



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

September 2025 News Making a Difference For Kids

President Cathy Elliott



Dear Ladies,

And just like that...it's September!

In just a few short days, we will close the books on our 37th Twin City Area Optimist Year. What makes this year so great isn't just the projects or the numbers—it's all of you. Time and again, you showed up when the club needed you. You gave your best to our programs, and you leaned into fellowship with one another. Together, we truly made a difference.

Highlights of the Year:

- Our Google Calendar is up and running—and being used!
- Weekly attendance grew at both day and evening meetings.
- Participation in East Missouri District Quarterly Meetings increased.
- More members attended the Optimist International Convention.
- Our very own **Jean Naeger** served as East Missouri District Governor—leading with excellence alongside **Phyllis Neff**.
- Our own **Mary Hatfield** has been voted in as East Missouri District Governor-elect.
- Fundraisers exceeded expectations.
- Sponsors gave generously, and new sponsors joined our cause.
- We added more programs and events, each a success.
- More grant money was awarded to support our work.
- We began attending Twin City Chamber Meetings, building connections in the community.
- One of our JOI members, Olivia Blair, won the Oratorical Contest at the District level and went on to compete at the World Regionals!
- We brought home **four awards** from the East Missouri Optimist District:
 - Rookie of the Year
 - Best Club Project of the Year
 - Outstanding District Member
 - President of the Year
- We welcomed **35 new members in just 8 months!**
- We celebrated “**us**” with a joyful Luau.
- Our **C.A.R.E. Program** showed just how much people value this club and its welcoming spirit.
- Three members are working very hard to start a Learn to Ride Your Bike Park.

We also faced challenges.

- Some of our members courageously fought cancer, and some are still in the fight.
- We said farewell to our long tradition of Christmas parties with Head Start.
- And most heavily on our hearts—we lost our beloved member, Caryl Harness. As a charter member, faithful attendee, gifted storyteller, and dear friend, her absence will be deeply felt.

Last October, I told you to “hang on to your hats!” And wow—what a ride it has been! Every success came from your hands, your hearts, and your commitment to being Optimists.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for a fabulous year!

With optimism,

Cathy Elliott

President-Twin City Area Optimist Club

Welcome New Members!



Heather Myers



Jackie Hoyt

In Memoriam Caryl Harness



The Twin City Area Optimist family mourns the loss of Caryl Harness, one of our most beloved and iconic charter members, who passed away on September 7, 2025.

For decades, Caryl gave her heart and soul to our club. As a founding member, she was a driving force from the very beginning, an unwavering presence, and the person we all looked to for guidance and encouragement. Her dedication to the Optimist mission was felt far beyond our local club. Caryl's impressive leadership journey included serving as club secretary in 1992-1993, club president in 1994-1995, followed by her time as East Missouri Optimist District Lieutenant Governor in 1999-2000. She continued service to the district by chairing many committees throughout the years. She was a key figure in the organization on an international

scale, serving as a member of the 2005 International Convention Committee. Over the years, she attended around 20 international conventions, with her last being this summer in St. Louis.

We will never forget her signature style. Caryl was a true lady in every sense of the word, always dressed impeccably, make-up in place and a bright, welcoming smile. This same grace extended to her legendary hospitality. So many of us will fondly remember her hosting board meetings, where she always served her famous taco salad, complete with a generous spread of every topping imaginable. Her delicious food and her warmth made every board meeting feel like a gathering of friends.

Caryl leaves behind a legacy of selfless service and enduring friendships. We are all better for having known her. We will miss her dearly.

[Obituary information for Caryl Ann Harness](#)

Jean Naeger

Past TCA President 2017-2018

EMO Governor 2024-2025



**Four of our Charter members
Caryl Harness, Elsie Williams, Sue Boyer,
and Marsha Greenstreet**



President's Roast



Trivia Fundraiser



Wearing our Optimist shirts



EMO Convention 2023

2025 Optimist International (OI) Convention

The last OI Convention Caryl attended with her Optimist sisters in St. Louis.



Aunt Rose Project



While Caryl was dedicated to many projects, the **Aunt Rose Project** was especially near and dear to her heart. After hearing about the need to supply foster teenage girls with period products, she made it her personal mission to involve our club in providing this crucial support.



September 4, 2025

General Meeting

Board Meeting Updates and Committees:

Lions Club Hillsboro – the board approved a donation of \$200 .00 to the Lions Club to sponsor World Sight Day. Another board member contributed \$50.00 to make a total club donation of \$250.00 to be listed as a Lion's Roar Sponsor.

Koeze Nut Sales – Patty Meyer

The catalogs will be arriving any time now. This fundraiser brought in \$5362.00 last year. Please try and sell these nuts as it is one of our larger fundraisers

Head Start Christmas Party - December

Due to Federal Regulations, we will need to change what we do for our Head Start Holiday Program. We are waiting to hear back from Head Start as to what we can do. No holiday party will be allowed as in the past, but we are working on a plan.

Coat Project – Mary McDowell

Grant - \$7,000.00 coming in January 2026 – Mary was able to ask for an additional \$1,000.00 and she got it! Thank you, Mary!!!

Officer Installation will be held October 2, 2025 at Taytro's from 12:00-1:30.

Host volunteers for Board Meetings are still available for the following dates. If you would like to host a board meeting in your home, please contact Cathy Elliott.

- Tuesday October 7, 2025
- December 2, 2025
- April 7, 2026

Chair Position Still Open:

- **Adolescent Boys Health – December, 2025**

Community Networking – Looking for someone to chair at least one event for the following:

- **Winterfest in Festus, 2025 – Open**
- **Hillsboro Homecoming, 2026- Open**
- **Trailnet / Bottleneck Bike Rodeo, August, 2026– Katie Huck**
- **Twin City Days Festus, September, 2026 – Katie Huck**
- **Things That Go in Herculaneum, 2026– Open**
- **De Soto Fall Festival in September, 2026 -Open**

Party Planners Needed (Cathy Elliott will provide the budget in October). If there is no one to work on the parties – they will be cancelled for the first time in 38 years.

- **Halloween, 2025-open**

- Winter Holiday, 2025-open
- Valentine's Day, 2026– Donna Long and Lynne Wendel
- Spring Event, 2026 - open
- Summer 2026– open
- Officer Installation/Roast, October 2026 - open

Three new members were approved! WELCOME!!

- Sherree Fite, sponsored by Judy Williams
- Danita Miller, sponsored by Cathy Elliott
- Jacquelyn Hoyt, sponsored by Kim Elbl

This now brings us to 141 Twin City Area Optimist Members!

Other:

Solicitation of Flyers

There have been many solicitations for events and donations from around the area, requesting that literature be distributed at our meetings and events. The following is from our club policies and procedures on page 3 under "Fund Raising": **"No solicitation for activities other than the Club's projects will be allowed"**.

After the board updates, Marian Bozak took over the meeting for a fun activity. Members roamed around looking for the partner to the word on the card they had such as: Old / Young, Peanut Butter / Jelly. Once we found our match we spent a few minutes looking for things we had in common! Thank you, Marian, for getting us up and mingling!

Submitted by: Cathy Elliott

September 11, 2025 Sponsorship Luncheon

The September 11 meeting opened with several announcements.

URGENT - Meeting Cancellations:

- **Thursday, September 18 at noon (Caryl Harness Church Service)**
- **Thursday, September 25 evening (join us at Panera for food and fellowship!)**

Caryl Harness

Cathy Elliott shared that the September 18 meeting was being cancelled so that members may attend Caryl's funeral service and pay their respects. Members were encouraged to wear their Optimist shirt, especially a mango-colored shirt (representing the Optimist Mango Ladies) when possible, to the service in Caryl's honor. Together, attending Optimists will recite the Optimist Creed at the service as a tribute to her life lived in its spirit. Caryl was a true embodiment of optimism, service, and friendship. May we honor her not only with our presence, but by carrying forward the joy and kindness she shared with all. Memorials may

be made out to **The Foundation for the Twin City Optimist Club** per the family's request.

Koeze Nut Catalogs are in! At the October 2 meeting, please pick up a catalog and order form. Orders are taken until November 20; the nuts arrive, usually the first week of December. This is an important fundraiser for the club. These treats make great gifts for family, friends, colleagues and customers. Proceeds go to help support various Twin Area Optimist Club programs.

INDUCTION – Please welcome 2 new members!

- **Heather Myers**, sponsored by Jean Naeger
- **Jackie Hoyt**, sponsored by Kim Elbl

After a delicious lunch, the Sponsorship program began, hosted by Jean Naeger. Sponsors in attendance were introduced. Jean expressed gratitude on behalf of the club for their donations and continued support of the Optimist projects our club provides for the betterment of the community. Sponsors in attendance were:

- Carol and Harold Hagan
- Edward Jones - Colby Portell
- Hovis & Associates - Lacey Robertson and David Hovis
- MN & Associates LLC - The Needy-Kohler Team - Marie Needy-Kohler and Jim Kohler
- North Medical Group, LLC - Karin Spinks
- Taytro's Bar and Bistro - Lynn Tetrault, Jane Markley, Patrick Thompson

In a twist from previous Sponsor luncheons, Jean Naeger and Amy Baum came up with a "The Price is Right" game to play with our sponsors. Jean played the Bob Barker role for the game with players Harold Hagan, Colby Portell, Lacey Robertson, Jim Kohler, Karin Spinks, and Lynn Tetrault. Six of the club's larger projects were listed on a board for the sponsors to pick from. After a short explanation of the selected project, the sponsor had to guess the project's cost. In five of the six guesses, the sponsors guessed over the actual cost, some by a substantial amount. Jim Kohler's guess was the closest without going over. He won a bag with chocolates and an Optimist coaster. This visual helped the sponsors understand the amount of money that Twin City Area Optimists spends supporting the community through its programs and projects, as well as showing them that we are frugal with the money they donate.

Thank you to all of the ladies who helped make today's luncheon a success!

Submitted by: Cathy Elliott and Carolyn McKinney



Jean Naeger and Katie Huck with "The Price is Right" board.



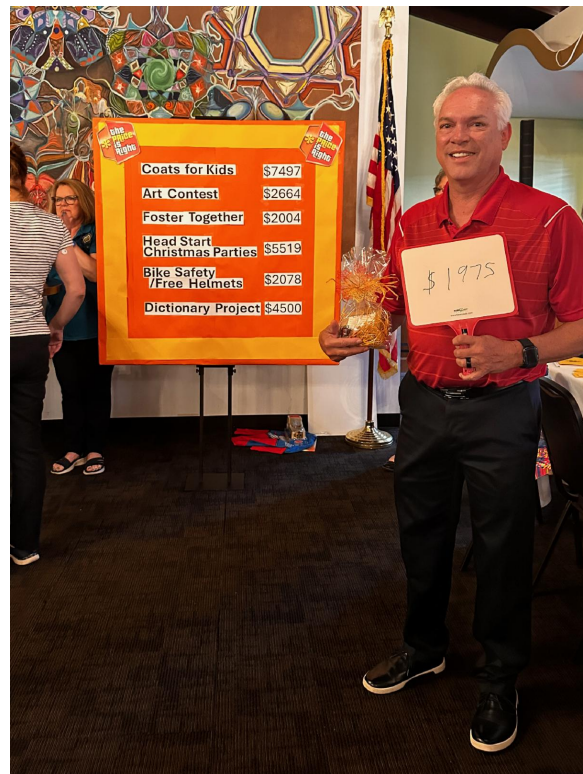
Lynn Tetrault and Jane Markley from Taytro's



Carol and Harold Hagan



Lacey Robertson and David Hovis



Jim Kohler, winner of "The Price is Right"!

CLUB PROJECTS

Twin City Days Bike Helmet Project

Twin City Area Optimists fitted and gave away an estimated 65 bike helmets to children on September 6 during Twin City Days! In addition to providing bike helmets, a Hot Wheels bicycle was raffled off, earning \$123 for the club! The bike was won by our own Christine Bradshaw. Congratulations Christine!

The goal of the Community Networking Committee and the booths we set up at festivals such as the Twin City Days, is to serve as a public relations outreach, positively impacting the perception of our organization and its service to the community. Our activity at Twin City Days accomplished that goal and furthered our commitment of promoting bike safety. The club members who worked at the event had direct contact with the children and their parents, thus adding to the positive influence of the project.

The club could not have accomplished so much without the help of the following Optimist members: Katie Huck, Sarah Hilker, Peggy Scott, Cathy Elliot, Karen Francis, Laura English, Marian Bozak, Heather Meyers, Carroll Metzger, Shannon Carter, Christine Bradshaw, Lisa Schevers, Maria Hoepfner, Phyllis Neff, Jennifer Wooldridge, and Sophia Hensley. Thank you so much for all that you do! Additionally, Phyllis Neff's son and grandson helped set up the pop-up canopy the morning of the event. Finally, we appreciate Peggy Scott and Leader Publications for allowing us to store the bike helmets in their facility!

Community Networking Committee: Mary Hatfield, chair, Katie Huck, co-chair

Submitted by: Mary Hatfield



Mary Hatfield, Katie Huck, Karen Francis, Laura English, and Cathy Elliott at the registration table.



Christine Bradshaw on the bike she won.

Some of the kids with their new bike helmets!





Dictionary Project

The Twin City Area Optimist Club recently completed its annual Dictionary Project, a community effort aimed at supporting education and literacy in Jefferson County. On September 8, more than 20 dedicated Optimist volunteers gathered at St. Pius X High School to label and sort over 1,000 dictionaries. The volunteers completed the work in just 30 minutes and the books have since been distributed to third graders at 13 local schools: Festus Elementary, Hillsboro, Telegraph, Pevely, St Rose, Twin City Christian Academy, Athena, Sunrise, Grandview, Our Lady, Christian Outreach, Vineland and Crystal City.

This project reflects the Optimist Club's mission of bringing out the best in kids by providing tools that encourage learning and inspire a love for reading. Thanks to the teamwork and generosity of our volunteers, hundreds of students now have their own personal dictionary to use throughout their educational journey.

"The goal of this program is to assist all students in becoming good writers, active readers, creative thinkers, and resourceful learners by providing them with their own personal dictionary. The dictionaries are a gift to each student to use at school and at home for years to come. Educators see third grade as the dividing line between learning to read and reading to learn, so we encourage our sponsors to give dictionaries each year to children in the third grade."

Thank you to Laura Lohman for chairing this important project and to the club members who helped label, sort and deliver the dictionaries: Mickie Huskey, Patty Meyer, Megan Canaday, Jessica Korte, Cheyenne Parrish, Cathy Elliott, Susan DeClue, Kim Polette, Kirstie Zych, Marian Bozak, Jackie Hoyt, Donna Long, Lynne Wendel, Judy Williams, Carolyn McKinney and Alicia Cummiskey.

Submitted by: Laura Lohman



Volunteers ready to label and sort dictionaries!

Front row: Laura Lohman, Mickie Huskey, and Patty Meyer

Center row: Megan Canaday, Jessica Korte, Cheyenne Parrish, Cathy Elliott, Susan DeClue, Kim Polette, Kirstie Zych

Back row: Marian Bozak, Jackie Hoyt, Donna Long, Lynne Wendel, Judy Williams, Carolyn McKinney, Alicia Cummiskey

Not pictured Debbie Hogenmiller and Christine Bradshaw



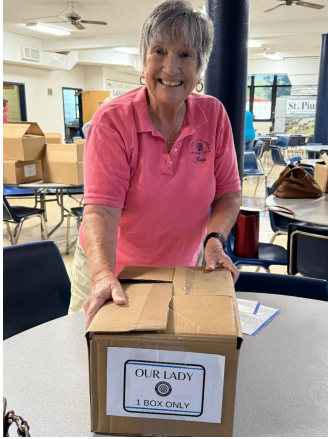
Patty Meyer, Susan DeClue, and Mickie Huskey



Marian Bozak, Alicia Cummiskey, Cheyenne Parrish, and Donna Long



Jackie Hoyt



Judy Williams



Kirstie Zych



Hillsboro students showing off their new dictionaries.



Festus students putting their new dictionaries to use.



Patty Myers (back row) delivered dictionaries to smiling third graders at Our Lady School.

Brenden's Friday Backpacks Food Drive

The Twin City Area Optimist Club conducted a community food drive for Brenden's Friday Backpacks on Saturday, September 13, 2025 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Festus Walmart. Our Optimist members handed out flyers to and received food donations from generous Walmart customers. We collected 8,731 single-serve items and \$825.40 in cash donations all to benefit Brenden's Friday Backpacks.

Thank you to committee chairs Kirstie Zych and Debbie Hogenmiller, and all of the volunteers who worked at the event. Optimist members included: Laura English, Amy Baum, Debbie Buenniger, Debbie Schumaker, Danita Miller, Cathy Elliot, Becky Francis, Tracy Johnson, Lynne Wendel, Anedra Owens and her daughter, Judy Williams, Lisa Schevers, Pat Doenges, Jean Naeger, Alicia Cumiskey, Sue Joggerst, Carroll Metzger, Jackie Hoyt, Christine Bradshaw, Carolyn McKinney, Sarah Hilker, Phyllis Neff, Debbie Floyd, Janice Boyd, Marian Bozak, and Maria Hoepfner.

This is a great example of our club's effort to support the community!

Submitted by: Kirstie Zych



Janice Boyd, Kirsti Zych (front), Debbie Hogenmiller, Debbie Floyd, and Phyllis Neff with the final haul.



Some generous donors!



Cathy Elliott, Debbie Buenniger, Amy Baum, and Danita Miller



Debbie Hogenmiller, Tracy Johnson, Debbie Schumaker, Lynne Wendel, and Anedra Owens



TWIN CITY AREA OPTIMIST CLUB ANNUAL ART CONTEST



November 23, 2025

2:00PM - 4:00PM

Elks Lodge 1721

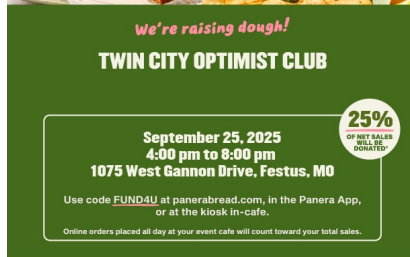
4 Elks Acres, Festus, MO



CLUB FUNDRAISERS

Dine to Donate - Panera

Panera in Festus participated in our Dine to Donate fundraiser on September 25. They donated 25% of the sales from customers who presented the Optimist flyer or used a promo code from 4-8 PM. The total raised for the club was \$211.64, and



Panera
FUNDRAISING

20% Fundraise: Up to 20% of net sales from your designated and registered fundraising event will be donated to your approved organization. Minimum sale of \$100 on the specified date, time and location required to receive 20% Fundraise. Up to 20% of net sales from your designated and registered fundraising event will be donated to your approved organization. Minimum sales of \$100 on the specified date, time and location required to receive 20% Fundraise. General terms: Details on percentage of net sales to be donated and the minimum sales requirement will be provided during the event registration process. Exclusions: Cash, cash equivalents, gift certificates, gift cards, gift cards, and other items that are not cash are excluded and will not count towards the total net sales from your designated fundraising event. This offer will be valid if your is distributed in or near the participating bakery-cake on the night of the event. Fundraising events may be cancelled without notice due to adverse weather conditions, health and safety concerns, or other unforeseen circumstances. Other restrictions may apply. For more information on how our Fundraising events work, please visit: <https://offspringpanetried.com/Fac>



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 Optimism 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



CONFERENCE / CONVENTION DATES

October 3-4, 2025

EMO/WMO 1st Quarter Conference

Capital Plaza, Jefferson City, MO

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

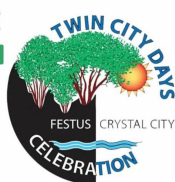
Optimist International Convention

June 28 - July 1, 2026

Hyatt Regency
Jacksonville, Florida

JOI CLUB

**LET'S STRIKE
UP SOME FUN**



FAMILY BOWLING EVENT

DATE: Friday September 5, 2025
TIME: 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
PLACE: Quonset Lanes
2004 N. Truman Blvd.
Crystal City

Per person:
one FREE Game
FREE shoe rental
\$6 food/beverage
voucher for first
75 kids

For more information contact:
Junior Optimist Adult Advisor

Debbie Schumaker debbie268244@gmail.com

Sponsored by:



Family Bowling Night

The JOI club hosted the Twin City Days Family Bowling Night on Friday, September 5 at Quonset Lanes in Festus. The club handed out 80 \$6.00 food vouchers to children who came to bowl with their families. Three JOI Club applications were also given out!

Families enjoyed a fun time together with lots of laughter while bowling!

Submitted by: Debbie Schumaker

Debbie Schumaker
JOI Adult Advisor

Carol Schanz
JOI Chair



SAVE THE DATES

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



October 2 Officer Installation
 October 2 JOI Club installation
 October 3-4 EMO 1st Quarter Conference
 October 7 Board Meeting
 October 9 Meeting - Board Update
 October 16 Meeting - Perfect Attendance

October 23 Meeting - MO Kids Unplugged
 October 25 Bloomsdale Fun Farm
 October 30 Meeting - Halloween Party & Chili Cookoff
 November 4 Board Meeting
 November 6 Meeting - Board Update
 November 13 Meeting
 November 20 Meeting - Head Start Gift Wrapping
 November 21 BUNCO
 November 23 Art Contest
 November 27 Thanksgiving - NO MEETING
 December 2 Board Meeting
 December 4 Meeting - Board Update
 December 6 Winterfest
 December 9 Head Start Party - De Soto
 December 10 Head Start Party - Hematite
 December 11 Meeting
 December 18 Holiday Party & Baked Goods Auction
 December 25 Christmas - NO MEETING
 January 1 New Year's Day - NO MEETING



Board of
 Directors
 2024-2025

President
 Cathy Elliott
 573 883 0924

President Elect
 Debbie
 Hogenmiller

Past President
 Peggy Scott

Secretary
 Kathy Todd

Secretary Elect
 Marian Bozak

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.

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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Visit our website



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

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