North Carolina East District Bulletin

1st Quarter District Meeting
November, 2026

Message from Governor David Jennings



As your District Governor, I am continually inspired by the dedication, passion, and energy flowing through our clubs. We recently celebrated a wonderful milestone in our Optimist year—the official installation of new club officers for the Wilson Golden Circle Optimist Club, the Garner Optimist Club, and the Henderson Optimist Club.

To the incoming officers: thank you for answering the call to leadership. Steering a club takes vision, commitment, and a heart for service. By stepping up, you are ensuring that our youth and communities continue to have dedicated champions in their corner. To the outgoing district leadership: thank you for your unwavering service, hard work, and the strong foundation you've built over the past year. Your impact will be felt for years to come.

As all our new leadership teams take the helm, let's bring renewed vigor to our mission. Whether it is mentoring young people, supporting local youth programs, or spreading the optimism that defines who we are, your efforts make our district stronger every single day. Please join me in congratulating the new officer teams at all club levels.

As Optimists, our greatest mission has always been bringing out the best in youth, our communities, and ourselves. Two of the most powerful ways we fulfill that mission each year are through **the Optimist International Essay Contest and the Optimist Oratorical Contest.**

These programs are far more than just competitions. They give the young people in our local communities a platform to find their voice, build lifelong confidence, and earn valuable college scholarships. For many students, stepping up to write that essay or speak at a podium is a transformative moment—and your club holds the key to making that happen.

As we continue our work bringing out the best in youth, our communities, and ourselves, I want to take a moment to highlight two incredible avenues where our collective generosity can make a profound, lasting impact: **the Boys & Girls Homes of North Carolina and the Optimist International Foundation (OIF).**

Our district has a long and proud history of standing alongside the Boys & Girls Homes. Every day, they provide a safe sanctuary, healing, and hope to children who have faced significant adversity. By supporting this vital institution, our clubs directly help provide the housing, education, and emotional support these young people need to rewrite their futures.

continued

At the same time, contributing to the Optimist International Foundation fuels the very engine of our organization. OIF grants and scholarships empower our local clubs to expand our reach, launch new youth programs, and recognize outstanding young leaders in our communities. When we give to the Foundation, we are directly reinvesting in our own mission and ensuring our district's programs continue to thrive.

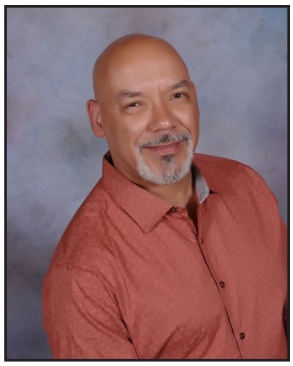
I am asking each club in the NC East District to consider making a meaningful donation to both of these worthy causes this term. Whether big or small, every contribution helps ensure that no child in our region is left without a champion. Thank you for your unwavering dedication, your passionate service, and your continued support of our youth. Together, we are making a difference that will resonate for generations.



Always *believe* **that something** *wonderful* **is about to** *happen!*

Friend of Youth!

Governor Elect
Timothy Johnson, Raleigh



Greetings, North Carolina East Optimists! It is an honor to serve as your Governor-Elect for the 2026–2027 Optimist year. Many of you know me through my recent service as District Governor, my work with the Oratorical Contest, or our time together at Club and District events. Thank you for your friendship, dedication, and continued trust.

One of the many lessons I learned during my year as Governor is that Optimists make a difference! Across North Carolina East, our members are touching lives and spreading Optimism. Maya Angelou said, "Be the rainbow in someone else's cloud." A rainbow is beautiful; a double rainbow is even more striking. That's the image I'd like you to hold in your mind's eye this year and beyond: Optimists working together, amplifying the hope and encouragement we bring to others.

As Governor David Jennings begins his term, I look forward to supporting him and our District leadership team. David's opening message celebrates our Clubs and calls us to strengthen member involvement, develop leaders, and share our impact with the community. Each of us has something to contribute, and I encourage you to join me in helping make his year successful.

My focus as Governor-Elect will be listening, learning, and helping our Clubs succeed. I welcome opportunities to attend your meetings and activities, hear your ideas, and understand where support would be useful. Working alongside Governor David, our Lieutenant Governors, and committee chairs, I hope to connect members with resources and encourage participation in District gatherings, training, and leadership opportunities. Your experiences will also guide my preparation for future service.

Please share one Club success that others could learn from and one challenge where District support could help. You can reach me at timothyleejohnsonjr@gmail.com.

Let's put our strengths to work together, support Governor David's leadership, and make this a rewarding year for our members and the young people we serve!



Zone 1 Update

Bennie Bass, Lt. Governor





Winter Park

Meet Tim Burleson with Winter Park. He has been coaching with WPO for 35 years. Winter Park is currently in the middle of fall ball.

They will also be setting up their Christmas tree lot in the next couple weeks. They open their lot on November 21st.

Cape Fear



Cape Fear is also in the middle of Fall ball season.

CFO is also having their 14th annual car show on Saturday, October 17th.

The first of November we will be setting up our Christmas tree lot, and will open on November 22nd.





Zone 2 Update
Brian Gibson, Lt. Governor



Chowen-Edenton

Peanut Parade!



Laurinburg

LAURINBURG OPTIMIST CLUB
SEMI-ANNUAL
FISH, SHRIMP or CHICKEN TENDERS
Wed., Oct. 21, 2026
To Be Held At
OPTIMIST BALL PARK
South Turnpike Road
Lunch - 11:00 - 1:30
Dinner - 4:00 - 6:30
$12.00 - per plate
EAT-IN OR TAKE OUT
Until Food Runs Out!
Proceeds for Youth Programs



Zone 3 Update

Robin Murtha, Lt. Governor



We are all looking forward to a great new year and are excited to work with our new governor.

The Golden Circle hosted our golf tournament in September, which saw a wonderful turnout. We also held our installation ceremony, where Dave graciously led the proceedings for us. Additionally, Ray and Timothy joined us to present Linda Shepherd with her Hall of Fame award.



Separately, I recently had the privilege of attending a Bennett Club meeting featuring a guest speaker from the hospital who gave a very informative talk on heart health.









Zone 4 Update
Joshua Cockrell, Lt. Governor



Greenville

The Optimist Club of Greenville has been staying busy out in the community lately!

We had an awesome time at Freeboot Fridays, where we helped families make miniature pumpkin chunkers, homemade stress balls, and custom buttons. You can also catch us working hard at the ECU football concession stands to raise money for our upcoming projects. We've also partnered up with Take A Kid Fishing to get out on the water and teach youth across Eastern North Carolina the life skill of fishing.





Zone 5 Update
Jonathan Bivens, Wake Forest
Lt. Governor



Henderson

Officer Installation



Wake Forest

Packing food at Back Pack Buddies



Zone 6 Update

Tony DeRico, Lt. Governor

October has been a busy yet productive month for Zone 6. As new leadership prepares to start their terms, the excitement is encouraging.

The last quarter of the year will see several holiday activities for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas; including Christmas tree sales, Garner Optimist Christmas Parade and some special holiday meals/gatherings.







Garner
Officer Installation



East Wake



Happy Kids eating Pizza, Pizza



Monthly meeting

Raleigh Monthly Meeting



Raleigh Club meeting with Lt. Gov. Tony DeRico speaking.



Raleigh Optimist Club members winning door prizes.

Boys & Girls Homes
Ray Cockrell – Wilmington



Optimist Make A Difference!! I have been telling the team at BGHNC for decades that "everything is personal". Relationships with our donors and friends and their relationships with others make amazing things happen!

As we have been working on the Now and Forever Capital Campaign, one of the projects was to provide safe transportation for our kids. We set a goal to provide a new van for every cottage and two new vans for Thomas Academy, our on-campus charter school. Linda and John Shepherd went to work and connected us with John Lee of Lee Motors in Wilson. It took a while of working with them, yet they provided us with a van – and paid for over half of the van!

That van today is serving our kids at Thomas Academy. A good friend and Optimist in District West made contact with Hendrick Motors and his family foundation and let him know what we are doing.

The Hendrick Family Foundation provided a new van for the Optimist Cottage and completed that project in the Capital Campaign.
We are truly blessed to have such amazing friends!!

I shared in the last Bulletin how excited the girls have been to get monthly gifts and recognition from Optimist Clubs in District East. Let's do it again!! I will have all the monthly dates and themes identified by the District Meeting in Lake Waccamaw and you can begin signing up there.

I look forward to seeing you in Lake Waccamaw in November. Thank you for being an Optimist! And more importantly, thank you for loving our kids!!

Ray



EST. BOYS & GIRLS 1954
HOMES
of NORTH CAROLINA



Optimists Make a Difference!!

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



Hello Optimist Friends! Another Optimist year gone and here we are 13 days into a new year. I'm so proud of our District and you as friends of the OI Foundation.

Just wanted to let you know how our District did this past year. We raised a grand total of $10,063.60 for the Foundation! Thanks to all of you, and your clubs. Our District finished 21st out of 39 Districts and that is $17.75 per member in giving.

As your DFR, I came in at 17th out of 39 District's thanks to all of you. I want to 'Give A Great Big Thanks' to all that donated those great items for the silent auction.

Also, 'A Great Big Thanks' to all of you that bought the items and made it a great success. We raised a grand total of $1,665.00 for the Foundation.

I look forward to serving you as the DFR again this year please invite me to come and speak to your club members and let them know what the Foundation is all about and what they do.

Club Foundation Reps - talk to your club and let's make this a **great** year in supporting the Foundation.

Thank You All
Gary Pender DFR.
919-920-9190
garypender9190@gmail.com



Here's a picture of Louwanna Pender purchasing the first Dime A Day and the Women's Philanthropy Pins

FOUNDATION

FOUNDATION

Dime a Day

With just one dime a day, you can become part of the movement of "Helping Optimists Help Kids" and become part of a large group of Foundation supporters who realize what a difference they make every day in the lives of children.

Would you consider making a gift of just a dime a day to assist the charitable work of Optimist International?
$36.50



Women's Philanthropy

The giving circle of the Women's Philanthropy Council begins with a **restricted** gift of at least **$100**

365 Club

Your **club** donates **$365 unrestricted** or $1 a day.

President's Club

Members may join the Presidents Club by making aninitial gift of at least **$250** and renewing each year for a $250 **annual** contribution.

Christian D. Larson Partners

A recognition level honoring the author of **The Optimist Creed.**
Those who follow **the Creed** and help fund the Foundation's mission through their personal giving of at least **$1,000 unrestricted** gift.

Please donate today!

https://www.oifoundation.org/us-canada-donate.cfm

Your donation supports Foundation Scholarship Contests: Oratorical, Essay, CCDHH, Visual Arts, Junior Optimists and Junior Golf!

District JOI Club
Paige Bivens, Wake Forest JOI Club Advisor



"I hope the millions of people I've touched have the optimism and desire to share their goals and hard work and persevere with a positive attitude."
— Michael Jordan

Kicking Off the New Year with JOI

Before we even begin our year in JOI Club we participate in two events to recruit new members. The first is a Club Fair held in the school library for two days. The officers and advisors set up a table with information about our club and applications. We talk to interested students and hand them an application. We handed out about 70 applications. The next step is holding an "Interest" meeting which is advertised on our Instagram Page, the PSTA Instagram page, and the school announcements. At this meeting we explained the workings of the JOI Club and expectations. The officers explained why someone would want to be a Junior Optimist. They honestly did better than the advisors would have. We were thrilled that 42 students showed up.



And…we now have 40 applications completed. We had our first meeting where the Officers were inducted. We then completed our first project…no sew blankets to put in Comfort Kits given to children in the Wake County Foster Care Program. This project is in partnership with the Wake Forest Optimist Club. We are following the ABCD's that effect ourselves as Optimists. Our Attitudes are: we can do any project and work against restraints because we Believe what we do makes a difference. We make Choices that benefit others and help us grow. We Decided that we are bigger than ourselves. We are community.









Optimist Junior Golf
David Jennings, Henderson



Greetings Optimists,

The Optimist International Junior Golf Championship is one of the largest and best-known junior golf tournaments in the world. Each year, more than 600 golfers participate in the championship. Optimists have been involved in the sport of junior golf for more than 30 years by holding local, regional, and international tournaments. The championship consists of qualifiers and culminates with the championship at Trump National Doral Resort and Spa in Miami, FL.

Our NC East Qualifier will be held in early June. I will not have all the particulars ironed out until mid-February. I will be in touch at that time. Our two young men who played at Doral in July have expressed gratitude for our support. We have made a big impact. We have 14 slots available this year and our goal is to fill them all!

If you have any interest in helping with this event, please let me know. I need all the volunteers I can get.

Thanks for all your help.

David Jennings
zone5ltgovernor2023@gmail.com
252-204-5160

OPTIMIST
G · O · L · F



Leadership Development
David Jennings, Henderson



Modern leadership development has shifted from top-down management to empowering individual potential, driving growth, and building resilient organizations. Investing in leadership training unlocks creative problem-solving, improves team engagement, and prepares organizations for future challenges.

Core Transformational Skill Sets

1. Visionary & Strategic Thinking

- Forward-Looking Mindset: Anticipating and identifying strategic opportunities and framing change as a launchpad for innovation.

- Purpose-Driven Execution: Translating high-level goals into actionable, clear missions that inspire everyday performance.

2. Adaptive Leadership & Resiliency

- Agile Problem-Solving: Navigating ambiguity with confidence and pivoting strategies swiftly in dynamic environments.

- Emotional Intelligence (EQ): Cultivating self-awareness, active listening, and empathy to build trust and strengthen high-performing teams.

3. Inclusive Coaching & Talent Empowerment

- Strengths-Based Coaching: Unlocking individual potential by prioritizing continuous mentorship, constructive feedback, and skill amplification over micro-management.

- Psychological Safety: Establishing team cultures where bold ideas, calculated risks, and open dialogue are encouraged and celebrated.

Impact of Modern Leadership Development

- Culture - Trust-based, collaborative, and inclusive

- Problem-solving - Proactive, cross-functional innovation Talent Retention - Continuous growth and high engagement

We had two very impactful training classes at our district convention. We are available to come and train your officers or share our resources with you to help you achieve your goals. Let us know how we may serve your needs.

David Jennings
Leadership Development



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. Many folks in Optimist support RMH. 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.

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

Ray

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 Parters 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.
I commit to signing up at least one school in the Wilmington area. If anyone is interested in giving this a try, please see me and we can make a plan.

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

Essay Contest
Liz Griffiths, Garner

Topic for the 2026-2027 Essay Contest Is "Finding My Voice in a World Full of Noise" As the Chairperson of the North Carolina East District for the 2026-2027 year, I look forward to working with clubs to get students involved. It is not too early to select a club chairperson. For information on how to set up an Essay program go to Optimist.org and select scholarship programs. Click on Essay contest. You will see all the paperwork. I would suggest that you set up a date for your club contest early in the year. You can advertise for entrants using the Schools, Church Groups, Boy and Girl Scouts, Social media, Home Schoolers and any other community sources.

The club winning entry must be received by the district chair by February 28, 2027. Be sure that all applications are filled out and paperwork submitted is signed.

I think this year's topic will be a great one to write about.

Sincerely,
Liz Griffiths
District Essay Chairperson
Dliz7898@outlook.com
Phone: 703-216-1845

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
ESSAY
CONTEST



Miss Linda Shepherd Hall of Fame Award 2026!

Membership
Angela Iwaniuk, Bennett



OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

NC EAST DISTRICT

MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

Bringing Out the Best in Youth, Our Community, and Ourselves

Attention fellow Optimists! Our strength lies in our passionate members. We challenge you to share your optimism and step up to grow our impact. By accepting this challenge, you commit to bringing in at least **one new member** to the NC East District family to help support our mission.

YOUR REWARD FOR COMPLETING THE CHALLENGE

An Exclusive T-Shirt featuring:
"Challenge Accepted" & "Challenge Completed"

This is something NEW! Challenge cards will be available for any member who has the courage to accept our challenge! If you successfully complete your challenge during the next 12 months – we will reward you with a special Recognition T-Shirt!!! We hope we have a whole room-full of the T-Shirts by Sept. 30, 2027!!





Optimist Clubs bring together people who care about helping youth succeed and making our community a better place for everyone!!

Please contact me if I can help you or your club create more ideas, energy or strategies to recruit new folks to become part of one of the greatest civic organizations in our country!!

Let's make this the year we see our membership and our service impact GROW!

Angela Iwaniuk - Membership Engagement
(252)289-5050 ncangel49@aol.com

Oratorical Contest

Timothy Johnson, Raleigh



Optimist International sponsors three scholarship contests that help students pursue higher education: the Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH), the Essay Contest, and the Oratorical Contest. Contests begin at the Club level and progress through Zone and Regional levels, if necessary, to the District level. District-level scholarships are funded by the Optimist International Foundations and awarded by Optimist International.

The Optimist Oratorical Contest gives young people the chance to speak to the world. More than $150,000 in college scholarships, funded by the Optimist International Foundations, is awarded annually through this program.

First conducted in 1928, the Oratorical Contest is Optimist International's second most popular program, with nearly 2,000 Clubs participating each year. Club-level winners may receive medallions, and Zone winners receive a plaque. Districts have the opportunity to award scholarships of $2,500 for first place, $1,500 for second place, and $1,000 for third place.

The Oratorical Contest topic for the 2026–2027 Optimist year is "How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me."

An oration, or speech, is an original work written by the contestant, with a limited amount of quoted or paraphrased material. It interprets the official topic through examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, logic, and emotion. It may combine information and persuasion to make its point.

The contest is open to students who are under the age of 19 as of October 1 of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1–September 30) and have not yet completed high school. There is no minimum age.

Interested students submit a speech on the designated topic to their local Optimist Club. For help finding a local Club contact, please email District Oratorical Chairperson Timothy Johnson at timothyleejohnsonjr@gmail.com.

Each sponsoring Optimist Club sets its own entry deadline. Club-level contests are typically held by late March so that the District Contest can take place at our Third Quarter District Gathering.

Districts and Clubs may choose to hold an online Oratorical Contest. For guidance on conducting an online contest, please contact District Oratorical Chairperson Timothy Johnson.

We encourage every Club in our District to conduct an Oratorical Contest this year. By providing a platform for young people to share their ideas, your Club can help them build confidence, develop public speaking skills, and pursue scholarship opportunities.



OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH CONTESTS 2026-2027



Topic
"How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me"

ORATORICAL CONTEST

Beginning in 1928, the Oratorical Contest has become the longest-running program of Optimist International. The contest is designed for young people to gain experience in public speaking and provide them with an opportunity to compete for multiple college scholarships with a pre-assigned topic.

District Scholarships:
First Place: $2,500 • Second Place: $1,500 • Third Place: $1,000
with a chance to win up to $22,500 at the World Championships level

ESSAY CONTEST

The Essay Contest is sponsored by Optimist International to give young people the opportunity to write about their own opinions regarding the world in which they live. The approach can encompass a young person's personal experience, the experience of their country or a more historical perspective. In addition to developing skills for written expression, participants also have the opportunity to win a college scholarship!

One District Scholarship of $2,500



Topic
"Finding My Voice in a World Full of Noise"



Topic
"How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me"

COMMUNICATION CONTEST FOR THE DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

This contest offers an opportunity for students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to present their thoughts in the community, gaining skills, which can only come from signing or speaking to a large audience. Patterned after the Optimist Oratorical Contest, the contest offers youth the chance to compete in speech or sign language with the chance to win a college scholarship.

One District Scholarship of $2,500

KIDS SPEAK OUT! SPEECH CONTEST

All young people can compete in the Optimist Oratorical Contest. The "Kids Speak Out" contest is a "pre-Oratorical" program that provides a more equitable competition for younger speakers.



Optimist INTERNATIONAL

Follow complete Official Rules posted on www.optimist.org

Application for 2026-2027 Optimist International Oratorical Contest

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State/Province/Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Telephone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

Date of Birth _____/_____/_____ Age _____

Have you participated in any other Optimist Club's Oratorical Contest this school year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Contestant Agreement: *I have studied the rules of the contest, and I will be bound by all the requirements. I understand entries will be run through plagiarism and AI detection software. I certify that this submission is my own original work.*

Contestant's Signature _____ Date____/____/____

Topic: "How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me"

Parent or Guardian Permission:

I give my permission for my child/ward to participate in this contest.

Signature _____ Date____/____/____

Relationship _____

I, _____ *grant the Optimist Club/International my permission to use a picture/video of my son/daughter* _____ *for their public relations purposes. Optimist Club/International may use the photo/video in any publication they see fit.*

Sponsoring Optimist Club Name _____

Sponsoring Optimist Club Number _____

Language speech will be spoken in: ☐ English ☐ French

For more information contact: _____

Address _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Official Rules

Section I — *General Rules*

1. The Optimist International Oratorical contest will begin at the Club level, proceed to the Zone and District level and end with a contest at World Championships level.
2. Contestants must enter through a local Optimist Club.
3. The official application must be completed by each contestant and submitted to the sponsoring Club's Contest Chair.
4. Clubs, Zones and Districts **will** have a combined gender contests.
5. No Zone, Regional, or District level contest shall have fewer than 3 or more than 20 contestants competing.
6. Optimist International has the right to edit, publish and record any speech used in any contest without payment to the author.

Section II — *Qualifications for Contestants*

1. The contest is open to contestants under the age of 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1 – September 30) and who have not yet completed secondary school or its equivalent, including CEGEP students in Québec, Canada. There is no minimum age.
2. A contestant is eligible to enter/compete in only one Optimist Oratorical contest during a contest year. Once a contestant wins first place at the Regional level of the Optimist International Oratorical World Championships, they are ineligible to compete in the Optimist International Oratorical Contest at any level again.
3. Each contestant shall prepare his or her own speech. The contestant may receive advice in the preparation of the speech and may make minor changes or improvements in the speech at any time.
4. All contestants at each level of the contest must show proof of age before competing. Optimist Clubs may require a copy of birth certificate or passport if offering a club scholarship separate from Optimist International. District winners must provide a copy of the birth certificate or passport with District entry documentation
5. A printed copy of the speech must be furnished either before or after the speech.

Section III — *Contest Rules*

1. All contestants must speak on the official topic.
2. A speech may be delivered in English or French.
3. All contestants must state the official topic in the first sentence of the speech. Timing will begin with the first spoken word. A 3-point penalty is automatically assessed by the timekeeper for failure to state the official topic in the first sentence.
4. Any quotation, copyrighted, or largely paraphrased material used in the speech must be identified verbally during the presentation and in the written copy of the speech with the original author's name. The contestant shall be fully responsible for the use of any quoted material and Optimist International shall assume no responsibility. Failure to identify non-original material will result in up to 10 penalty points.
5. The use of props, special costumes or clothing, will result in 10 penalty points
6. The use of audience prompters will result in disqualification
7. Notes and lecterns can be used if the contestant desires.
8. The time allowed will be not under 4 minutes or over 5 minutes. Contestants going over or under will not be cautioned, and will be penalized one point for each 15 seconds or fraction of over or under the allotted time. This penalty will be determined by the official timekeeper.
9. Timing will begin at the first word spoken. Timing will stop when the contestant finishes.
10. No reference can be made that identifies the contestant, parents, school, community, sponsoring Optimist Club or District. This will result in a deduction of up to 5 points. Contestants shall not be identified by name or sponsoring Clubs until after the last oration has been presented and the judges and timekeeper have started deliberations.
11. Any protest in the conduct at any level of this contest must be made immediately after the condition is noted. Protests received after the next contestant has been introduced, or in the case of the last contestant, after the judges leave to total the scores, will not be accepted under any circumstances.
12. The Contest Chairperson will decide all protests in accordance with the official rules. The decision of the Contest Chair is final and no higher appeals will be recognized. In the case of Club contests, the Club Contest Chair has this authority. In the case of Zone and District contests, the final authority is vested in the District Contest Chair. The Zone Chair has the authority to handle protests that may arise during the Zone competition with the District Chair having the final authority.

Section IV — *Scoring*

Scoring in all Club, Zone, District, and World Championships contests will conform to the following criteria.

1. Poise – appearance and personality: 10 points
2. Content of Speech – subject adherence, theme, content, logic and color: 40 points
3. Delivery & Presentation – voice, volume, pronunciation, gestures, eye contact, sincerity and emphasis: 35points
4. Overall Effectiveness – appeal, impression, attitude and effect: 15 points

Section V — *Penalties*

1. Failure to announce the official topic in the first sentence – 3 points
2. Failure to identify non-original material – up to 10 points
3. Use of props, costume, etc. - 10 points
4. Time penalties – 1 point for each 15 seconds or fraction of over or under the allotted time.
5. Self-identification – up to 5 points
6. Failure to complete speech – disqualification
7. Use of audience prompters - disqualification

Section VI — *Awards*

1. Club Level – Medallion
2. Zone Level – Plaque
3. District Regional Level – Plaque
4. District – Plaque and Scholarship

Each winner of the District level contest will receive a scholarship for use at a college, university or trade school only. Three winners awarded scholarships of $2,500, $1,500 and $1,000 respectively for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place.
All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.

5. World Championship Optimist Oratorical Contests – Plaque and Scholarship
   A. Each winner of the World Regional level contest will receive a scholarship for use at a college, university or trade school only. There will be one winner awarded a $5000 scholarship at the World Regional Level. All winners of the World Regional Contests will be eligible to compete in the World Championship Contest with awards for first, second, and third place of $15,000, $10,000, and $5,000 respectively at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri.
   B. All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International.
   C. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International.
   D. Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.

New Club Building
David Griffiths, Garner



New Club Building is a project that requires the same passion, enthusiasm, resourcefulness, and diligence as conducting an Essay contest, holding a fundraiser, or conducting a community service project. As with any project, a project committee must be established with a goal including designated parameters and timelines to ensure a successful conclusion.

Decision #1 – What Type of Club Do We Want to Build. These are the different types of Optimist clubs:

- Traditional Club
- Sports Club
- College Club
- Club within a Club
- Diaspora Club

Decision #2 – Identify the targeted community or entity (Sports Club or Club within a Club).
Decision #3 – Identify the start date.

Now the fun begins.

The 4-Step New Club Building Process

Step 1: Needs Assessment
A needs assessment is exploring the way things are versus the way they could be within a community. This first step is simply identifying the purposes of the New Optimist Club. What are the opportunities for service within the community? How could a Club help bring this about? Can a Club achieve the desired result? What are the costs and benefits of a Club to the community?

Step 2: Recruitment
Recruitment is simply the process of adding like-minded individuals to an Optimist Club for the purposes of "Bringing Out the Best in Youth, in our Communities, and in Ourselves."

Step 3: Meetings
Meetings are the process of coming together as an assembly for a common purpose during the formation of an Optimist Club. There are two types of meetings in New Club Building: Informational and Organizational. Informational Meetings are held to inform prospective Members about the mission, values and structure of Optimist Clubs and to identify service opportunities within the community.

Step 4: Follow-Up
Follow-up is the ongoing process, led by the district, ensuring that each New Club becomes a strong, viable asset with effective leadership that provides excellent service to the community.
To support the 4-Step New Club Building Process identified above, there are numerous electronic documents available that can be shared to provide additional guidance, suggested meeting agendas, etc. for a successful project. In addition, I offer my assistance as others within the district to ensure your project is a success for the Community and your Club.
Good luck with your new project. I look forward to hearing from you.

My contact information:
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NEW CLUB BUILDING

NC East Convention Meeting
September 19, 2026
Myrtle Beach, SC

Convene: 9:34 am

Welcome: Timothy Johnson
-Pledge
-Prayer
-Creed

Agenda – Motion - Robin Murtha, 2nd - Shana Bunn. Motion passed.
Welcome to Optimist International guests and Past Governors
Minutes - Motion to approve - Robin Murtha. 2nd - Tracie Thomas. Motion carries.
Financial Report - Terry Corle presented. Filed to audit.

Guest Speaker video - Malik & Racheal Parker - experience with Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina

Memorial Tribute Video with candles and moments of silence for members that have passed this year

GOAT Award - Angela awarded to Golden Circle Club
Governor Timothy reiterated importance of fellowship

2026 End of Year Committees
-Jr Golf: David Jennings – two students from our District went to the Trump National Doral Golf Course for the Junior Golf Championship. See website for their pictures. Thank you to all volunteers. This District event keeps growing each year and we hope to add girls next year.
-OI Convention 2027: Sandy Cyphers – There will be wonderful speakers and a fun time. New Orleans is next year. Encourage everyone to go to meet Optimists across US, Nepal and Caribbean.
-OI Foundation: Gary Pender - $36.50 Dime-a-Day = 125, $100 Philanthropy 25, $250 Presidents Club 14, $1,000 Christian D. Larson 3. In Memory of is $100.00. Sandy Cyphers explained the oratorical and essay funding. As of Aug 30, we have received $5,952. With oratorical winner included, our district received $22,500 in scholarship money. Clubs presented checks.
-Member Engagement: Angela Iwaniuk - Passed out gift certificates to sponsors of new club members. Made an invitation for folks to give to recruit new members. There is also a new brochure. Raleigh club will build a club within a club for Apex.
JOI Club: Paige Bivens – Provided an Ice breaker she uses with JOI Clubs to show us how we were alike or different and we talked within our sides and got to know each other. Move right or left based on choices given. This is a way to build community and get to know each other deeper. That is how she builds a JOI club. She had a recruitment event and passed out 75 applications. Then they held a follow-up as an interest meeting. Out of 75 applications received, 42 of those came to the meeting plus they received an additional 12 applications. The District has potential for 2 new clubs. Tag line is "Just ask." Joan sang "I've Got the Joy in My Heart."
-Boys and Girls Homes of North Carolina: Ray Cockrell - promoted Fall 2026 Civic Day which is October 10. He recognized BGHNC Civic Committee Past Chair Sandy Cyphers. New item - Civic Club Collectors Pin - $8.30x12 or $100 to BGHNC to receive the pin. Ducks race this afternoon at 4:00pm, he is selling tickets.
-LT Governors:

-Zone 3: Robin Murtha – Golden Circle Club is trying to start a JOI club in their middle school district. They made over $5,000 in their golf tournament last week. – Jewel Wilson with Goldsboro – their club participated in a Touch the Truck event, participated in school supply event, collaborated with others and had a bicycle rodeo. Angela Iwaniuk – Bennett Club will have a Kisses for Cancer event soon.

-Zone 5 – Joan Robinson – Henderson Club - Held a Community FUN Day where they gave away bikes and helmets, had a pizza luncheon for Henderson Boys and Girls Club, gave a mini-grant of $1,000 to an elementary school, held a First Responders appreciation event. They also host an Attend to Win event -where the best class attendance in the schools receives $75 for class celebration as well as a table at the National Night Out Against Crime event. They will be starting a JOI club. Jonathan Bivens – Wake Forest – They held a pork butt sale, club end-of-season picnic for 8 schools in Wake Forest they provide emergency, food clothes and toiletries, deliver CARE Packages with community grant, (pillow, bag, game, toiletries and socks), as well as participate in several game days and nights and assemble backpack buddies.

-Zone 6 – Tracie Thomas – Garner – our last district meeting was in Garner. Starting to hold activities in their Garner Club building. They will be holding a Breakfast with Santa along with Christmas Trees, Fall BBQ which sold out, Reverse Raffle Dinner – winner is last person called. $50 includes a steak dinner. They also have the Garner Optimist Christmas Parade coming up. A Garner school requested money for instruments, and the club gave them $2500. Please accept the call for Optimist Clubs to be in their parade. East Wake – Gail Craft – They feed Zebulon Boys and Girls club twice a month the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays. Raleigh – Timothy Johnson – They hold a fishing derby, roadside cleanup, and revenue comes from rental of their clubhouse.

Oratorical District, Regional winner and 2nd place World Winner - Avishai Deshpande
-Raleigh Club gave $500 check to its winner + $250 for travel.

2027-2028 Governor Election - Ray Cockrell explained voting rules for secret ballot

-1 official nominee for Gov Election 2026-2027 - Timothy Johnson only official nomination

-Motion to close nomination Shana Bunn. 2nd- Joan Robinson.

continued

-Please handwrite yes or no on ballot. Each delegate please submit a ballot and they will be collected by Terry Corle.

-Ray and Terry will count the ballots.

-Majority voted for Timothy Johnson for Governor-Elect 2026-2027

Outgoing Governor Remarks

An Optimist is someone who looks at a broken world and they decide to build anyway. At the beginning of year, I asked you to be mission ready. Today I stand as mission grateful. This is a calling. This district is made up of many who do. Children in NC are not hungry this weekend because of you. One encouraged child can change the future. Making a difference requires showing up, sacrifice, moving forward, risking failure - nothing is accomplished by staying safe. Don't grow weary of doing good. 2025-2026 did not materialize as a record year. We proved that service still matters, encouragement changes lives, communities strengthened by choosing Optimism. We proved the Optimist Creed to be lived out if we "Promise Ourselves." Thank you for the privilege and honor of serving you this past year. I think the Optimist Creed is our battle cry. Prove that one person can make a difference. Stay motivated. Continue to be Optimists!!!

Mid Atlantic VP - Dale Hoffer

Be ready to have your 10-minute speech. My name is not on agenda, so I have my 5-minute speech. I love this group. I heard everything everyone is doing. I don't see impact reports being submitted. Submit all year long instead of at the end of the year. Make sure you do it. Make corrections and submit Club by-laws, signed by President and secretary. Must be updated every year. (Appreciation gift given to Dale and his wife.)

OI President Tom Kendo

-Video shown – "Together We can be The Change" sung by Britt Nicole. You can view it on the Optimist Leader's website.

I have asked all Optimist to look at the world you live in, see changes you want and be the change. Look in the mirror every day and say, "I will be the change." You will be modeling, leading by example and others will want to be the change too. We live a longer, better, healthier, happier life being optimistic. A fact: our life is better, we make ourselves better, our world around us and youth in our community better. Your club in your town makes a difference to the lives of youth. Would the government, school districts? No. Who will do it? Optimist clubs. Only way to sustain your Optimist Club is to add more members. We cannot control in Optimist who passes or moves out of the community. Your Optimist Club is the key here. The Back in Balance Program - was put out by our OI Growth Committee. It is simple, if you are negative 1, find 1 member by September 30. It can be daunting for a small club. Average is 20-25, it is doable. With larger clubs it is easier to get one new member. We must invite. (Invite others to a service work event) My salary is zero just like you. Just because you invited and they attended, you still need to JUST ASK. The key is to focus on your club. Many remain in Optimist because of relationships. The people who are Optimist are all the same in that we all re like-minded individuals. We are about communities, children and the best we can be. Who wouldn't want to be around friends who are positive. Strive to live the Creed. You will make yourself a better person. If you do all on the Creed, you will be better than me. It is one we must try to live. It is our standard and who we are. Don't think this is a "starts October 1 and ends September 30." I still have a big job to do. It is an awesome responsibility to be on the Optimist International Board. We must keep 40,000 members in mind. Optimist Members is the most important job you have. Keep the momentum going. I see energized Optimists here. I need to see more here. Bring a friend. This is worthwhile to come to. You are doing good work in your communities. You need the help. Be positive and proud of your Club and your District. Invite people, ASK people to join you, and continue to have fun. Always remember BE THE CHANGE. (Appreciation gift given to Tom and his wife.)

Conclusion:

_Governor Timothy's appreciation to folks who gave sponsorships for the District Convention. Hard stop for final basket bids is at 6:30pm.

Optimist Creed

Adjourned 12:47pm

List of attendees:

Terry Corle
Sarah Corle
Sandy Cyphers
Shana Bunn
Robin Murtha
Ray Cockrell
Kimberly Cockrell
Joshua Cockrell
Hayley Cockrell
David Jennings
Jeanetta Jennings
Gail Craft
Timothy Johnson
Gary Pender
Louwanna Pender
Kathy Howard
Angela Iwaniuk
William Iwaniuk
Annie Jewel Wilson
Jonathan Bivens
Paige Bivens
Daniel Durham
Barbara Durham
Tracie Thomas
Joan Robinson
Cheryl Elman
Cindy Harris
Joan Robinson
Cindy Harris
Tom Kendo
Mrs. Kendo
Dale Hoffer
Mrs. Hoffer
Avishai Deshpande
Mr. Deshpande

North Carolina East District 2025 - 2026 (BEFORE AUDIT)

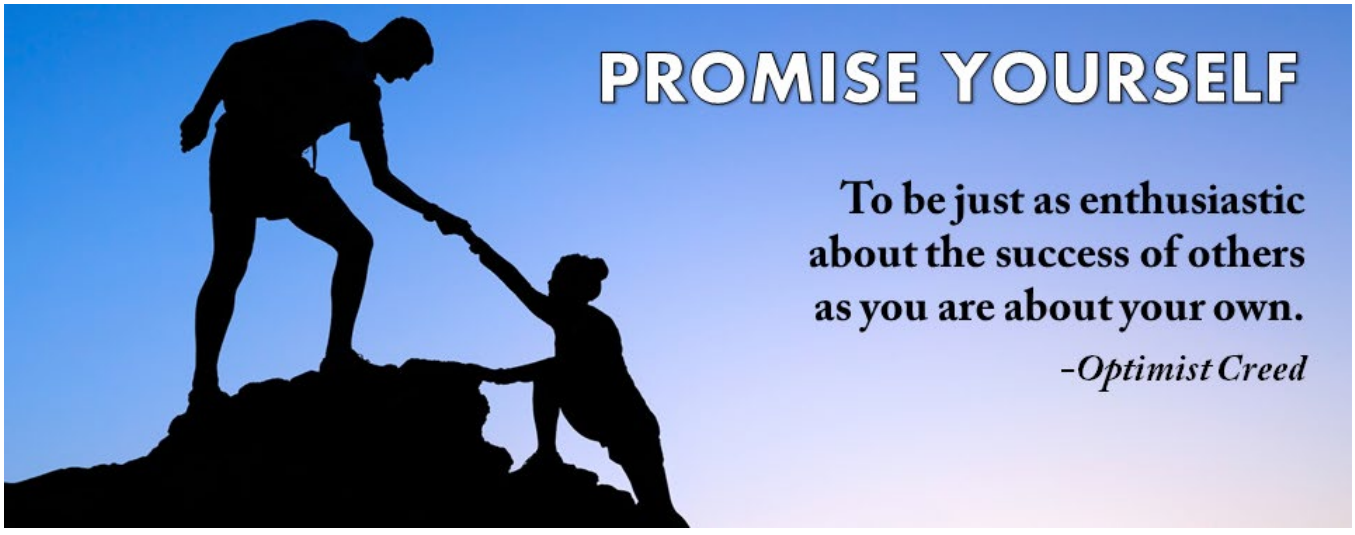
Account Name	Budgeted	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Actual	Difference
Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	Receipts	
#100 Dues	$ 9,312.00	$ 2,698.50	$ 2,072.00	$ 2,093.00	$ 1,925.50	$ 8,789.00	$ (523.00)
#105 Corporate Partners						$ -	$ -
#110 Allotment OI	$ 582.00					$ -	$ (582.00)
#120 Dist Convention	$ 3,000.00				$ 4,340.18	$ 4,340.18	$ 1,340.18
#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	$ 126.50	$ 1,134.50	$ 734.50
#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	$ 6,392.18	$ 17,453.68	$ (12,956.32)

Account Name	Budgeted	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	Actual	
Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Disbursements	Difference
#200 Governor	$ 2,500.00				$ 2,015.99	$ 2,015.99	$ (484.01)
#210 Lt. Governors	$ 1,800.00	$ 355.40	$ 251.04	$ 178.14	$ 335.13	$ 1,119.71	$ (680.29)
#250 District Secretary	$ 300.00					$ -	$ (300.00)
#252 District Treasurer	$ 100.00		$ 73.86			$ -	$ (100.00)
#255 Governor Elect	$ 750.00				$ 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			$ 196.00	$ 426.20	$ (2,073.80)
#300 Clerical/Secretary						$ -	$ -
#301 Postage	$ 50.00					$ -	$ (50.00)
#320 Office Supplies	$ 300.00				$ 361.61	$ 361.61	$ 61.61
#330 District Bulletin	$ 500.00	$ 291.93	$ 579.15	$ 497.00		$ 1,368.08	$ 868.08
#331 Web Page	$ 325.00	$ 371.76			$ 24.19	$ 395.95	$ 70.95
#340 District Directory	$ -					$ -	$ -
#350 District Convention	$ 5,000.00				$ 6,070.16	$ 6,070.16	$ 1,070.16
#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	$ 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	$ 4.95	$ 687.92	$ 387.92
#440 NCB Supplies	$ 500.00					$ -	$ (500.00)
#441 Membership	$ 1,000.00	$ 100.00		$ 250.00	$ 100.00	$ 450.00	$ (550.00)
#442 A & A	$ -					$ -	$ -
#443 Personal Growth						$ -	$ -

continued

#444 Childhood Health	$ 750.00					$ -	$ (750.00)
#446 Leadership Develop	$ 250.00				$ 50.00	$ 50.00	$ (200.00)
#447 OI Foundation	$ 500.00		$ 100.00		$ 200.00	$ 300.00	$ (200.00)
#448 Boys & Girls Home	$ 500.00					$ -	$ (500.00)
#450 Gifts (Guest)	$ 200.00				$ 200.00	$ 200.00	$ -
#470 Miscellaneous	$ 2,385.00			$ 203.41	$ 129.67	$ 333.08	$ (2,051.92)
#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	$ 11,437.70	$ 20,263.57	$ (10,146.43)
* #260 Only if current Gov can't attend							
YTD Summary							
Total Receipts		$ 3,854.50	$ 3,730.00	$ 3,477.00	$ 6,392.18	$ 17,453.68	
Total Disbursements		$ 3,070.64	$ 1,322.14	$ 4,506.95	$ 11,437.70	$ 20,263.57	
Receipts minus Disbursements		$ 783.86	$ 2,407.86	$ (1,029.95)	$ (5,045.52)	$ (2,809.89)	
Checkbook Balance 10/1/2026							$ 14,530.93

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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