

2nd Quarter EMO Conference - That's A Wrap! A Game Show-Style Virtual Experience!  
Optimist Proud!



## East Missouri District 2nd Quarter Conference Impact Report & Q3 Preview

February 7, 2026

The East Missouri District's 2nd Quarter Conference was a celebration of service, leadership, and community impact. From reporting Clubs we are proud to report a EMO district impact with **800+ volunteer hours**, **\$240,000+ in community investment**, and **\$25,000 in volunteer value**, Optimists across the district continue to make measurable change.

The event featured new Optimist International resources, JOI youth initiatives, Foundation giving challenges, and the always-anticipated **Prize Wheel Giveaway**. Governor Bagwell also launched a creative "**Dime-A-Day**" Challenge supporting the Optimist International Foundation (OIF), while Rick McKernan introduced an engaging **U.S. 250th Anniversary Geocache Project** that connected history, service, and fun.

As we look ahead to the **Q3** "he district's momentum continues to grow — fueled by optimism, generosity, and teamwork.



## District Impact Snapshot (2025–2026 to Date)

- 🙋 800+ volunteer hours logged across East Missouri
- 💙 \$25,000+ in sweat equity (based on national volunteer value)
- 💰 \$240,000+ in donations and community investment
- 🌟 Youth programs, scholarships, and family support funded districtwide
- 🎓 Leadership development through officer training, JOI partnerships, and membership growth

These numbers reflect Optimists in action — serving, leading, and transforming communities.



## Key Highlights from the 2nd Quarter Conference

### Club & Zone Impact

Reports highlighted:

#### Zone 1 – Mary Dewey, Lieutenant Governor

- **Moberly Optimist Club** hosted its annual *Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser* with strong community turnout.
- **Kids First Optimist Club** organized a *Vision Bus Trip* and *Ronald McDonald House lunch-packing project*.
- **Sunrise Optimist Club** prepared for its *Spring Space Tournament* and *Trivia Night*.
- Clubs in Zone 1 continue to collaborate on youth outreach and community service, demonstrating strong inter-club support and visibility.

#### Zone 2 – Ed Jurotich, Lieutenant Governor

- **St. Charles Optimist Club** supported *Shower of Blessings* for the homeless and prepared for its *Annual Spaghetti Dinner (April 10)*.
- **Wentzville–Lake St. Louis Club** donated to local police departments' *Blue Line Family Program* and participated in the *Polar Plunge* for Special Olympics.
- **Jonesburg Optimist Club** planned its *Sweetheart Dance (Feb 14)* and *Zone Oratorical Contest (March 28)*.
- Clubs in Zone 2 continue to balance fundraising, youth contests, and community partnerships.

#### Zone 3 – Adam Bagwell, Lieutenant Governor

- **St. Louis Optimist Club** awarded over **\$120,000 in community grants** and partnered with *Toastmasters* to expand oratorical participation.

- Hosted *Optimist Day at Optimist International Headquarters* featuring youth art contest winners and a donation to *Ronald McDonald House*.
- **Bridgeton Optimist Club** continues revitalization efforts with membership outreach and joint service projects.
- Zone 3 remains a hub for innovation, leadership, and collaboration across the metro area.

## Zone 4 – Joe Hatfield (Report Presented by Governor Bagwell)

- **Jefferson County Optimist Club** held a *Bowling Tournament* with 96 participants and a *Fishing Derby* for 161 youth.
- **Twin City Area Optimist Club** hosted *Head Start Winter Parties, Art Contests, and Coats for Kids* drives, distributing over **500 coats**.
- **Washington Optimist Club** organized *Breakfast with Santa, Festival of Trees, and Exceptional Equestrian Field Trips*.
- **Rolla Optimist Club** raised nearly **\$12,000** through its *Christmas Tree Lot* fundraiser.
- **Perryville Optimist Club** supported *Shop with a Hero* and *Youth Soccer Programs* with over 500 participants.
- Zone 4 clubs demonstrated exceptional youth engagement and community outreach.

## Zone 5 – Emily Collins, Lieutenant Governor

- Coordinated outreach to all clubs in the Cape Girardeau region to encourage participation in district contests.
- Planning underway for *Zone Oratorical Contest* with *Jackson Noon* and *Cape Evening Clubs*.
- Focus on rebuilding communication and increasing youth program participation across the zone.
- Clubs continue to collaborate closely with local schools to identify new service opportunities.

These efforts embody our mission: “**Bringing Out the Best in Youth, Our Communities, and Ourselves.**”



### Presenter Highlights

 Heather Myers – *Optimist Institute & New Member Resources*

Heather introduced exciting updates from Optimist International:

- **OptimistInstitute.org** – 300+ free training courses for all members
- **OptimistInfo.org** – new password-protected site for member-only resources
- **Passcode:** *member2526* (valid through May 1)
- New leadership and professional development programs, including the **Optimist Dream** pilot for future leaders

Her message: “*Every member can grow, lead, and connect through these free tools.*”

## JOI Leadership Session – *Amy Keller & Katie Huck*

- The district aims to **form an official JOI District** this year (requires 4 active clubs).
- **Starting a JOI Club:** needs just **8 youth members** and a sponsoring adult club.
- **Incentive Program:** The **St. Louis Optimist Club** offers **\$500 grants** to new JOI clubs for community service projects.
- JOI members can apply for **two \$2,000 scholarships**:
  - *Outstanding JOI Member Scholarship*
  - *JOI Achievement Award* (for district/international officers)
- **JOI International Summit:** July 16–19, 2026, at St. Louis University.

**Call to Action:** Every club can start a JOI club this year — the youth are ready, the funding is available, and the future of Optimism depends on it.



## Peggy Scott – *Publicity & Community Connections*

Peggy reminded clubs that **publicity is a service, not self-promotion.**

Key takeaways:

- Post event photos within **24–48 hours**.
- Tag schools, sponsors, and partners.
- Use short, clear captions with *who, what, when, where, why*.
- Build relationships with local media.
- Create a **3-step publicity plan**:
  1. Assign a publicity contact.
  2. Choose 3–5 events to promote heavily.
  3. Maintain an updated media contact list.

Visibility builds credibility — and credibility attracts members, grants, and partners.

## Jean Naeger & Mary Dewey – *Optimist International Foundation (OIF) Grants & Giving*

Jean and Mary co-presented on the **Optimist International Foundation's (OIF)** programs and opportunities.

**Jean Naeger** shared details on:

- **Club Grants:** Matching grants of **\$250–\$1,000** for new or innovative club projects.
- **Childhood Health & Wellness Grants:** Focused on youth health, mental wellness, and disabilities.
- **Deadlines:**
  - *Club Grants:* March 20, 2026
  - *Health & Wellness Grants:* January 30 and August 21, 2026
- Applications are simple, fillable PDFs available at **oifoundation.org**.

**Mary Dewey** followed with a presentation on the **impact of OIF giving**, including a **Foundation video** highlighting how donations directly fund scholarships, youth programs, and community initiatives.

She encouraged members to join the **“Dime-A-Day” program** (\$36.50 annually) and shared stories of how even small contributions create lasting change.

Together, Jean and Mary emphasized that OIF is the financial engine behind many of the programs that make Optimism thrive.

## Governor Jennifer Bagwell – *OIF Dime-A-Day Challenge & Gift Card Giveaway*

Governor Bagwell launched a **Dime-A-Day Challenge** to inspire giving and support for OIF.

Members who pledged or donated were entered into a **special gift card drawing**, celebrating generosity and Foundation support.

The initiative raised awareness of how small, consistent giving fuels scholarships, youth programs, and district grants — turning optimism into action.



## Rick McKernan – *U.S. 250th Anniversary Geocache Project*

Rick introduced an exciting, nationwide initiative celebrating **America's 250th Anniversary** through **Optimist Geocaching**.

- Clubs can participate by creating or sponsoring geocache sites tied to local history, Optimist landmarks, or community projects.
- The project connects Optimists across the country through exploration, education, and service.

- Rick also awarded **three special prizes** to participants who engaged during his presentation — recognizing creativity and enthusiasm for this historic project.

This initiative blends fun, history, and community engagement — a perfect fit for Optimists who love adventure and service.

## Prize Wheel & Gift Card Winners

The **Prize Wheel** and **Foundation Challenge Drawings** brought energy and fun to the virtual conference.

Winners were recognized live and received digital gift cards following the event.

Prize	Winner
<b>Cold Stone Creamery Gift Card</b>	Phyllis Neff
<b>IHOP Gift Card</b>	Elena Cook
<b>Krispy Kreme Gift Card</b>	Amanda Walter
<b>IHOP Gift Card</b>	Danna Wren
<b>Domino's Gift Card</b>	Cathy Elliott
<b>IHOP Gift Card</b>	Barb West
<b>Rick McKernan's Presentation Prizes (3 Winners)</b>	<i>Awarded during Geocache session</i>

- Governor Bagwell personally text messaged all digital gift cards following the session.

Future giveaways and named on wheel will continue at each quarterly conference — so don't miss Q3 for more spins, surprises, and Optimist fun!

### Special Moment: Surprise Visit

Past International President **Patsy Garner** made a surprise appearance, inspiring attendees with her message of service leadership and the enduring power of Optimism. Her visit reminded members that every act of service continues the legacy of those who came before us.



## Looking Ahead – Q3 Conference Preview

**Theme:** *“Betting on Optimism!”*

**When:** Spring 2026 (details coming soon)

**Why Attend:**

- Oratorical
- Celebrate district achievements
- Enjoy fellowship, prizes, and new district merchandise

Let's make Q3 the biggest celebration of Optimism yet!

## Closing Reflection



The 2nd Quarter Conference proved that East Missouri Optimists are not just participating — we are **leading, growing, and making measurable impact.**

Clubs are serving.  
Leaders are stepping forward.  
Youth are being empowered.  
Communities are being strengthened.

With half the Optimist year remaining, our momentum is unstoppable.

Let's carry this energy into Q3 — and keep bringing out the best in each other.

— **Governor Jennifer Bagwell**

East Missouri District | Optimist International

## Optimist Magazine - Winter 2026

Reader for Issue

[continue »](#)



**The new medallions are available in Gold, Silver, and Bronze, each featuring the Optimist International logo at the center.**

- Specific contest names are not listed on the medallions. This intentional design choice allows Clubs and Districts to use one versatile medallion style for all three scholarship contests, ensuring long-term sustainability, easier inventory management, and a more consistent recognition experience for students.
- The medallions will be available for purchase through the [Optimist](#)



**Gold - Optimist  
International Medals**

International Merchandise Store beginning in January.

- We encourage you to check back at the [OI Merch Store](#) at that time for availability, ordering information, and projected shipping timelines.



We are on LinkedIn!  
[Click Here](#)



East Missouri District - Optimist Members Only

Members be sure to join and invite other club/EMO members. We use this Facebook group to inform, share club activities, and celebrate!



It's time for all members to either register for an account (if you have **never** registered) or re-subscribe. The Institute has so much to offer! There's a media library, quick reference guide, inspiration section, new club info, a place to create and participate in group chats and even courses for officers! [Learn more.](#)

## District Events

FEBRUARY 6-7, 2026

2nd Quarter virtual conference

MAY 1-2, 2026

3rd Quarter Conference

JUNE \_\_\_\_, 2026

EMO Jr. Golf Tournament

JUNE 28 - JULY 2

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

AUGUST 21-23, 2026

EMO District Convention

## Key Optimist International Organization - Wide Events

Click here to register or for more information

- **February 1: 2026 International Convention Registration Opens.** Registration officially begins for the convention in Jacksonville, FL (scheduled for June 28–July 1, 2026).
- **February 5: Optimist Day.** Celebrated annually on the first Thursday of February. Members are encouraged to wear Optimist gear and perform acts of service in their communities.
- **February 9: Junior Golf Forum (6:00 PM – 7:00 PM).** A virtual session focused on planning qualifiers, tournament guidelines, and rules.
- **February 9: Leadership Development Webinar (7:00 PM – 8:00 PM).**
- **February 15: IRS Form 990 Filing Deadline.** All U.S. Optimist Clubs must submit their annual tax filings by this date.
- **February 17: Presidents' Day (US).** Observed by the international office.
- **February 28: Club Essay Contest Deadline.** Deadline for Clubs to submit their winning essays to the District Chair.

## District & Regional Events

- **February 6–7: East Missouri (EMO) District 2nd Quarter Conference.** A virtual "Be The Change" game show-style conference via Zoom.
- **February 6–8: Southeast Regional Conference.** Held in Panama City, Florida.
- **February 20–22: GATEway District 2nd Quarter Conference.**

## Monthly Observances

- **Junior Optimist Reading Month:** Throughout February, JOI members focus on literacy and reading initiatives.
- **Black History Month:** Celebrated throughout the month.

You can view the full interactive calendar and sign up for reminders at the [Optimist International Upcoming Events page](#).

# NEW!

We value your opinion - What do you love about this newsletter? What do you think needs changed? Email us at [emoptimistdist@gmail.com](mailto:emoptimistdist@gmail.com) with your comments.

## Why am I receiving this email?

You are receiving this because you are Member of Optimist International and within the EMO District. You agreed to Opt-in for communications during your Membership application.

If you need to have your email updated or if you no longer wish to receive such emails from our Club please email us at [emoptimistdist@gmail.com](mailto:emoptimistdist@gmail.com)

Please know if you unsubscribe or opt-out, you will no longer receive any communications regarding your submission, and important news and updates.



**Mailing address:** EMO East Missouri District, 4494 Lindell Blvd, St. Louis, MO, 63108,  
US

[Unsubscribe](#) from future emails.

---