

North Carolina East District Bulletin

4th Quarter District Meeting September, 2026



Message from Governor Timothy Johnson

The Mission Continues

It seems like only yesterday we were beginning the 2025-2026 Optimist Year!

At the beginning of our year, I challenged us to be Mission Ready. We had a new Optimist Year in front of us. New opportunities. New challenges. And most importantly, another year to make a difference in the lives of children and in the communities we serve.

And now, here we are! We are in the final stretch of our Optimist Year, and our District Convention is here!

Time really does fly when you're having fun. And, as I said earlier this year, time flies when you're doing great things. And, North Carolina East Optimists have been doing GREAT things!

Throughout this year, I have had the privilege of hearing about—and sometimes participating in—the work our Clubs are doing throughout eastern North Carolina. We have fed children and families. We have provided scholarships. We have supported Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina. We have held Christmas tree sales, parades, golf tournaments, Easter egg hunts, athletic programs, food drives, fundraisers and community service projects.

We have supported children who needed encouragement. We have helped families

who needed a hand. We have brought people together.

And we have given young people opportunities to discover something within themselves.

That is especially meaningful to me.

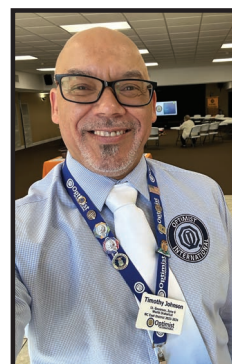
Through our Essay and Oratorical Contests, we have heard directly from some incredible young people. We asked them to think about service, belonging and community—and then we listened to what they had to say.

One of those young people, Avishai Deshpande, carried the banner of North Carolina East all the way to the Optimist International Oratorical World Championships!

Think about that!

A young person began by participating in an Optimist program here in our District and ultimately had the opportunity to stand on an international stage. That is what can happen when Optimists create opportunities for young people.

That is why what we do matters! But our mission isn't only about programs. It is also about people.



continued

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Earlier this year, I asked, "Who's Your One?"

I challenged each of us to think of one person with whom we could build—or rebuild—a relationship. Not simply to recruit another member, but to connect with someone. Have coffee. Invite them to serve alongside us. Let them see firsthand what Optimists do.

That challenge is still before us.

Our Clubs are doing wonderful things, but those things cannot continue without people. We need new members. We need new leaders. We need people who believe that investing their time and talents in young people and their communities is still worthwhile.

And I believe those people are out there.

Maybe they just haven't been asked yet.

As we approach the end of this Optimist Year, we also prepare for something new.

Our Clubs have elected leaders who will take office October 1. Our incoming District leadership team is preparing for the year ahead. Governor-Elect David Jennings and his team are already working and planning.



That is how Optimism continues.

Leadership changes. Officers change. Governors change.

The mission does not.

Before we make that transition, however, we have some unfinished business—and some celebrating to do!

Our North Carolina East District Convention is coming September 17-20 at Ocean Creek Resort.

District Convention is our opportunity to come together as Optimists from across eastern North Carolina. We

will conduct the business of our District. We will learn. We will recognize accomplishments. We will celebrate our Clubs and our members. And perhaps most importantly, we will reconnect with one another.

Those relationships matter.

One of the greatest things about Optimism is the people we meet along the way. People from different communities, different backgrounds and different walks of life come together because we share something in common: we want to make life better for others—especially children.

So let's finish strong!

There is still time left in this Optimist Year. There are still children to encourage. There are still communities to serve. There are still potential members to invite.



There are still people who need what Optimism has to offer.

Galatians 6:9 reminds us not to grow weary in doing good, because in due season we will reap a harvest if we don't give up.

Optimists, don't give up.

Stay motivated. Strive for greatness.

Keep serving. Keep inviting. Keep encouraging. Keep showing people what Optimism looks like when it is put into action.

A year ago, we were "Mission Ready".

Today, I am "Mission Grateful".

Grateful for our Club Presidents and Officers. Grateful for our Lieutenant Governors and District Leaders. Grateful for our Past Governors and the wisdom and history they bring. Grateful for the members who quietly show up, work hard, serve

children and never ask for recognition.

And most of all, I am grateful that you chose to be an Optimist.

Somewhere in North Carolina, there is a child whose life is a little better because an Optimist didn't quit.

Maybe that Optimist was you.

Our year is not finished.

Our work is not finished.

Our mission continues.

And because of Optimists like you, The Future Is Bright!

Thank you for all you do!

Optimists make a difference! NC East Optimists make a difference! YOU make a difference!



Governor Elect David Jennings

Dear NC East Optimist Family,

Get ready, because a wave of positive energy is heading our way!

It is with immense joy, humility, and an absolute bucketload of excitement that I step into the role of your new District Governor. I have watched this incredible district change lives, uplift communities, and bring out the absolute best in our youth. Now, as we kick off this brilliant new chapter together, I am thrilled to officially invite you to be part of our guiding vision:
"Join the Optimism Movement!"

Optimism isn't just a mindset—it's an action. It's a choice we make every single day to look at the world not for what it lacks, but for what it can become. This year, we aren't just maintaining our clubs; we are launching a movement. We are going to turn up the volume on our passion, expand our reach, and make sure everyone in North Carolina East knows exactly who the Optimists are and the incredible impact we make. What Does the Movement Look Like?

To truly ignite this movement, we're focusing on three big goals this year:

- **Bold Visibility:** Let's share our stories louder than ever! Expect vibrant community outreach, dynamic projects, and a strong presence that makes people say, "I want to be a part of whatever they are doing."
- **Empowered Growth:** Growth means more hands to do the work and more hearts to share

the joy. We will be focusing on bringing fresh voices into our current clubs and building new clubs to anchor more communities.

- **Unstoppable Fellowship:** We do our best work when we are connected. Get ready for high-energy district meetings, exciting zone events, and plenty of opportunities to celebrate our successes (and each other) along the way.

Your Invitation to Action

A movement doesn't start with one person; it starts with a collective spark. I need your ideas, your energy, and your unique passions. Whether you've been an Optimist for thirty years or thirty days, your voice is essential to this journey. Let's commit to being the catalysts for hope in our communities. Let's mentor the youth, support our neighbors, and bring a contagious smile to everything we do.

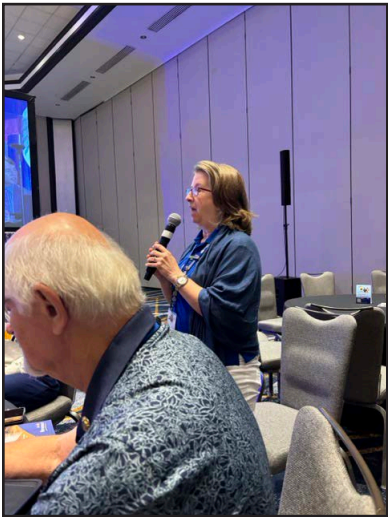
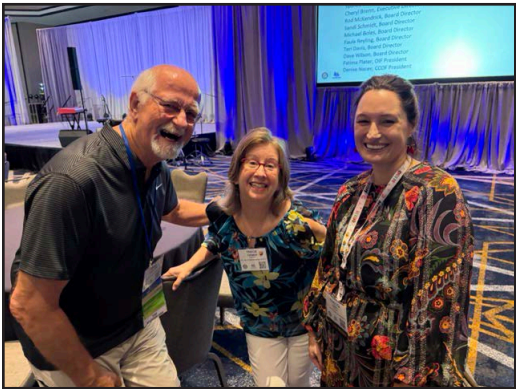
Thank you for your dedication, your warmth, and your unwavering belief in a better tomorrow. I cannot wait to visit your clubs, work alongside you, and see just how far this movement will take us.

Let's make this year unforgettable. Are you ready? Join the optimism movement!

With deepest gratitude and endless optimism,
David Jennings



International Convention
June Jacksonville, FL



Zone 1 Update

Bennie Bass, Lt. Governor



Winter Park

Fall Baseball / Softball Sign Ups have started. We had a very successful Spring season both baseball and softball. Baseball saw all age groups competing in DYB playoffs, fortunate to have the 11/12 yr olds win the State tournament and are currently competing in Mississippi.

On the softball side we had three teams qualify for the State tournament and all did very well, with our 10 yr old team finishing 3rd. Christmas trees have been ordered and looking forward to another successful season there as well.

Cape Fear Optimist 60th Anniversary



Mr. PeeWee Moore - the only original member and his family.



Greenville

The Greenville Optimist Club participated in the Mid-Atlantic Expo in July, hosting an exhibition booth and organizing multiple fundraising raffles to support upcoming community initiatives.



The Optimist Club of Greenville is proudly delivering and installing a new buddy bench at Lake Forest Elementary School.

Zone 2 Update
Brian Gibson, Lt. Governor

Chowen-Edenton



Bike, Paddle & Run event, hosted by The Edenton-Chowan Optimist Club



Laurinburg



Fried Fish Fundraiser

Zone 3 Update

Robin Murtha, Lt. Governor

Its been a slow and hot summer for most of our clubs.

The Golden Circle stayed busy though with getting ready for our golf tournament. We welcomed two new members. Donated items for the Speight Middle School. Held a spirit night at Culver's to help raise money. Gave three scholarships of \$1,000 to local seniors and one for \$250 to the school for the deaf. Donated \$500 to Camp Rainbow for children with cancer. Had our Bunco night in May, also Kisses for Cancer. Big shout out to OI for the matching grant we received for \$1,000 to help Artistry Unlimited.





WILSON GOLDEN CIRCLE OPTIMIST

GOLF Tournament

WILSON GOLDEN CIRCLE OPTIMIST
Fundraiser for Community Youth Projects

SEPTEMBER 11, 2026
12:00 PM to 6:00 PM

WEDGEWOOD PUBLIC GOLF COURSE
3201 Old Stantonsburg Rd.
Wilson, NC 27893
(252) 237-4761

18 HOLES WITH LUNCH

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS | **TEAM AWARDS** | **GREAT PRIZES & RAFFLES** | **FUN, FOOD & FELLOWSHIP**

CONTACT:
Linda Hawley- Isbell
252-288-7050
Jean McLamb
252-296-6913
Or any club member

Thank you for supporting our community youth!

SUPPORTING YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY

4 PERSON SUPERBALL

\$75 SINGLES

\$300 TEAMS



Goldsboro did a school supply give away. Worked on bicycles for a bike rodeo. Participated in a career day at Maxwell center to share info on the Optimist organization.

Zone 4 Update

TBD, Lt. Governor



RR OPTIMIST CLUB
T-BALL & COACH PITCH LEAGUE 2026

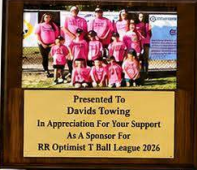
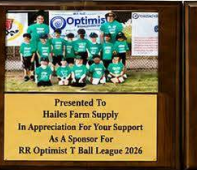
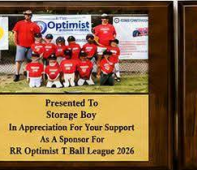
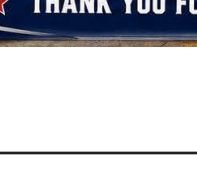
Thank You to All Our Sponsors!

**YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT MADE OUR BASEBALL SEASON POSSIBLE.
WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DO IT WITHOUT YOU!**

Thank You SO MUCH!

We Appreciate YOU!

THANK YOU FOR INVESTING IN OUR PLAYERS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITY!

 Presented To Davids Towing In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Hales fire and Safety In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Hales Farm Supply In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Storage Boy In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Watkins Painting In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026
 Presented To Eastern Electric In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Big Johns Store In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Edward Jones Colby Lyles In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist T Ball League 2026	 Presented To Eastern Electric In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist Coach Pitch League 2026	 Presented To Garner's Lawn Equipment In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist Coach Pitch League 2026
 Presented To Davis Body Shop In Appreciation For Your Support As A Sponsor For RR Optimist Coach Pitch League 2026				



PROMISE YOURSELF

To talk health,
happiness and
prosperity to every
person you meet.

-Optimist Creed

Zone 5 Update

David Jennings Interim, Lt. Governor

Henderson

Donation to Collegiate Scholarship

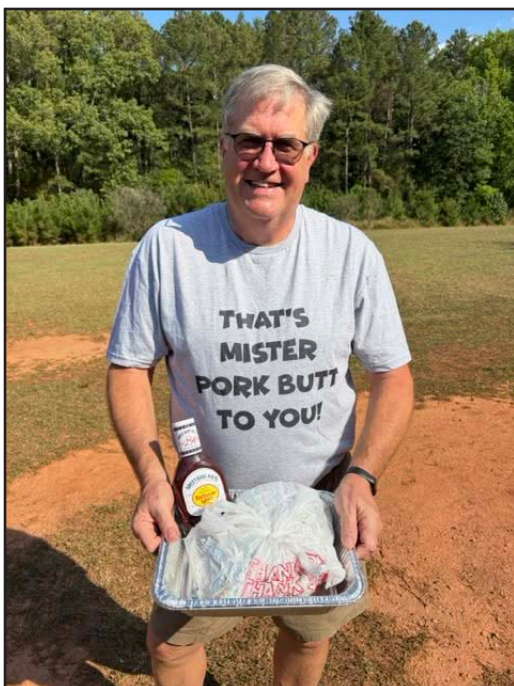


Annual Pizza
Party



Wake Forest

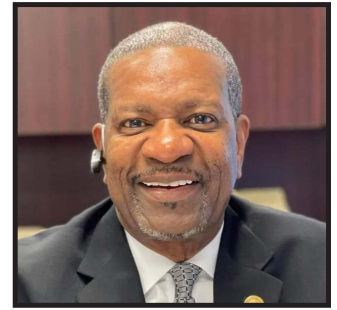
Pork Butt Fundraiser



Zone 6 Update

Tony DeRico, Lt. Governor

Raleigh



East Wake



Feeding the kids at the Boys & Girls
Club in Zebulon – with
Past Governor Terry Corle

Optimists Make a Difference!!

Boys & Girls Homes Ray Cockrell – Wilmington

Gratitude! "Thankfulness or gratefulness – a feeling of appreciation by a recipient of another's kindness." The girls in the Optimist Cottage at Boys and Girls Homes are grateful recipients of the amazing love, generosity and kindness of our Optimist Clubs. This project is the brainchild of Linda Sheppard and expanded by Kimberly's creativity. It has been special to watch their smiles and excitement as our clubs let them know they care. A huge shout out to the clubs listed below that signed up to make a day exciting for the girls and to all the clubs that do special things throughout the year to show Optimist love. You guys are amazing!!

National Puzzle Day
Wilmington Optimist

January

Valentines Day
Wilmington Optimist

February

St. Patrick's Day
Wake Forest Optimist

March

Easter
Winter Park Optimist

April

Pizza Party Day
East Wake Optimist

May

National Fudge Day
East Wake Optimist

June

National Chocolate Chip
Cookie Day
Raleigh Optimist

August

National Teddy Bear Day
Cape Fear Optimist

September

Halloween
Circle Optimist

October

Golden

Thanksgiving
Optimist

November

Garner

We will be doing it again in the coming year.
Keep an eye out for your opportunity to make a difference!

Thank you for loving our kids!!

Ray



PROMISE YOURSELF

To look at the sunny
side of everything
and make your
optimism come true.

-Optimist Creed

OI Foundation Representative Gary Pender, Goldsboro Club & Sandy Cyphers, Wilmington

Hello Optimists!

We are at the end of another Optimist Year and the OI Foundation needs your help. As you have heard we are going to have a Silent Auction at the convention. Please bring your items for the auction and don't forget your cash, check book or your credit cards We take all three.

With only a short time left we need to buckle down and do our part in supporting the Foundation.

If you haven't gotten your Dime A Day, Women's Philanthropy pin or joined the President Club come see me - or better yet just call me at 919-920-9190, or text me.

Thanks for All Your Support,
Gary Pender DFR Chair



District JOI Club

Paige Bivens, Wake Forest Club

Choosing JOI Throughout the Year

As we reflect on our year at the Wake Forest High School JOI Club, we feel that we have given joy to others and we have hope for continuing our giving projects. Each member was given the opportunity to lead with ideas to spread joy throughout our community.

Below is a summary of our year:

- September: We participated in a Club Fair to recruit new members for our Club. This two day event added about 15 new members to our returning members of 15. We started the year by walking in the Wake Forest Crop Walk to help alleviate hunger in our community, in the United States, and worldwide. This project was in partnership with the Wake Forest Optimist Club.
- October: we made blankets for Comfort Kits given to foster children that have been taken from their homes with no or little personal belongings.
- November: we made cards of encouragement handwritten by each member of the JOI Club. Some cards were given with the blankets we made in October and some were given to student services for counselors to pass to students in need.
- December: Our December project was working with the Wake Forest Police Department and the Wake Forest Optimist Club in a program called "Shop with a Cop". Thirty-five students of need go shopping with a policeman for needs and wants. We provided games and crafts while students arrived and forged some personal relationships with each child.



- January: We partnered with other clubs and with the Principal's Council to pack bags of food for our fellow students in food insecurity. We added a note of encouragement to our bags.



- February: We created pocket hearts to distribute throughout the school....some to staff, some to students anonymously who we had noticed needed a little uplifting.
- March: We made "posters of inspiration" to hang at our local Boys and Girls Club. It was exciting to see our posters hanging throughout the Club walls.
- April: We once again worked with other clubs within the school and the Principal's Cabinet to have a school supply drive in anticipation of the next year. Students go shopping at the beginning of next year in student services to shop for the supplies they need for classes.
- May: Was our Summer Send-Off. We celebrated all we had done throughout the year and debriefed what our favorite projects were. We cheered for next year as we will have the same officers and many of our same members because we did not have any senior classmates this year.

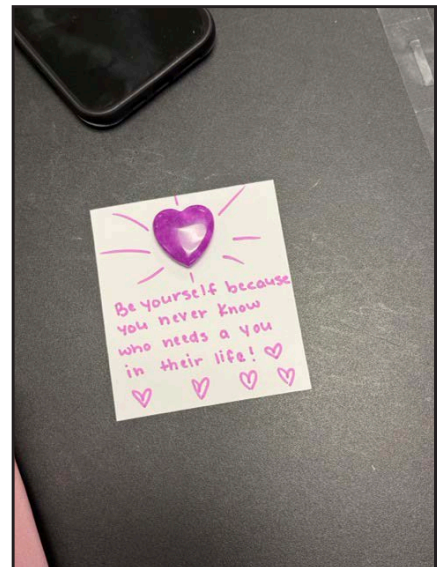
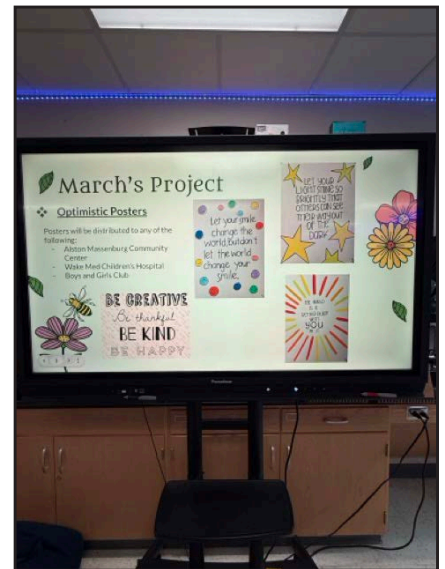
We have truly embraced the Optimist Club Motto: "friend of youth", as we joyfully worked to live the Optimist Creed!

By Paige Bivens
JOI Advisor at the Wake Forest Optimist Club





JOI Club Wake Forest



Optimist Junior Golf

David C Jennings, Henderson

Eli Hardison, our 16 year old, placed 39/170 at the third phase of the Optimist Championship.

Below is a message from his mother.

David!! We are home safe, back in NC!! What a week it was. The tournament was amazing and put on so well!! The organizers were all so great and the volunteers we amazing too!! The resort was top notch of course and so accommodating for each of us!! We met some incredible families from all over the world!!

Eli didn't have his best first two days. Playing through FL weather is tough. Super hot and super high humidity, which we obviously are somewhat accustomed to playing in, but FL heat and humidity hits a tad different. Pouring sideways rain many different times too. Luckily we didn't get caught in any lightning delays. He made the cut despite not being at the top of his game though!! He was so excited to have a chance to redeem himself. And that he did!! He was T75 at the start of Wednesday morning, and shot an impressive 74 in yet again tough conditions to move up the leaderboard and finish at an overall T39. Proud to say the least!! What an experience!!!!



We cherish your organization's willingness to sponsor him through the scholarship too. That helped our family tremendously as travel expenses add up fast!! I will now send some pictures and videos.



They botched Fuquay Varina in the tee off, but even people from NC can't always get that one right!!

Thanks again for the opportunity to represent NC and he sure does hope and pray he'll get the opportunity again.

Trump National Doral
MIAMI

2026

**OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
JUNIOR BOYS CHAMPIONSHIP**

— OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL —

JULY 25-30, 2026

ROUND 1	78	GOLDEN PALM PAR 71	+7
ROUND 2	80	BLUE MONSTER PAR 72	+8
ROUND 3	74	BLUE MONSTER PAR 72	+2
TOTAL		+17	232 TOTAL STROKES

★ **T39** | OUT OF 170 PLAYERS

THE OPTIMIST 
International Junior Golf Championships

Leadership Development

Rebecca Lakey, Garner

Graduating with Optimism: My OLA Journey
Attending the 2026 Optimist International Convention in Jacksonville, Florida was truly a milestone for me, not just because of the energy, inspiration, and connection, but because it marked my graduation from the Optimist Leadership Academy (OLA). Being surrounded by so many passionate Optimists while completing a nine month journey of growth made the experience even more meaningful.

OLA pushed me to look inward, clarify my values, and strengthen the kind of leadership skills that matter both inside and outside our clubs. The completion of OLA in Jacksonville felt like the culmination of months of learning, reflection, and collaboration with fellow Optimists who were just as committed to becoming better leaders and better humans.

The convention brought everything full circle, the relationships built throughout OLA, the encouragement from mentors, and the pride of knowing I had invested in myself and my Optimist future. Graduating from OLA was a reminder of why we do this work and how much impact we can have when we lead with optimism.

As you may have heard, OLA is introducing two major updates this year.

First, members can now self nominate. Anyone who has not served as Governor or above may submit an application.

Secondly, convention attendance is no longer required. All coursework can now be completed online, removing travel as a barrier and allowing more members to participate fully in the Academy.

These changes aim to make the program more accessible while continuing to help participants explore their values and strengthen leadership skills.

If anyone is interested in learning more about OLA, please contact Heather Myers at Heather.Myers@optimist.org.



2026 OLA Graduates: Dave Arone (Western NC District)
& Rebecca Lakey (Eastern NC District)

Childhood Health & Wellness

Ray Cockrell, Wilmington

There are many ways that we can impact the lives of the children and families that are facing the challenges of childhood cancer. There are organizations whose sole purpose is serving these kids and families. We can support those organizations. Most notably that we have talked about in the past are the Ronald McDonald Houses in the Triangle and Greenville areas. North Carolina East District has made a financial contribution to Ronald McDonald House in Chapel Hill, and several folks support the RMH in Greenville. Golden Circle has at least one member that volunteers her time there and the Greenville Optimist Club donated a collection of breakfast items. The list of needs and ways you can help is online at Home - RMHC of Eastern North Carolina.

You have heard me talk about the Kidz in Lids program. This program plans a day for kids in a school to bring \$1 and that allows them to wear their favorite hat during the day. Teachers can donate \$5 and wear jeans that day as well. This program provides funding for the Childhood Cancer Partners that serves childhood cancer patients in North and South Carolina. See the flyer below. There are many schools in SC working this program but only a few in NC.

If anyone is interested in giving this a try, please see me and we can make a plan.

Thank you everyone for helping make a difference for these kids and families! Let me know how I can help you.



Ray

Hi -

Can you please save your **Can Tabs** for the Ronald McDonald House? thanks.
:)



How we communicate to you:

Facebook:	North Carolina East District
Website:	OptimistNCEast.org
Int'l Website:	Optimist.org
Email:	Constant Contact





kidz IN LIDS

AS EASY AS
1-2-3!

KIDZ IN LIDS

was invented by 10-year old Paige, who wanted to honor a classmate lost to cancer. It's so simple: on a chosen day, students who bring just \$1 to school get to wear their favorite hat all day. Teachers, admins, and any adult who chip in \$5 can wear blue jeans or athletic wear (depending on what your school decides). All those dollars stay local, helping children in your community get to lifesaving cancer treatment through Children's Cancer Partners of the Carolinas.



PAIGE, AGED 10, KIDZ
IN LIDS CREATOR

PAIGE WITH CCP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LAURA ALLEN



1

PICK A DAY!

Choose a day that works for your school and get your principal's approval.

It can be a day, a week, or even several dates. Put it on your school calendar right away!

Some schools choose a September date since it's National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

2

PROMOTE IT!

Tell everyone how your school will make a difference for local children & youth battling cancer.

Go to ChildrensCancerPartners.org and click our [Kidz in Lids tab](#) for good ideas, downloadable fliers, and social media posts. You can even challenge rival schools to see who has more heart for helping others!

3

BE PROUD!

When your students, staff, teachers, and families show up on Kidz in Lids Day with smiles, dollars, and favorite hats, celebrate them!

Knowing you are making a difference for classmates and neighbors on their cancer journey will be a source of pride for everyone.



**Children's Cancer
PARTNERS**
OF THE
CAROLINAS
Supporting Families Through the Journey



CANCER IS THE #1 DISEASE KILLER OF CAROLINA CHILDREN.

There are two or more new childhood cancer diagnoses every day in the Carolinas. Children's Cancer Partners is the safety net spread across our 83,000 square miles, ensuring access to the best treatment possible for more than 2,800 children, regardless of how far from home, how often, or how long that treatment is required. 100% of the funds contributed at Kidz in Lids events go to local children to help with travel, lodging, meals, home care, and family emergencies.



SCAN HERE TO SIGN UP!

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT: Kidz@childrenscancerpartners.org | 864-582-0673



October 10, 2026

10:00am - 2:00pm

Fall Civic Club Day



Join us for a day of service and fellowship!

- **9:30am-10:00am** - Registration at Chapel
- **10:00am** - Welcome
- **10:30am** - Tour of Cottage
- **11:00am-11:45am** - Clubs/Kids Competition Games in Quad
- **12:00pm - 1:00pm** - Lunch at Thomas Academy Gym
- **1:00pm-2:00pm** - Campus Service Projects

Scan to Register!



Please bring donations for the BGHNC Country Store and/or general needed items for campus. Scan the code for items needed and to register!

For more information contact:

Erica Hughes, Director of Community Engagement

Pamela Young-Jacobs, Chief Mission Officer

erica.hughes@bghnc.org * 910.646.3083 * pamela.young-jacobs@bghnc.org

Optimist - Civitan - GFWC-NC - Shriners - ECA

Membership

Angela Iwaniuk, Bennett



Don't Keep the Optimist to Yourself
Optimists make a difference! This is a phrase that Ray Cockrell encourages us with at most of our District meetings. It is so true! Don't you want to share this with others? Especially folks who are not members of our clubs?

First of all, let's think of the people we know who care about our community (especially the youth of our community) then share with them the good things that our clubs do in the community. Instead of telling these people that our club is looking for new members, let's say "Want to make a difference for the kids in our community? Come join us for one project and see what we are all about! Come as our guest!"

This approach seems to work much better, especially if you want to attract younger members. Most people truly want to make a difference, but they don't always want to be restricted to just joining a club. But after they see what we do, they will hopefully want to be a part of an Optimist club and Optimist family.

We are in the final few weeks of the 2025-2026 Optimist Year and although we have lost more members than the new members we have brought in, it has still been a pretty good year.

Seven of our 27 active clubs are currently "Plus" in membership. Congratulations to these 7 clubs! It's not too late to add your club to this list if you are willing to share our good news!

- Garner Club +7
- Wilson Golden Circle +1
- Wilson Bennet Club +1
- Chowan-Edenton +1
- Greenville Club +2
- Wake Forest Club +1
- Northern Wake Club +2

People join Optimist Clubs because they believe in the cause; to make the world brighter for kids and communities. They stay for the friendships, the laughter and the feeling of belonging that come from serving together.

Join Us – Make a Bigger Difference!

Invite Others to Join Our Optimist Clubs!

Optimists are people who believe in the best — and work together to build a brighter future for our youth, our communities and our world.

Why Join?

- Make Meaningful Connections**
Friendship • Fellowship • Fun
- Support Youth Opportunities**
Helping kids Reach Their Full Potential
- Give Back to Your Community**
Service Projects That Change Lives
- Be Part of a Worldwide Movement**
Joining a Legacy of Hope and Optimism

Stronger Clubs. Brighter Communities.

Who Can Join?

Anyone who shares our belief in improving the lives of young people and making our communities better!

Know Someone Who Cares?

Invite them to join your local Optimist Club today!

Together We Can:

- ✓ Build stronger youth
- ✓ Create safer, kinder communities
- ✓ Inspire people
- ✓ Change lives

Invite • Share • Grow

Let's Make Optimism Contagious!

Contact Your Local Optimist Club Today

www.optimist.org

Oratorical Contest Timothy Johnson

A Year to Remember

What a year for the Optimist International Oratorical Contest in the North Carolina East District!

Each year, the Oratorical Contest gives young people an opportunity to stand before an audience, share their ideas and discover the power of their own voice. It takes courage to do that. It takes preparation. And it takes young people who are willing to think deeply about the world around them and then tell us what they see.

This year's topic was:

"The Moment I Realized I Belonged
— My Definition of Community."

What a timely topic!

Throughout our District, young people were challenged to think about what it means to belong. What makes a community? Is it simply where we live? Is it the people who look like us, think like us or share our experiences?

Or can community become something bigger?

Our North Carolina East District Contest brought together outstanding young speakers who answered those questions in their own ways.

Our District winners were:

1st Place — Avishai Deshpande
2nd Place — Josiah Ausby
3rd Place — Morgan Armstrong

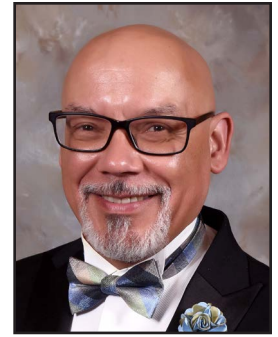
Congratulations to all three!

Each contestant should be proud. Standing in front of judges and an audience to deliver a prepared speech is an accomplishment in itself. These young people demonstrated confidence, preparation and thoughtfulness, and they reminded us why Optimist International continues to invest in programs that give youth opportunities to succeed.

For one of our contestants, however, the journey was only beginning.



Avishai Deshpande, sponsored by the Optimist Club of Raleigh, advanced from the Club level to become our North Carolina East District Champion.



Then he kept going.

Avishai represented our District in the Mid-Atlantic Regional competition and won!

That victory earned him the opportunity to compete in the 2026 Optimist International Oratorical World Championships, held July 16-17 at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Think about that journey:

Raleigh Club.
North Carolina East District.
Mid-Atlantic Region.
World Championship.

At the World Championships, Avishai competed among outstanding young speakers and finished **SECOND IN THE WORLD!**

WOW!

His second-place finish earned him a \$10,000 scholarship at the World Championship level. Combined with scholarship awards earned through the earlier stages of the competition, Avishai received \$18,000 in scholarships through the Optimist Oratorical program.

But as impressive as the awards are, there was something even more meaningful about his journey.

It was the message.

Avishai's speech explored the idea that real community does not require everyone to be the same. In fact, some of our strongest communities are built when we learn to value people whose backgrounds, experiences and perspectives are different from our own.

At one point, he said:

"I had dreamed of a community made up of people exactly like me. And thank goodness I never found it."



What a powerful realization!

He later summed up his message this way:

"Community is not something we find in people who are like us—it is something we build by choosing to value people who are not."

That is a message our world needs to hear.

And an Optimist program gave a young man from North Carolina the opportunity to carry that message all the way to an international stage.

That is why we hold these contests!

Yes, there are applications to complete. There are judges to recruit. There are rooms to reserve, schedules to coordinate and paperwork to submit.

It takes some work.

But it is worth it!

It is worth it to give a young person a reason to sit down and wrestle with an important idea.

It is worth it to watch a nervous contestant step to the podium and discover that they can do something difficult.

It is worth it to applaud every contestant when they finish.

And sometimes, that Club contest we organize in our own

community becomes the first step on a journey that leads all the way to the World Championship.

I am tremendously proud of Avishai and what he accomplished. I am equally grateful for Josiah, Morgan and every young person who participated in an Oratorical Contest this year.

I am thankful for the Optimist Clubs that sponsored contestants, the volunteers who organized contests, the judges who gave their time, the parents and families who supported these young people, and everyone who helped make this program possible.

Programs like the Oratorical Contest remind us of something important:

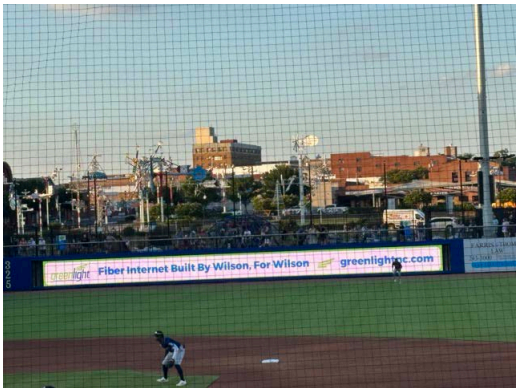
Young people have something to say.

Sometimes our job as Optimists is simply to create the opportunity, hand them the microphone—and listen.

Congratulations to all of our 2025-2026 contestants!



NC East District Leadership at the Wilson Warbirds!



**NC East District 3Q Meeting
May 2, 2026
Garner, NC**

9:35am Meeting Convenes

-Color Guard

-Optimist Creed

-Ice breaker - List as many identities that you have.

Volunteers listed their most important identity and unusual one. Tony DeRico had the most identities listed. He won an OI passport holder. Gary Pender received socks for oldest participant.

Welcome

-First-timers

-Past Governors

-Distinguished Guest: Dale Hoffert

-Recognized Garner Optimist Club 60th Anniversary

-Recognized Carteret Optimist Club 65th Anniversary

Approve Agenda, Minutes and Financial Report:

-Agenda with change of speaker order. So amended.

Motion to approve -Shana Bunn. Second-Louwanna Pender. Passed unanimously.

-Q2 District Minutes: Motion to approve -Tony DeRico.

Second-Paige Bivens. Passed unanimously.

-Financial Report-Terry Corle: Any questions, please reach out to him. \$19,397.00 in checking account. Please give him your reimbursement receipts. Clarification on budget total on financial report handout is \$16,607.72. Motion to approve - Dave Griffiths. Second - Tony DeRico. Passed unanimously.

Optimist International President, Tom Kendo, video
Welcome to our Q3 District meeting.

Optimist International Vice President, Region 3, Dale Hoffer

-Welcome: Thank you to Garner Club for celebration and food last night. Please submit Club Pride report. Please submit for social media grant. See you in Myrtle Beach.

Governor Remarks - Timothy Johnson

Friends, Homies, Comrades, My crew, The Team, Posse. All words that describe one Concept: Community. The theme or topic for this year's Oratorical Contest is "My definition of Community; The Moment I realized I belonged..."

I like words. Let's break that one down: community. Prefix: Com. From the Greek meaning "with". Root word: Unity: Togetherness: Community: Those joined with one another with a common purpose!

I used to work for a mentoring agency, The Mentoring Center of Central Ohio. There was a workshop at this one training conference that I attended. They had us write down all the categories to which we belonged. We all have labels. Humans. Male or female. Race. Nationality, etc. these are inherent. You don't get to choose these. It's what you are. Others, you get to choose. For example, where

you go to school. The identifier or mascot of your school. Mine was the Redcats! I'm a Redcat!

Another is Your religious faith. You're a Christian, a Catholic or a Baptist or member of a different Faith, Muslim or Hindu or Jew. You can change that, though. You can adopt a different Faith.

For me, I found COMMUNITY three or four times in my life. Growing up Mixed (half Black/half White) I often didn't feel like I belonged in either world. I wasn't affiliated with a gang like many people in my neighborhood, so I didn't have that. And we moved a lot. So, I never really stayed anywhere long enough to build a community of local friends. I had to find community elsewhere.

I went to Bay View High School. We had a Junior ROTC program. Always having had military aspirations, I joined that! It was my first real community. Then when I enlisted in the Air Force, I found my next place to belong. I became and will always be an Airman! I'm bonded forever in that fellowship!

And, in September of 2020, I discovered Optimist International. That Creed spoke to me. That Creed defined the kind of person I wanted to be and the lifestyle I wanted to live out! I joined and I've never regretted it; I've never looked back!

Fellow Optimists... YOU are my Community! THIS is where I belong! I hope you feel the same! Never get tired of living life as an Optimist! I'm proud of you. I'm proud to know you. I'm proud to be a fellow sojourner on this road of Optimism!"

Committee Chair Reports

-Member Engagement – Angela Iwaniuk: District brought in 12 new members this Quarter. Lost a club with 17 members. Presented gift cards to those who brought in new members. Garner Club brought in 6 new members. G.O.A.T. Trophy presented to Goldsboro Optimist Club.

-New Club Building - Timothy Johnson: RTP area has spoken to Morrisville City Council about Optimist. Will re-energize efforts in Apex. Raleigh Club will be sponsoring the charter of new Research Triangle Park Optimist Club. Need another club to sponsor chartering of Apex Club.

-JOI - Paige Bivens: Shout out to Garner as they are working on their JOI club. Hopefully we will have two in the next month. We have spring and summer opportunities to build JOI clubs. This is a pipeline to get youth involved in our clubs. Her JOI Club has asked her to reach out to an international club and zoom with them. Her JOI club members are so motivated and developed new projects as well as taken to heart OI Motto "Friend of youth." Paige says she can help you in any way. Let's put our mark on young people and be a friend of youth.

-OI Foundation - Gary Pender: Our District has raised-to-date \$4,168.10. We received \$10,000 for Scholarships from OI. We need to raise at least that amount. Dime-A-Day is

the easiest. We currently have 12 Women Philanthropist in our district. President's Club - Gary will be looking for an application from our Governor □. He passed out applications to Lt Governors, Presidents and past Governors. \$100 for Veteran and Memorials. Passed out Dime-A-Day pins. Sandy Cyphers will have a drawing for a free weekend in MYB for anyone who supports philanthropy this year. Goldsboro Club presented \$300.00 check.

-Childhood Cancer- Ray Cockrell: Shout out to Goldsboro Optimist Club for work with Greenville Ronald McDonald House. I have a 5-gallon water jug, I want can tabs filled by Convention. Another opportunity is to work with MeFine. -Boys and Girls Home of NC - Ray Cockrell: Optimist Cottage is looking amazing. Monday starts the kitchen remodel. A shout out to Sandy Cypher and Ray Spitz for a major gift to make this project happen. Optimist Cottage Monthly Holiday for the residents - July 4th and September 9th dates are still open for a club to participate. Goldsboro presented check for \$300.00.

-OI Jr Golf - Dave Jennings: June 16th, Cardinal Country Club in Selma, NC. Registration opened. Need volunteers around 10:00am when golfers come off the 10th hole.

-Essay Contest - Liz Griffiths: 7 entries this year. Winner was from the Garner Optimist Club. Reminder for folks to review the essay contest rules. Winner received \$2,500 from the district.

-District Convention - Timothy Johnson: See his flyer he passed out. Will be at Ocean Creek Resort in North Myrtle Beach across from Barefoot Landing. September 17 - 20, 2026. Make plans today.

-Oratorical Contest - Timothy Johnson: We will have 9 contestants later today.

-OI Convention - Timothy Johnson: June 28 - July 2 at Hyatt regency in Jacksonville, FL. Registration link is on OI website. Lots of opportunities for professional development and fellowship. You will have a great time. Service Projects: Pitch of Hope - seasonings and Celebration Cake Package.

Break

Lt Governors:

Zone 1- Kimberly Cockrell for Bennie Bass: Cape Fear Optimist is in the middle of softball season with a full park on Monday and Thursday nights. Working on fundraising ideas to raise money for the Cape Fear Optimist softball fields remodel. Winter Park Optimist has 40 baseball and softball teams this season with 480 kids. They raised \$2,500 in pre-season tournaments for kids suffering with cancer. They collected a trailer of food and \$2,000 for Nourish NC. Lastly, they are a sponsor for Miracle League. They support them with trophies, snacks for the season and also a sole sponsor for both spring and fall seasons. Members from Wilmington Optimist and Greenville Optimist assisted as volunteers at the ECU Science Olympiad high school competition in February.

Zone 3 - Robin Murtha: Bennett Optimist Club is doing Kisses for Cancer in May. Goldsboro Optimist Club participated in Mt Olive Pickle Festival hospitality room for

first responders. Wake County fairgrounds will have Touch a Truck next weekend and they will hand out popcorn. There will be a Back-to-School Supply Giveaway with Wayne County Museum who also offered to let them have meeting space. In September they will have a bicycle rodeo with Wayne County Extension. Wilson Breakfast Optimist will be holding a golf tournament for the Middlesex Childrens Home and Angela Iwaniuk took a \$600 check to the Ronald McDonald House. First Zone mtg had over 30. 2nd Zone meeting had 17 contestants. Kisses for Cancer next weekend at Parkers. Bunco Night will be at West Nash Methodist, 6:30pm. Donate to Unleashed Dance studio in Wilson so kids could take dance with no registration fees. Zone 4: Betty Mosley – Roanoke Rapids: Baseball is coach pitch with 11 teams with 15 players. The program starts next week for 10 weeks. They will hold an Easter egg hunt. At the Harvest Festival they will give out goodie bags and have Boston Butt sales. They will have Fishing for Kids for next year. Joshua Cockrell – Greenville: They are sponsoring Buddy Bench builds for middle schools. Eagle Scouts build them. They are holding a Pickle Ball Tournament in August with kids.

Zone 5: Dave Jennings: Henderson had Quarter Auction on Saturday and raised \$5,800. We must get out to other clubs and support each other. All of our zone clubs are very supportive. Jonathan Bivens: Wake Forest assists with Triad Food Ministry, foster program care packages, Bunco night, Pork Butt fund raiser – this is all geared toward graduation parties. Starting with 50 this year. It is fun to attend other clubs' fundraisers.

Zone 6: Tony DeRico: East Wake Club feeds Boys and Girls Club 3 times a month for kids after 6pm. Q4 they brought 4 kids presents. At the Zebulon Rec Center they have bingo. Upcoming is an Easter egg hunt and book drive. The Garner Optimist Club golf tournament donated over \$7,000 to Me Fine Foundation. The Garner Optimist Christmas parade is going into their 4th year. In March they will hold a pork BBQ fundraiser. They had 13 essay participants in February and are giving away 11 scholarships of \$1,000 each. They are sponsoring Thanksgiving at BGHNC Optimist Cottage. They are currently holding a reverse raffle for \$5,000 for scholarships which includes a steak and potato dinner. Other clubs came and helped with Christmas Parade. (Look in bulletin)

Garner Optimist Club Proclamation: Timothy Johnson Read OI President Tom Kendo's Proclamation for Garner's 60th anniversary.

NC East Hall of Fame Nominations - Ray Cockrell: Presented nomination forms and criteria.

Gov Elect Remarks - Dave Jennings: Super proud to announce at the board meeting we have 4 out of 5 zones covered with Lt Governor. I need a Zone 4 Lt Governor. We will be reinstating a Lt Gov and President retreat training in May. I have all my positions filled for my year.

Welcome Oratorical Contestant's Families

Blessing
11:56 break for lunch

Governor Timothy announced:
-----Please submit Officer Elect report by May 20, 2026.
-----Silent Auction items for OI Foundation needed for convention.

1:18pm Guest Speaker: Heather Stallings shared her story about By the Grace food truck - she wants to spread joy and love through food. Wants folks to feel like their grandma was cooking for them. If God wants you to do it and it is one of your gifts he will make the way. No matter how bad the card is dealt, it is temporary and you will get through it. God has a plan for you.

District Oratorical Contest
Timothy Johnson reviewed Oratorical Contest rules for contestants and audience. Theme is "The Moment I Realized I Belonged – My Definition of Community."
1st place \$2,500, 2nd place is \$1,500 and 3rd place is \$1,000. 4-5 minute time frame.

Contestants A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I and J in person. F via zoom.
District NC East Oratorical Winners 2026:
1st - Avishai Deshpande
2nd - Josiah Ausby
3rd - Morgan Armstrong

3:25 Adjourned

Attendees
Terry Corle
Gail Craft
Greg Craft
David Jennings
Robin Murtha
Shana Bunn
Timothy Johnson
Dannelle Johnson
Dale Hoffer
Ray Cockrell
Kimberly Cockrell
Tony DeRico
Richard Bendow
Wendell Anglin
Fred Burke
Lydia Dameron
David Griffiths
Liz Griffiths
Patrice Johnson
Rebecca Lakey
Tracie Thomas
Angela Iwaniuk
William Iwaniuk
Jewel Wilson

Joann Parks
Kimberly Haywood
Anetta Reid
Dinorah Keith
Chuck Keith
Gary Pender
Louwanna Pender
Paige Bivens
Jonathan Bivens
Joshua Cockrell
Hayley Cockrell
Betty Mosley

Always
believe
that
something
wonderful
is about to
happen!



Friend of Youth!

Draft Budget/ North Carolina East District 2025 - 2026							
Account Name	Budgeted	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Actual	Difference
Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	
#100 Dues	\$ 9,312.00	\$ 2,698.50	\$ 2,072.00	\$ 2,093.00	\$ -	\$ 6,863.50	\$ (2,448.50)
#105 Corporate Partners						\$ -	\$ -
#110 Allotment OI	\$ 582.00					\$ -	\$ (582.00)
#120 Dist Convention	\$ 3,000.00					\$ -	\$ (3,000.00)
#130 Dist Meetings	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 595.00	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,195.00		\$ 3,090.00	\$ 90.00
#145 Jr. Golf		\$ 100.00				\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
#150 Miscellaneous	\$ 500.00					\$ -	\$ (500.00)
#160 Optimist Store	\$ 400.00	\$ 461.00	\$ 358.00	\$ 189.00		\$ 1,008.00	\$ 608.00
#190 OI Foundation Auction						\$ -	\$ -
#191 Auction B & G Home						\$ -	\$ -
#192 Fifty Fifty	\$ 200.00					\$ -	\$ (200.00)
#650 Transfer Prev Admin	\$ 13,416.00					\$ -	\$ (13,416.00)
#800 CCDHH	\$ -					\$ -	\$ -
Total Receipts	\$ 30,410.00	\$ 3,854.50	\$ 3,730.00	\$ 3,477.00	\$ -	\$ 11,061.50	\$ (19,348.50)
Account Name	Budgeted	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Actual	Difference
Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Difference
#200 Governor	\$ 2,500.00				\$ -	\$ -	\$ (2,500.00)
#210 Lt. Governors	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 355.40	\$ 251.04	\$ 178.14		\$ 784.58	\$ (1,015.42)
#250 District Secretary	\$ 300.00					\$ -	\$ (300.00)
#252 District Treasurer	\$ 100.00		\$ 73.86			\$ -	\$ (100.00)
#255 Governor Elect	\$ 750.00					\$ -	\$ (750.00)
#260 Immediate Past Gov. OI Conv. *						\$ -	\$ -
#261 Past Governor	\$ -					\$ -	\$ -
#262 B & G Home Chair	\$ -					\$ -	\$ -
#283 New Club Building	\$ 1,000.00					\$ -	\$ (1,000.00)
#265 Committee Chairs	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 230.20				\$ 230.20	\$ (2,269.80)
#300 Clerical/Secretary						\$ -	\$ -
#301 Postage	\$ 50.00					\$ -	\$ (50.00)
#320 Office Supplies	\$ 300.00					\$ -	\$ (300.00)
#330 District Bulletin	\$ 500.00	\$ 291.93	\$ 579.15	\$ 497.00		\$ 1,368.08	\$ 868.08
#331 Web Page	\$ 325.00	\$ 371.76				\$ 371.76	\$ 46.76
#340 District Directory	\$ -					\$ -	\$ -
#350 District Convention	\$ 5,000.00					\$ -	\$ (5,000.00)
#360 District Meetings	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 885.89	\$ 318.09	\$ 1,394.48		\$ 2,598.46	\$ (401.54)
#361 Lt Governor's Conf.						\$ -	\$ -
#370 Oratorical Contest	\$ 1,000.00					\$ -	\$ (1,000.00)
#371 CCDHH Contest	\$ 750.00					\$ -	\$ (750.00)
#380 Jr. Golf	\$ 2,000.00			\$ 988.00		\$ 988.00	\$ (1,012.00)
#390 Essay Contest	\$ 750.00			\$ 155.60		\$ 155.60	\$ (594.40)
#400 Badges & Pins Officers	\$ 300.00	\$ 446.68				\$ 446.68	\$ 146.68
#410 Awards Current Year	\$ 200.00					\$ -	\$ (200.00)
#411 Awards, Past Year	\$ 500.00	\$ 346.13				\$ 346.13	\$ (153.87)
#420 Audit/Bank Charges	\$ 100.00					\$ -	\$ (100.00)
#421 Audit Review 990	\$ 100.00					\$ -	\$ (100.00)
#430 Merchandise / Optimist Store	\$ 300.00	\$ 42.65		\$ 640.32		\$ 682.97	\$ 382.97
#440 NCB Supplies	\$ 500.00					\$ -	\$ (500.00)
#441 Membership	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 100.00		\$ 250.00		\$ 350.00	\$ (650.00)
#442 A & A	\$ -					\$ -	\$ -

#443 Personal Growth						\$ -	\$ -
#444 Childhood Health	\$ 750.00					\$ -	\$ (750.00)
#446 Leadership Develop	\$ 250.00					\$ -	\$ (250.00)
#447 OI Foundation	\$ 500.00		\$ 100.00			\$ 100.00	\$ (400.00)
#448 Boys & Girls Home	\$ 500.00					\$ -	\$ (500.00)
#450 Gifts (Guest)	\$ 200.00					\$ -	\$ (200.00)
#470 Miscellaneous	\$ 2,385.00			\$ 203.41		\$ 203.41	\$ (2,181.59)
#480 Previous Admin Exp	\$ 200.00					\$ -	\$ (200.00)
#490 Next Admin Exp				\$ 200.00		\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Total Disbursements	\$ 30,410.00	\$ 3,070.64	\$ 1,322.14	\$ 4,506.95	\$ -	\$ 8,825.87	\$ (21,584.13)
* #260 Only if current Gov can't attend							
YTD Summary							
Total Receipts				\$ 3,477.00	\$ -	\$ 11,061.50	
Total Disbursements				\$ 4,506.95	\$ -	\$ 8,825.87	
Bank Balance End of Quarter				\$ 15,874.58			
Note: A minus number in H means we are under budget							
A plus number in H means we are over budget							



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



Optimist

INTERNATIONAL

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