

**PROMISE YOURSELF**  
**RP SUNRISE OPTIMIST, FEBRUARY 17, 2026**  
**VOL 10 - ISSUE 13 MONTHLY EDITION**



**February 19<sup>th</sup> – Ray-Pec Sunrise Optimists Host 2026 Oratorical Contest**

This year's **Ray-Pec Sunrise Optimist Oratorical Contest** brought together **10 exceptionally talented students**, each delivering thoughtful, animated, and heartfelt speeches on the theme:

**“The Moment I Realized I Belonged – My Definition of Community.”**

The competition was incredibly tight, with orators demonstrating poise, clarity, and impressive stage presence. While judges tallied the scores, Governor Brian Mills kept the students entertained with lighthearted banter — including joking that a three-way tie might have to be settled with an arm-wrestling match. The room erupted in laughter, easing nerves and reminding everyone that Optimism always finds a way to shine.

After careful scoring, the top three students were announced:

- **1st Place – Eliza Martin (age 15) – \$200 prize**
- **2nd Place – Amy Robinson (age 17) – \$150 prize**
- **3rd Place – Vanessa Diaz (age 17) – \$100 prize**

Vanessa is a familiar face, having won last year's contest as well.

Each student brought a unique perspective to the theme, and their words reflected the strength, diversity, and heart of our community. We are incredibly proud of all ten participants and grateful for the families, teachers, and supporters who encourage these young leaders to share their voices.

Raymore-  
Peculiar Sunrise  
Optimists



**follow us**

Facebook.com/RPOptimist

**CLUB OFFICERS**

**President:**

Mike Sanders  
[msanders1090@gmail.com](mailto:msanders1090@gmail.com)  
(816) 668-4150

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:**

Jim Kopetsky  
[jandelk@comcast.net](mailto:jandelk@comcast.net)  
(816) 719-9789

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:**

Tom O'Connor  
[tom@snprealestate.com](mailto:tom@snprealestate.com)  
(816) 406-4055

**Secretary**

Denise Woolf  
[rpsunriseoptimists@gmail.com](mailto:rpsunriseoptimists@gmail.com)  
(816) 728-6750

**Treasurer**

Renee Kerckhoff  
[renee@kdomus.com](mailto:renee@kdomus.com)  
(816) 813-5162

Optimist International Foundation Rep  
Joe O'Neal  
[jonealnbct5@gmail.com](mailto:jonealnbct5@gmail.com)  
(816) 914-2061

**President:**

Raymore Peculiar  
Sunrise Optimists  
Foundation  
Gerry Eftink  
[geftink@comcast.net](mailto:geftink@comcast.net)  
(816) 591-1682

**Editor:**

Denise Woolf  
<https://raypecsunriseoptimists.com>

## Feb 17<sup>th</sup> - Students of the Month

Our February Student of the Month is **Mya Johnson**, pictured with her niece Ana. Mya recently transferred from the Belton School District and is already thriving at Ray-Pec. She is completing a **Shull Internship** and taking coursework that supports her goal of helping her mother run **T & J LLC**, a local soul-food catering business. Mya is also a gifted musician who plays piano, clarinet, and guitar. We also recognized **Bryson Burkhart** as a February honoree. Although he was unable to attend the presentation, we are proud to celebrate his achievement alongside Mya's.



## Feb 10<sup>th</sup> – Caring Hearts

Caring Hearts of Peculiar provides several levels of funding for various social welfare agencies in Peculiar and Cass County. Some groups that fall within the Mission of this organization are:

- Wreaths across America
- Peculiar Baptist Church Food Pantry
- Peculiar Thrift Store
- Cass County Dental Clinic
- Hope Haven
- Local Boy and Girls Scout Troops
- Cass Regional Patient Assistance Fund
- Compass Behavioral Health Ray Pec School Foundation
- CAN & Stuff the Bus



**Upcoming Events** see <https://raypecsunriseoptimists.com> for details

**Tue 2/24** – Games Johnny's Tavern 6pm

**Tue 3/3** – Tentative 6:30 – 7:30 am

**Tue 3/10** – Tentative Kija Orstad with "In the Light Academy"

**Tue 3/17** – March Students of the Month and Veteran's Quilt Guild

**Tue 3/24** – An evening at Jerri Lynn and Bruce Keith's Home

## Feb 7th - Peculiar Winter Community Fair

The “Optimist Spotted” cam made its way around vendors and guests at the Peculiar Community Winter Fair. You might recognize some of these smiles!



### 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.

