



OPTIMIST CLUB of Chippewa Falls

July-August
Newsletter
September 2023

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Reflections on 2022-23 Optimist Year

Weekly Club Meetings

6:45 a.m.-7:30 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church
130 W Central St.
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

OFFICERS

Amanda Blonigen, President
Tom Cushman, VP
Cathy Greenseth,
President-Elect
Deb Braden, Sec.-Treas.
Angie Riemer, Past President

BOARD MEMBERS

Louise Bentley, 1st year
Nadine Bresina, 1st year
Tom Eder, 1st year
Jack Halbleib, 2nd year
Marty Tlachac, 2nd year
Vicki Wilson, 2nd year

Club Foundation Board

Ralph Cushman
Jack Halbleib
Joe Niese
Angie Riemer
Dave Schaller
Amanda Blonigen, Ex-Officio

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

Nadine Bresina - Sept 5
Jack Halbleib - Sept 21
Joe Niese - Sept 30

OCTOBER

Lyle Krumenauer - Oct 2
Tom Eder - Oct 24
Tom Cushman - Oct 28
Norb Kirk - Oct 28
Nancy Post - Oct 31

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Greetings Fellow Optimist!

The Optimist year is quickly coming to a close. At any end of the year, it's always good to reflect on all the things that have transpired...

This year we were able to accomplish many things both new and old. We passed out dictionaries to third graders. We showed support to our police, educators, bus drivers, international students, and honored many Youth of the Month. We shared in community and conversations weekly. We boosted our donations and started reaching out to more youth in our community. We started a JOI Club. We hosted a bike rodeo. We welcomed many new members. We had an amazing cheese curd stand at the fair. And most importantly, we individually grew in our optimism.

I'm grateful to be your leader this year. As we finish strong in our last month together, let me remind you of a few fun things...

We have the Oktoberfest food stand September 15th-16th. Please [sign up on our website](#) for a time to serve curds if you are able. We also will be celebrating the year at our banquet on September 26th at 5:30PM (dinner at 6:00) at the Heyde Center. Please RSVP via email or text (330-933-8235).

Thank you for a wonderful year!

Amanda



*Amanda Blonigen,
Club President*

Club Co-Hosts WINUM District Convention

On August 18-19, our club co-hosted the WINUM 4th Quarter Convention with the Hallie Club. Events included a Chippewa Falls historic walking tour Friday night with tour guide and club member Louise Bentley. This was followed by an Oktoberfest-themed Hospitality at the Holiday Inn Express with delicious food prepared by members Deb Braden and Angie Riemer.

On Saturday, the Hallie Club hosted sessions at the Hallie Town Hall. This included the election of the WINUM Governor-Elect. And the winner is...our own Angie Riemer! *Congratulations, Angie! We are so proud of you and will support you as governor in 2024-25.*



Club members Nadine Bresina (holding baby Avi), Louise Bentley, Amanda Blonigen and Carleen Sterner at the Chippewa Falls walking tour.



Garden Club Creates Wildflower Sanctuary

Do you love to garden? If so, the Lake Wissota Garden Club (LWGC) is looking for new members, said current president Ginger Wierman. Ginger attended our club's August 30 meeting, and told us about the many community projects that the garden club does each year.

The LWCG was established in 1976, and meets the second Thursday of the month and has 38 members. Their club is affiliated with both the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation-St. Croix District, and the National Garden Club, Inc. Their objectives are to stimulate the love of gardening, encourage home and community beautification, promote better horticultural and environmental practices, and encourage conservation.

The Native Wildflower Sanctuary started in 2011, and contains 225+ native species. The ½ acre woodland is just north of the duck pond in Irvine Park. A free guided tour will be held on September 9 at 11 a.m. or you can take a self-guided tour during park hours.

The Garden Club also maintains several local gardens in our area, including the Bridge Street Welcome Garden. Every year they plant trees for Arbor Day, and have a ceremony involving their Junior Garden Club, called Young Sprouts. They also do an annual tree sale in coordination with the Chippewa Rod and Gun Club and assist in the preparations for the annual Oktoberfest celebration as fundraisers to continue their projects. To learn more, go to their website <https://lakewissotagardenclub.weebly.com/>. Thank you, Ginger, for educating our club on the beautiful work done by the garden club.



President Amanda, baby Avi, and Ginger Wierman

July-August 2023 Thank You to our Speakers!

JULY PROGRAMS

July 5 - Tour Area History Center

July 12 - Fair Stand Info

July 19 - Know Your Optimist Member, Ralph Cushman

July 26 - Fair Stand Wrap Up

AUGUST PROGRAMS

Aug 2 - Historic Downtown, Louise Bentley; Visit the Enchanted Forest Club

Aug 9 - Club Updates

Aug 16 - Know Your Optimist Member, Lisa Thelen

Aug 23 - Boys & Girls Club, Tasha Weiss

Aug 30 - Lake Wissota Garden Club, Ginger Wierman

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Sept 6 - Optimist International Update, Jodi Arriola

Sept 13 - TBA

Sept 20 - Youth of the Month

Sept 27 - TBA

2023 SPECIAL EVENTS

Oktoberfest, Sept 15-16, NWSF

Annual Awards & Installation Banquet, Sept 26, Heyde Center for the Arts

Boys and Girls Club Provides Update



From left to right are Optimist President Amanda Blonigen, and Angela Payne, Jeff Jaeger and Tasha Weiss from the Boys and Girls Club.

Jeff Jaeger, Angela Payne, and Tasha Weiss from the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley were our speakers on August 23.

Since the Boys and Girls Club in Chippewa Falls moved to their new location at 650 Bridgewater Ave., they have been busy with renovations. Phase 1, remodeling the upstairs, is complete. They are currently in Phase 2, working on the downstairs, especially the kitchen. They are also looking into adding an elevator and a gym in Phase 3.

Youth and teens, (age 7-18) can participate in all after-school programs, meals, and special events for an annual membership fee of only \$15 per person or \$30 per family. Their summer program that is currently running has 112 kids enrolled and runs all day for a higher fee. These kids participate in the community garden and help at the food pantry. There are scholarships available to a large number of attendees.

The club offers structured and intentional programming in the areas of the arts and education. These include digital literacy, hand-on STEM activities, as well as homework help. For more information on the Boys and Girls Club, visit their website at <https://cvclubs.org/local-clubs/chippewa-falls/>. Thanks, Jeff, Angela, and Tasha for the update on all that you do for the kids at Boys and Girls Club.



July Optimist Member -- Ralph Cushman

Due to its popularity, our program Know Your Optimist Club Member is now featured every month. This program provides members with a chance to get to know each other better and perhaps learn something about another Optimist that they did not know before. On July 19, we were excited to hear from long-time member Ralph Cushman.



President Amanda Blonigen, Lucy Cushman, and Ralph Cushman with some Optimist memorabilia.

Ralph has been a member of the Chippewa Falls Optimist Club since 1980, so for 43 years! This makes him one of the senior members in our club. He has held many offices including club president, the first time from 1983-84. He presented the first Optimist of the Year award at the end of that term. He also served as club secretary and three terms as Lt. Governor for the WINUM District. He was a Distinguished Lt. Governor in 1989, and helped build the Hallie and Osseo clubs. He and his family traveled to many state conferences and conventions, including five international conventions.

In 2004, Ralph was project chairperson for dismantling the old fair stand. He drew up plans for the existing stand and found people to do construction, finishing, electrical, plumbing, excavating, blacktopping, and other services for cost of materials only, which saved the club any labor fees. In 2020, Ralph received a certificate and pin from Optimist International for sponsoring 100 new members.

Ralph was born and raised in Chippewa Falls. He attended Lincoln Teachers College in Merrill and UW-Eau Claire. In 1966, he married his wife, Lucy. They have two sons and two grandchildren. Ralph was hired by the Chippewa Falls Police Department in 1967 where he served as a patrolman and community support officer. He wrote a grant through the Sears Roebuck Foundation to use the name Officer Friendly. In 1969 he started working with the School Safety Patrol, and was either an advisor or on their board of directors for the next 50 years. In 1993, he was elected sheriff and served one term for Chippewa County. Ralph retired from law enforcement at age 50 and worked for Courtesy Corp. doing maintenance at 11 McDonalds. He also did maintenance for the Heyde Companies, and was a van driver for the Chippewa Falls School District. Ralph was a go getter at an early age, and had several other jobs over the years. He would probably still be working if it wasn't for health issues.

Ralph's hobbies include volunteering in the community and woodworking, and his main creation is child-size rocking horses. As of this year, he has made 81 of them, donating 11 to the St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary for their annual fundraiser. One of his keepsake rocking horses was a door prize at a WINUM convention and was won by the International VP.

Thanks, Ralph, for your many years of service to the Chippewa Falls Optimist Club and for helping us get to know you better.

July-August 2023

BOOST WINNERS

- July 5 - None Chosen
- July 12 - Ralph Cushman
- July 19 - Angie Riemer
- July 26 - Jody Kranig
- Aug 2 - Scott Marty
- Aug 9 - Lisa Thelen
- Aug 16 - Louise Bentley
- Aug 23 - Jack Halbleib
- Aug 30 - Angie Riemer

SECRET HANDSHAKERS

- July 5 - None Chosen
- July 12 - Mike McGinley to Lisa Thelen
- July 19 - Bob Nelson to Ralph Cushman
- July 26 - Deb Braden to Nancy Post
- Aug 2 - Angie Riemer to Bob Nelson
- Aug 9 - Deb Braden to Bob Nelson
- Aug 16 - Cathy Greenseth to Nadine Bresina
- Aug 23 - Angie Riemer to Vicki Wilson
- Aug 30 - Deb Braden to Yvonne Zwiefelhofer

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED BY OUR CLUB

- *Chippewa County Public Health-Western Regional Center
- *Chippewa County Foster Care Program



August Optimist Member -- Lisa Thelen

Our club's Know Your Optimist Club Member program for August was all about having FUN. On August 16, club member Lisa Thelen told about herself in a very creative way by showing us a Power Point entitled "It's Optimist Field Trip Day!" It featured a bus graphic that "drove" to various stops to talk about Lisa.

At the first stop, Lisa said that in 2018 she met Ralph Cushman who asked if she was willing to attend an Optimist Club meeting as his guest. Little did he know that back in 2002, Lisa had been a member for a short time, but wasn't ready at that time to be herself. This time she attended the meeting with an open heart and was welcomed by members with open arms, literally. Lisa loves hugs. That was a sign for her that this was where she belonged.

Lisa said she believes that she gets to live in the present moment while using her history to learn and grow from. This is her approach when working on club committees like the spring social and bike rodeo. She also worked on the WINUM district newsletter a few years back.

When asked about her family, Lisa said she was born on the south side in Lake Hallie into a large Catholic family. She's the baby...number 11 of 11. Because her family has strong Catholic roots, whenever her mom was asked about her large family, she would say, "We're Catholic and that's that, so what are we going to do?" Lisa added that today, the institution of religion doesn't hold true for her. She considers herself to be a spiritual BEing in a physical body and every human BEing is gifted with freewill and choice; therefore, she is committed to daily work that includes not judging others for the choices they make and when she comes across judgment from others, she works on not taking it personally and asks that they give her grace as she becomes the best version of herself as possible.

With that as a backbone of her family, Lisa has two sons Logan (29) and Ethan (26). A fun fact is that in early 2000, she and her husband Jay purchased the family homestead from her mom and continue to call it home today.

Lisa works for herself as a Visionary, an Energetics and Reiki Master-Teacher, and as a Guiding Mindful Change Life Coach. She connects with students and clients across the world. Most mornings she is in her online classroom at 3 a.m. connecting with students in the United Kingdom. In her history, she worked for the State of Wisconsin in the Department of Corrections, Natural Resources and Veterans Affairs. She worked in various roles from data entry to trainer.

Lisa's number one hobby is connecting with others in this journey of life and learning about what they love. A newer hobby is called Cricut, and she bought a Cricut Maker in 2021. Her desire is to have more fun, community interaction, lots of laughter, and a space to let her creativity shine.

She said that by being in the Optimist Club she gets to be that human who brings out the best in kids, her community, and ultimately herself by living her purpose to live, love, laugh, learn and grow with others in her Universe. The best part is all her Optimist Friends have become her family, and they are always there to lend a helping hand...if she asks for it.

Lisa concluded her presentation by giving everyone a small backpack filled with a variety of snacks and fun little toys. *Thanks, Lisa, for sharing your gifts and talents with the club, as we learn more about you.*



President Amanda Blonigen and member Lisa Thelen

July-August 2023

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Bauman Construction
3644 130th St
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
715-723-0307

[Website](#)

Cook Chiropractic
Dr. Lona Cook
2029 Co Hwy I
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

drlonacook@gmail.com

715.720-8500

[Website](#)

Film Tech LLC
799 N. Broadway St.
Stanley, WI 54768
715.644.3663

[Website](#)

Horan Funeral Home
420 Bay St.
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
715.723.4404

[Website](#)

NIS Financial Services, Inc
Mutual Funds
Ozark National Life
Life Insurance
Marty Tlachac
715.720.8726
715.404.0720 cell

On-Site Chiropractic
Dr. Amanda Blonigen
2029 Co. Hwy I Ste 5
Chippewa Falls, WI
715.382.6864

[Website](#)

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Fun at the Northern Wisconsin State Fair



The morning crew get the fair stand ready for the day. Left to right are Nancy Post, Tom Cushman, Rik Greenseth and Angie Riemer.



Member Katie Crise, center, welcomes the first customers to the stand on opening day of the fair.



Thursday evening front crew included Chad Kragness, Laurie Ewings, Zach Cole, Louise Bentley and Holly Kragness.



Thursday evening back crew members Norb Kirk, Cathy Greenseth, Vicki Wilson, Karin Schuler and Emily Kragness

Northern Wisconsin State Fair
July 12-16, 2023

A special thank you to all of our customers and volunteers who helped the kids in our community by supporting our food stand.

Dwarfs Talk “Club Building” at Aug. 2 Meeting



The skit was performed by Lisa Thelen as Dopey” (not shown), Laurie Ewings “Sneezy”, Carleen Sterner “Doc”, Amanda Blonigen “Snow White”, Louise Bentley “Happy”, Deb Braden “Sleepy”, Jody Kranig “Thumper”, Jack Halbleib “Bashful”, and Tom Cushman “Grumpy”.



Weekly Meeting Held at New Chippewa Area History Center

On July 5, our club held our weekly meeting at the new Chippewa Area History Center. Members were also given a tour of this amazing facility.

The new History Center is home to the Chippewa County Historical Society and the Chippewa County Genealogical Society. The two organizations work together to provide a glimpse of the area's history and its impact on past and current generations.

Thanks to the History Center for hosting us and for the tour of this fantastic addition to our community! To learn more about the History Center, [go to their website](#).



Club members at the new Area History Center

July-August 2023

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS! (Cont.)

Post Glass and Mirror

35 E Park Ave
Chippewa Falls, WI
715.723.8676
postglass@outlook.com
[Website](#)

Sokup's Market

624 N Bridge St
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
715.723.4953
[Facebook](#)

State Farm Insurance

Jeff Flaig, Agent
421 Island St
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
715.723.9128
jeff.flraig.g6k6@statefarm.co



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 fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

--Optimist International