



Twin City Area Optimist Club

P.O. Box 475

Festus, Missouri 63028

www.twincityoptimist.org

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Affiliated with Optimist International

Serving Youth and Community since 1919

April 2025 News Making a Difference For Kids

President Cathy Elliott



April — a time of blooming, a time of opening.

The word itself comes from the Latin “*aperire*,” meaning “to open” — and at the **Twin City Area Optimist Club**, we open our hearts wider than ever.

This month, we proudly share the spirit of the season by providing five Head Start families with nourishing food and joy-filled Easter baskets.

We celebrate the next generation, welcoming our youth as they begin their own incredible journey of giving back. For our Homeless Youth, we offer more than

support -we provide the tools for a brighter tomorrow.

And through every project, every event, we continue our mission of **raising hope, raising dreams, and raising optimism** for all those we serve.

April reminds us: when we open our arms, we open a world of possibilities. ☺

Cathy Elliott
President, Twin City Area Optimist Club

Welcome New Members!



Arlene Fidler

April 3, 2025
Homeless Youth Initiative
Rachel Johnson



The speaker for the April 3, 2025 meeting was Rachel Johnson from the Homeless Youth Initiative. Rachel has been a volunteer with the organization for 10 years. She began her presentation with the definition of a homeless youth being a person under 21 who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or who is unable to live safely with a relative and has no other safe alternative living arrangement.

While there are many programs available to help younger children, older children tend to get left behind. One reason for this is that older kids may not want to be part of the system. Also, Children's Division has to prioritize all ages based on need and safety which results in much of the focus going to the younger children. The Homeless Youth Initiative is specifically designed to help 14- to 20-year-olds who meet the definition of homeless and are still in high school.

The primary goal of the Homeless Youth Initiative is to help the youth become self-sufficient by providing tools and resources they will need to succeed in an independent living situation. The organization also helps with funds for special events like graduation and prom. Gift cards may be arranged so that kids can join their friends in social activities such as eating out. School supplies, personal care items, and even assistance with vehicle expenses are furnished when necessary.

The Homeless Youth Initiative provides college scholarships and may follow a student through college if necessary. Rachel described one student moving into the Jefferson College dorm with nothing to her name. The organization arranged supplies for her room and had a dorm room party to help her settle in.

The organization works with the Jefferson County public high schools for referrals. They are legally not allowed to have contact directly with the youth so they work with liaisons provided by the schools. Jefferson College also has a liaison with the Homeless Youth Initiative.

The Homeless Youth Initiative receives no state or federal funds so everything is donation-based. All funds donated stay in Jefferson County. Donations may be

dropped off at the Disability Resource Association office in Festus.

At the end of Rachel's presentation, she was presented with \$500 in school supplies and a check for \$500 from the Twin City Area Optimist Club.

For further information about the Homeless Youth Initiative please refer to:
<https://dra4help.org/home/partners/homeless-youth-initiative/>

Submitted by: Carolyn McKinney



Marian Bozak, Rachel Johnson, and Pat Parsons after presenting Rachel with a check for \$500.



Rachel Johnson with the school supplies donated by TCA Optimists.

April 10, 2025 Youth Appreciation Luncheon



The Twin City Area Optimist Club held its annual Youth Appreciation Day on April 10, 2025. Nine area high school students were selected by their respective schools for being a person of good character, striving to do their best always and making a positive impact on their community.

We heard about all the wonderful stories these students do in their school and community- outstanding and amazing young adults!

We presented each student with a certificate and a handwritten note with a monetary gift tucked inside. The students recognized were:

- St. Pius X High School – Manny Verzola. Manny plans to attend Ohio State

University to study social sciences and aviation with a goal of becoming a commercial pilot.

- Festus Senior High School – Amelia Brummer. Amelia will be attending SIUE to study health and nutrition.
- De Soto High School – Austin Missey. Austin will be attending Illinois College to play football and participate in track & field. He plans to study exercise science to become a physical therapist.
- Crystal City High School – Sydney Partney. Sydney plans to attend Lindenwood University to study exercise science and become a physical therapist.
- Herculaneum High School – Peyton Light. Peyton is currently enrolled in the ATS program studying building repair at Jefferson College which leads to careers in carpentry, electricity, plumbing, and various other skills involved in residential and commercial construction and operation.
- Hillsboro High School – Calab Arnold. Caleb will attend Lindenwood University to study business. He hopes to use his vast financial resources from his many successful businesses to then move into ministry, which is his passion.
- Jefferson R7 – Carleigh Cook. Carleigh will graduate from BOTH Jefferson High School and Jefferson College at the end of this school year! She wants to continue her studies at the University of Kentucky in biology and pre-med with the goal of being either a radiologist or a pediatrician.
- Twin City Christian Academy – Micah McAllister. Micah wants to be a preacher after graduation. He did not indicate a specific seminary.
- Grandview High School – Jade Rahmberg was not in attendance.

As always, the club is impressed with the maturity and vision of these youth. They are fine representatives of our future. The Twin City Area Optimist Club is proud to be able to honor these students by providing a helping hand and recognizing their talents and achievements.

Thank you to event chair Sarah Bauman and the volunteers that assisted in making this luncheon such a success!

Submitted by: Sarah Bauman and Karen Huskey



Micah McAllister, Twin City
Christian Academy



Peyton Light, Herculaneum High
School

Congratulations!

Caleb Arnold, Hillsboro Hig



Amelia Brummer, Festus Senior
High School

Sydney Partney, Crystal City High
School



Manny Verzola, St. Pius X High
School

Carleigh Cook, Jefferson R7

Austin Missey, De Soto High
School

April 17, 2025 Aunt Rose Project Spring Fling Party

Cathy Elliott opened the April 17 meeting with updates from the April board meeting:

- The board approved a donation of \$250 to the Quad City Juneteenth Celebration.
- Approved a donation of \$500 to Kade's Playground in Herculaneum to assist in fixing storm damage.
- New member Arlene Fidler, sponsor Phyllis Neff, was approved.

New officers and board members nominated for 2025-2026 :

- Cathy Elliott will remain as President for another year.

- Donna Masters will be President-Elect.
- Peggy Scott will remain as Past President.
- Becky Capps will become Treasurer.
- Ellen Bridgewater will become Treasurer-Elect.
- Marian Bozak will be Secretary.
- A candidate for Secretary-Elect is still needed.
- Remaining board members: Mary McDowell, Debbie Kettler and Carolyn McKinney.
- New board members: Becky Francis, Meghan Siracusa and Donna Long.

Cathy called for a vote from club members and the new board was approved.

Cathy then awarded Becky Francis a pin from Optimist International for bringing 5 new members to our club. Great job, Becky!

Guest speaker for the meeting was Renee Gerlach who provided an update on the Aunt Rose Project. The Aunt Rose project provides books and feminine hygiene products to girls and women in need. When she first formed the organization, the focus was on girls in the schools. The Aunt Rose project still supports the schools, but now also partners with several local charities. Aunt Rose provides hygiene products and/or books to the Jefferson County Foster Children's Fund, the Jefferson County Foster Closet, All for Family, the Homeless Youth Initiative, and the STL Crisis Nursery.

Renee mentioned that if she has a surplus of supplies, she may give products to Second Hand Heroes. And if incontinence products are mistakenly received, she delivers them to the Disability Resource Association in Festus as some of their clients have a need for those products.

In the first three months of 2025, around 11,590 items were collected by Aunt Rose. Over 6000 of those items were donated through the Leader's Celebrating Women event in March. In addition to the products, Renee was presented with a check for \$1000. While she usually does not receive cash, she plans to use it for additional storage and to purchase supplies if they run low.

Renee told the story of a woman who had found the Aunt Rose Project online and requested help for her daughter. The woman was very ill in the hospital and wanted to make sure her daughter would be prepared as she went through puberty and started menstruating. Even though they lived in a different state, Renee sent a book. The woman has since passed away. The Aunt Rose Project will be giving away 25 books on adolescence and menstruation at the Hillsboro Homecoming Festival on May 17 in honor of this mother.

Carroll Metzger joined Renee and shared that they will be hosting a workshop at the Optimist International Convention. The workshop will share how Renee identified a need in the community and organized the Aunt Rose Project to address it. They also will cover how the Twin City Area Optimist Club became involved, and how that involvement led to the start of a new project for Adolescent Boys.

The Spring Fling Party started with everyone rolling dice for snake eyes. The first at each table to roll snake eyes advanced to the next level which was a race across the room while holding an egg (not real!) on a wooden spoon. The final winners: Katie Huck and Marie Stelling! Congratulations, ladies.

Judy Williams won the Easter bonnet competition with her lovely pink bonnet. That bonnet brought Judy more luck as she also won the meeting's 50/50 drawing.

Thank you to Renee for joining us and to the party committee for a job well done!

Submitted by: Carolyn McKinney



Renee Gerlach speaking about the Aunt Rose Project.



Cathy Elliott presented Becky Francis with a pin from OI for bringing in 5 new members.



Judy Williams, Alicia Cummiskey, Ruth Ann Adams, Donna Long, Tracy Johnson, and Debra Floyd showed off their Spring/Easter headwear.



Rosie O'Shaughnessy and Dorothea Kehm maneuvered around Donna Long with their eggs while Carroll Metzger and Caryl Harness looked on.



First and second place winners for their Easter Bonnets: Ruth Ann Adams (2nd place) and Judy Williams (1st place).



Egg race winners Marie Stelling and Katie Huck flanked party planners Debra Floyd and Donna Long.

April 24, 2025 Tea Party



Evening Program Chair Beth Winkeler planned a Tea Party for the April 24 meeting at the First United Methodist Church - Festus/Crystal City. The meeting room was decorated perfectly for the occasion. Beth provided a variety of teas, several people brought in treats, and the United Methodist Church provided delicious cinnamon rolls.

Attendees sampled the tea and treats while President Cathy Elliott made announcements and then inducted new member Arlene Fidar, sponsored by Phyllis Neff. Welcome Arlene!

It was a very enjoyable evening!

Thank you, Beth!

Submitted by: Cathy Elliott



Attendees had a variety of teas to select from.



Beth Winkeler did a great job organizing the tea party!



Members and the United Methodist Church provided many delicious treats.

Attendees enjoyed their tea and treats while listening to announcements and socializing



CLUB PROJECTS

Easter Shopping for Head Start Families

Twin City Area Optimists helped 5 Head Start families in need with Easter dinners and essential groceries. The 5 families, with a total of 10 children, were selected by Head Start.

TCA Optimist Members donated groceries, household items and personal care items for the families. On April 14, several Optimists met at Schnucks in Festus to shop for any remaining items as well as Easter dinners. Representatives from Head Start met the ladies afterwards to pick up the goods and deliver them to the families.

In addition to the items mentioned above, each child received an Easter Basket.

Thank you to the members that donated goods as well as those that took the time to shop for these families!

Submitted by: Carolyn McKinney



Tracy Johnson, Karen Huskey, Judy Williams, Lynne Wendel, Becky Capps, Alicia Cummiskey, and Kim Elbl shopping at Schnucks



Becky Capps, Judy Williams, and Lynne Wendel navigating the aisles at Schnucks.



Delivering to Head Start representatives.



Alicia Cummiskey, Lynne Wendel, Judy Williams, Tracy Johnson, and Carol Schanz resting after a successful day of shopping.

Kade's Playground

The Twin City Area Optimist Board voted at the April meeting to donate \$500 to Kade's Playground in Herculaneum to replace old and storm-damaged equipment. The presentation was made on April 17 by Cathy Elliott and Laura Elbl.

Thank you Twin City Area Optimist Club for
your generous donation to Kade's Playground!



Eruption
Champion
Sponsor



CLUB FUNDRAISERS

Please help promote the golf raffle with your family and friends. You can share flyer from our public Facebook page.

Golf Raffle



CRYSTAL HIGHLANDS
GOLF COURSE & BISTRO

**One entry for
every \$10 donation**

**Drawing
May 8, 2025**



view qr code to pay



**4 rounds of golf at
Crystal Highlands Golf Course
(includes cart rental, valid M-F)**

TOTAL VALUE \$240



**Benefits TCA Optimist
Youth/Community Projects**

Dine to Donate - Texas Roadhouse

Texas Roadhouse in Festus supported the Twin City Area Optimist club by participating in a Dine-to-Donate event on April 22 and April 29. Ten percent of the total food purchases by guests that presented the Optimist flyer was donated to the club. Many Optimists turned out to support the club by dining or purchasing gift cards. The total made for the club between the 2 nights was \$225 plus \$13 in tips.

Thank you to everyone who contributed!



Mary Hatfield, Sue Boyer, Caryl Harness, Judy Kuhlmann, Pam Cernik, and Pat Parsons posed with the restaurant mascot during their evening out.



President Cathy Elliott came out to eat and show her support.

Please Note: Dining out fundraisers will include 10% of sales from gift cards. Stop in and dine and purchase gift cards for future dining. The gift that keeps on giving!

New Marketing Brochure

The revised tri-fold marketing brochure is now available. This document provides basic information about the projects and services we provide to the community. It will be used for new member packets, sponsorship campaigns, and available at club public events. This is a great way to spread the word about our club. Members can request copies from Marketing Chair Jean Naeger.

SERVICE



BICYCLE SAFETY

Optimists gave away and properly fitted hundreds of bicycle helmets as part of the club's new and growing bicycle safety project.

Optimists partner with community organizations to serve children

- Jefferson College: Scholarships
- Aunt Rose Project: Serving period poverty
- Second Hand Heroes: Providing items and support
- Atlas Youth Outreach: Therapy for local teens
- Foster Together: Supporting foster families
- Spotlight Community Theatre: Encouraging the arts
- Helping Hands and Horses: Equestrian therapy

SPONSORSHIPS | 2025

Help us help the kids

We rely on the generosity of our community to support the Twin City Area Optimist Club's work in the community. Help us help the kids by sponsoring our club. For more information, please contact Jean Naeger, marketing chair, at 314-495-2822.

Platinum Sponsor: \$1,000 or more

- Greater visibility at club events
- Includes photo/logo of you or your business
- Announced on our public Facebook page
- Included on our website
- Recognized at public events

Gold Sponsor: \$500-\$999

- Includes photo/logo of you or your business
- Announced on our public Facebook page
- Included on our website
- Recognized at public events

Silver Sponsor: \$250-\$499

- Includes business logo
- Announced on our public Facebook page
- Included on our website
- Recognized at public events

Bronze Sponsor: \$100-\$249

- Announced on our public Facebook page
- Included on our website
- Recognized at public events

New for 2025: Donations are tax deductible

Make tax-deductible checks payable to: The Foundation of the Twin City Optimist Club, separately incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Please mail to P.O. Box 13, Festus, MO 63028.



Twin City Area Optimist Club

Bringing out the best in youth

Choose Optimism

By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves. Join the Twin City Area Optimist Club, a service club supporting southern Jefferson County, and make a difference today.



COATS FOR KIDS

Coats for Kids is the club's largest project and has been operating for more than 30 years. Each year, up to 500 coats are given away. The project committee works with local school counselors to identify local children in need.

www.twincityoptimist.org
@twincityoptimistclub
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Festus, MO 63028



CELEBRATE



JUNIOR OPTIMIST CLUB

Children ages 11-18 are encouraged to join the Twin City Optimist's Junior Optimist Club. Above, members learn about careers while enjoying a craft project. The club elects officers, plans its own projects and gives members a chance to develop leadership skills, meet new people and have fun.



DICTIONARIES FOR THIRD GRADERS

Each year, every third grader in southern Jefferson County receives their very own dictionary. In an age of electronics, the children love getting the books and learning new skills.

JUNIOR GOLF

One of junior golf's most prestigious events, the Optimist International Junior Golf Championships, starts with a local qualifying tournament supported by the Twin City Area club.



COLLECTING FOR OTHERS

Club members organize food drives and other collections throughout the years to serve members of the community. Above, a truckload of food was gathered for Brenden's Friday Backpacks, a community organization providing food to children in need.

OPTIMIST CLUB MEMBERS RECEIVE AS MUCH AS THEY GIVE

- The fellowship of proactive people with optimistic mindsets
- New social and working relationships with individuals from a cross section of our communities
- The opportunity to develop and demonstrate leadership skills locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- The satisfaction of making a difference in our communities

Whether you are searching for an outlet to help your community, personal development, or rewarding camaraderie, you'll find what you're looking for in your local Optimist Club.



YOUTH APPRECIATION

Bringing out the best in youth includes honoring local students for their achievements at the annual Youth Appreciation luncheon.



RESPECT FOR LAW

As part of the Optimist International organization, the Twin City Optimists take part in a project held around the world to honor law enforcement officers each year.

WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU JOIN US

The Twin City Area Optimist Club includes people who want to help youth and the community. Members join to serve others and to promote Optimism as a way of life. Visit a meeting as a guest to see if Optimist is for you. Join and you will be invited to participate in projects you care about alongside people who want to make a difference.

facebook.com/twincityoptimistclub
www.twincityoptimist.org

EAST MISSOURI (EMO) OPTIMIST DISTRICT



SAVE THE DATE



June 6, 2025 - EMO Jr. Golf Tournament

Ste. Genevieve Golf Course - Ste. Genevieve, MO

June 29-July 3, 2025 - OI Convention

St. Louis Union Station - St. Louis, MO



July 17-18, 2025- Oratorical Championships

St. Louis University, Center for Global Citizenship, St. Louis, MO

August 15-17, 2025 - EMO Fourth Quarter Convention

Courtyard by Marriott, Columbia, MO

JOI Club April 26, 2025

On Saturday, April 26, the JOI Club was invited to help the Disability Resource Association (DRA) with their 1st Annual Run, Roll & Stroll. This event included a 5K fun run and a 1.5 mile walk/run for people of all abilities. JOI members that attended the walk were Kaitlyn Blair, Olivia Blair and Oscar Blair along with sponsor Debbie Schumaker. The group met at the playground at Larry G. Crite's Memorial Park in Festus and set up directional signs. During the event they assisted people participating in both the 1.5 K and the 5K walk, and manned bubbles machines along the route.

The DRA had a successful walk with about 90 to 100 participants.

For more information on the Disability Resource Association, see their website at <https://dra4help.org/>.

Submitted by: Debbie Schumaker



JOI Club Member Olivia Blair (right) with some participants.

Debbie Schumaker
JOI Adult Advisor

Carol Schanz
JOI Chair



Participants encountered bubble machines along the route.



SAVE THE DATES



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

May 1 Oratorical and Essay Lunch
May 2-3 EMO 3rd Quarter Conference
May 6 Board meeting - United Methodist Church
May 8 Meeting - Board update, Golf Raffle
May 17 Hillsboro Homecoming
May 22 Respect for Law Luncheon

June 3 Board meeting - hostesses Caryl Harness / Sue Boyer
June 5 Meeting - board update
June 6 Jr. Optimist Golf
June 6 BUNCO
June 12 Meeting - Foster Together
June 19 Meeting - Tim Krysl on Juneteenth
June 30-July 3 107th Optimist International Convention in St. Louis
July 3 NO GENERAL MEETING
July 10 Meeting - Hawaiian Luau, International Convention Updates
July 17 Old Bag Lunch
July 24 Meeting - All for Family
July 31 Meeting - NOW/WOW



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
2024-2025

President
Cathy Elliott
573 883 0924

President Elect
Debbie
Hogenmiller

Past President
Peggy Scott

Secretary
Kathy Todd

Secretary Elect
Sandy Barnes

Treasurer
Becky Francis

Treasurer Elect
Becky Capps

Board Members

2024-2026
Amy Baum
Beth Watts
Kirstie Zych

2025-2027
Mary McDowell
Debbie Kettler
Carolyn
McKinney

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

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