leaving, girls have access to a 24/7 phone line and also can access outpatient services through CAP offices.

Monarch Jewelry turns brokenness into beauty and contributes all net profits to Crisis Aid's U.S. SAFE (Survivor Assistance for Empowerment) initiative. Since 2011, they have raised over \$1.8 million, becoming the number one funder of U.S. SAFE.

For more information, reference the following links:

<https://monarchjewelry.org/>

<https://crisisaid.org/>

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney

January 22, 2026 Debbie Schumaker, JOI Club

Junior Optimist International (JOI) Club

Debbie Schumaker, the JOI Club Advisor, provided an update on the JOI Club's activities. Membership in the JOI Club is open for kids ages 8-18 years. Their motto is "Kids doing and helping other kids". Debbie and Carol Schanz, the JOI Club Chair, have been involved with the club for a few years.

The club meets monthly, often with guest speakers or tours of municipal facilities that help the members learn more about their community. In the past year, they have toured the Joachim Ambulance District, the police department's 911 call center, and a local fire house. They even received CPR training at one meeting, although it did not include certification.



In addition to the meetings, the JOI Club members participate in community events. They have collected donations for or volunteered at animal shelters, the Ronald McDonald House, the Crisis Nursery, and the Pevely Food Pantry. They host Family Bowling night during Twin City Days, and support BB5K, a suicide prevention event. This past year they visited the Autumn Ridge Residences for Christmas caroling and craft projects with the residents. The residents enjoyed the activities so much the club has plans to return this spring for more singing and crafts.



The Twin City Area Optimist Club supports the JOI Club and pays for each child's membership. The JOI Club, which turned 20 last year, meets at 7:00 pm the first Thursday of each month at the Joachim Ambulance District. TCA Optimists are welcome to attend the JOI Club meetings.

For more information, please reference:

<https://twincityoptimist.org/junior-optimist-society>.

Submitted by: Carolyn McKinney and Cathy Elliott

January 29, 2026 Game Night!

After a few announcements, Marian Bozak took over the evening meeting of January 29 with games and puzzles. Many attendees gravitated to jigsaw puzzles resulting in two 1,000 piece puzzles being completed by the end of the meeting.

Fun fact: the first jigsaw puzzles were maps cut into pieces or dissected maps, so the formal term for people that put them together is dissectologist.



Pat Parsons, Amy Baum, and Karen Francis played a rousing game of Rack-O.





Kathy Todd, Laura Elbl, Mary Hatfield, Carroll Metzger, and Patty Meyer collaborated on a puzzle.

Denise Funston and Carol Schanz focused on a jigsaw puzzle.

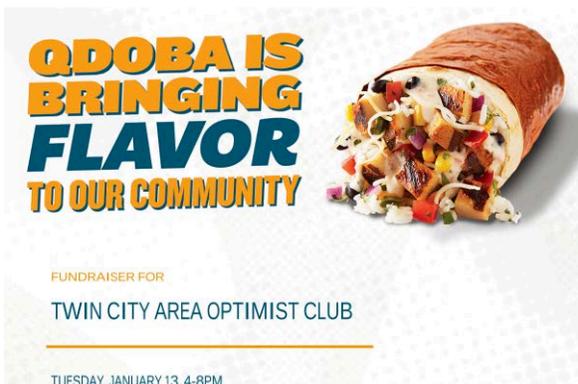


Laura Elbl, Patty Meyer, Jessica Korte, Carroll Metzger, Mary Hatfield, and Pat Doenges with a completed puzzle.



Pat Doenges, Marian Bozak, and Susan DeClue concentrated on piecing together jigsaw puzzles.

CLUB FUNDRAISERS



Dine to Donate QDOBA

A Dine-to-Donate event was held on January 13, 2026 at the Qdoba restaurant in Festus. While attendance was light, the restaurant management was generous and gave us credit for several patrons who did not present our QR code.

The total donation to our club was \$209.28, which included 25% of the sales during the event and an additional \$16.95 in the donation jar. Thanks to all who attended!

Submitted by Kathy Todd



While freezing temperatures and a winter snow storm threatened on January 23, Optimists and friends gathered at H.W. Herrell Distributing Co. in Imperial for the first Bunco night of 2026. Inside, the atmosphere was anything but cold — the room buzzed with laughter, friendly competition, and plenty of warm conversation as dice started rolling.

After the third game, wins and losses were tallied, leading to a roll-off for the four ladies who had each won 12 of 18 rounds. The roll-off resulted in Nancy McAnany in first place, Susan DeClue in second, and Jenny Salls with third place. The most Buncos, four, went to Debbie Bradley, and the most losses, 14, to Kathy Jensen. Finally, 50/50 was won by Carroll Metzger. Congratulations!

We made \$920 by going out and enjoying the evening! A huge thank you to everyone who braved the weather to join us, and to Carol Schanz for providing such a welcoming and warm space.

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney



Prize winners: Nancy McAnany in 1st place, Susan DeClue in 2nd, Jenny Salls in 3rd, Debbie Bradley with most Buncos, and Kathy Jensen with most losses.



Carroll Metzger took home 50/50 winnings.



Dorothea Kehm, Mary Kay Scott, and Shirley Coile



Kathy Todd visited with Carol Schanz before the game started.



Judy Kuhlman and Carroll Metzger



Carolyn McKinney, Jean Naeger, and Shirley Coile



Engrossed in the game!



Nancy McAnany, Patty Meyer, Pat Parsons, Sue Boyer, Rosie O'Shaughnessy, with Shirley Coile photo bombing.

Wine Event ---SAVE THE DATE

Ticket sales begin the first week of December. Purchase tickets at meetings or with QR code on flyer.



Join us for a

WINE TASTING, DINNER, AND AUCTION FUNDRAISER



*Sample wines from a
variety of Missouri wineries.*

*\$60/person
May reserve
a table of 10*

**Master of Ceremonies:
Channel 4 News
Reporter Russell Kinsaul**



DATE: Saturday, February 21, 2026
TIME: 6 PM
VENUE: Oak Valley Golf Course & Resort
1230 Abbey Lane Pevely, MO

Scan QR code to
reserve spot
(service charge
applied)
or mail check to
Twin City Area
Optimist Club,
P.O. Box 475,
Festus, MO
63028

**Proceeds support the projects of the
Twin City Area Optimist Club**

Minimum Age 21 years



Twin City Area Optimist Club **BUNCO**

DATE: Fri. April 17, 2026
Doors open at 6:00 p.m.
Bunco starts at 7:00 p.m.



Contact: Carol Schanz
636-222-4344

Registration Fee:
\$20

**(In advance/
non-refundable)**

Location:
H W Herrell Distributing Company
1002 White Street, Imperial, MO

**Bring your
own beverage**

**Bring a
snack/dessert
to share**

**Invite a
friend**

CLUB PROJECTS

Coats for Kids Donation

Sandy and Franklin Delano ("Denny") Roth have regularly donated a few coats each year through Cindy Cherry, who was their CPA. Cindy was passionate about the Coats for Kids project and housed the coat inventory in her accounting office for many years. This year Sandy and Denny reached out to their friends and donated multiple bags full of coats in memory of Cindy. We'd like to thank the Roths for their generous donation and for honoring Cindy's memory with a gift that will make a real difference to local children.

Submitted by Carolyn McKinney



Judy Williams with Denny Roth and the donated coats.



TWIN CITY AREA OPTIMIST
2ND ANNUAL

CHILI COOK-OFF

2/26//2026 6:00-7:00 PM (Eve Meeting)

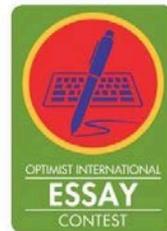
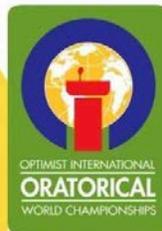
Prizes for the best chili!

First United Methodist Church
Festus



CONTACT ALICIA CUMMISKEY AT 314-956-8115 TO ENTER YOUR BEST CHILI RECIPE
(ONLY 10 ENTRIES)

**SCHOLARSHIP
OPPORTUNITY**



Visit our website for details
and application forms for
both contests

<https://twincityoptimist.org/>

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONTESTS 2025-2026



Topic
"The Moment I Realized I Belonged
— My Definition of Community"

ORATORICAL CONTEST

Beginning in 1928, the Oratorical Contest has become the longest-running program of Optimist International. The contest is designed for young people to gain experience in public speaking and provide them with an opportunity to compete for multiple college scholarships with a pre-assigned topic.

District Scholarships:
First Place: \$2,500 • Second Place: \$1,500 • Third Place: \$1,000
**with a chance to win up to \$22,500 at the
World Championships level**

ESSAY CONTEST

The Essay Contest is sponsored by Optimist International to give young people the opportunity to write about their own 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. In addition to developing skills for written expression, participants also have the opportunity to win a college scholarship!

One District Scholarship of \$2,500



Topic
"How My Acts of Service Help Me
Understand What My Community
Means to Me"



Topic
"The Moment I Realized I Belonged
— My Definition of Community"

COMMUNICATION CONTEST FOR THE DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

This contest offers an opportunity for students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to present their thoughts in the community, gaining skills, which can only come from signing or speaking to 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

KIDS SPEAK OUT! SPEECH CONTEST

All young people can compete in the Optimist Oratorical Contest. The "Kids Speak Out" contest is a "pre-Oratorical" program that provides a more equitable competition for younger speakers.



Follow complete Official Rules posted on www.optimist.org

The **Optimist International Essay and Oratorical Contests** are annual scholarship competitions sponsored by Optimist International to provide young people with the opportunity to express their views and win college scholarships.

The Essay Contest gives students a chance to write about their opinions on a pre-assigned topic related to the world they live in. **Prizes:** Winners at the club level advance to the District contest to compete for a scholarship, typically **\$2,500** at the District level, funded by the Optimist International Foundation.

The Oratorical Contest is a public speaking competition where youngsters prepare and deliver a speech on a pre-assigned topic. It's one of the longest-running programs of Optimist International. **Prizes:** More than **\$150,000** in

college scholarships is awarded annually. District winners can receive **\$2,500** for first place, with a chance to win up to **\$22,500** at the World Championships level.

The Twin City Area Optimists Club hosts both the Essay and Oratorical Contests. For more information and contest application forms visit our website. <https://twincityoptimist.org/>.

Essay Contest: <https://twincityoptimist.org/essay-contest>

Oratorical Contest: <https://twincityoptimist.org/oratorical-contest>

Submitted by: Jean Naeger

Optimist INTERNATIONAL

Optimist International Presents:
THE OPTIMIST VISUAL ARTS COMPETITION

Topic: Be Bold - Be the Change

There are two age divisions:
up to 7 years of age
and 8-11 years of age.

For details and registration form visit our website:
<https://twincityoptimist.org/>

Visual Arts Contest Deadline February 9, 2026. Please visit our website, <https://twincityoptimist.org/visual-arts-competition> to access the rules/entry form. Cash prizes will be awarded at the local level for first, second, and third place winners. For further information, please contact project chair Patty Meyer.

Dime -A- Day
Optimist International Foundation

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](#)

Submitted by Jean Naeger

FOUNDATION NEWS

January 14, 2026

The Foundation of the Twin City Optimist Club held its third annual meeting of the non-profit on January 14, 2026. All current board members and officers will remain for 2026. Following up on the goals from the strategic planning meeting, the board continues to develop policy and procedures for the flow of funds to and from the Club; the designation of restricted and unrestricted funds, governance of unrestricted funds and election of new board members. Succession planning for 2027 officers and board members is ongoing. One of the goals of the planning meeting was to improve communication with club members and therefore a quarterly report will be submitted for the club newsletter. Financial reporting will also be made to the Club's board of directors on a quarterly basis. All Foundation policy and procedures will be provided to the Club president.



Submitted by Carroll Metzger

EAST MISSOURI (EMO) OPTIMIST DISTRICT



CONFERENCE / CONVENTION DATES

Feb 6-7, 2026

EMO 2nd Quarter Conference

Virtual

May 1-2, 2026:

EMO 3rd Quarter Conference

Hilton St. Louis Airport, St. Louis, MO

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 is no JOI Club update this month but see the January 22 meeting summary for information on the club and their activities!

Debbie Schumaker

JOI Adult Advisor

Carol Schanz

JOI Chair



SAVE THE DATES



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

February 1 Leader's Wedding Fair
February 3 Board Meeting
February 5 Meeting - Board Update
February 5 Optimist Day!
February 6-7 EMO 2nd Quarter Conference - Virtual
February 12 Valentine's Day Party
February 19 NOW Meeting
February 21 Wine Tasting Dinner & Auction
February 26 Chili Cookoff and Brenden's Backpack Assembly
March 3 Board Meeting
March 5 Meeting - Board Update
March 6 Celebration of Women
March 10 Dine to Donate - Culver's
March 12 Meeting - Aunt Rose Project
March 16 Nomination meeting
March 19 Meeting
March 26 Evening Meeting Meeting
April 2 Meeting
April 7 Board Meeting
April 9 Meeting - Youth Appreciation
April 16 Meeting - Respect for Law
April 17 Bunco
April 23 Meeting
April 30 Evening 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 in our area youth.

**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**

Board Members

**2024-2026
Mary McDowell
Debbie Kettler
Carolyn
McKinney**

**2025-2027
Becky Francis
Megan Siracusa
Donna Long**



**Keep current with club activities,
like us on Facebook, and
visit our website.**

Visit our website





Try email marketing for free today!