

Illinois District Optimist Land of Lincoln Bulletin



August 2019

We're in the Home Stretch – Let's Finish Strong

Hello, Optimists! As you're reading this, we've only got about one month left in the "Promise Yourself" Centennial year of Optimist International. The time has flown by, and I'd like to thank each of you for all you've done to make a difference for the kids, your club, and your community. As I've heard about the amazing projects that you've been doing for the kids in your communities, I know that the future is bright for those kids and for the success of Optimism in Illinois!

Keep working hard to provide support for the needs of the kids in your community. Whether it's a new project working with the kids, providing financial support for critical services, or starting that Junior Optimist Club you've been thinking about, all are important. As each of your clubs continue to find and fill the needs in your communities, you build a better world for all of us.

Keep growing. As you add new members to your club, you increase your club's ability to serve the needs of the kids and the community. Every new Optimist member you add to your club means that you can provide service to 35 additional kids. What a solid legacy to provide for your club!

I recently sent an email to all club presidents, secretaries, and treasurers, challenging every Optimist Club in Illinois to end the year on September 30 with two more members than they had on August 1. When we all make that happen, we'll be serving almost 2900 more kids in Illinois!

To sweeten the pot a little, I'm going to provide special recognition for two clubs for growth in these last two months of the year:

- the club with the largest net + number of new members
- the club with the largest percentage increase in membership

Whether you add to your membership by holding a NOW (New Optimists Welcome) event or by using the tried and true "Just Ask" method of adding new members, the kids are the real winners when we welcome new Optimist members to our clubs.



My theme for this year is "Optimism – The Perfect Fit". You've proven to me, over and over again, that you are indeed a critical piece of the puzzle that creates the amazing and vibrant picture of your Optimist Club. We can only do what we do by every Optimist member continuing to be The Perfect Fit in our puzzle!

Your efforts always matter – together we truly make a difference.

Let's finish this year strong – give it your all to make sure you are the very best Optimist you can be and your club is the very best club it can be. Do it for yourself, but more importantly, do it for the kids! Let me know what I can do to help you and your club. I'm here for you. Please call me at 309-236-1342 or email me at schmidtsandi@gmail.com if there's anything I can do to help.

Sandi Schmidt
Illinois Optimist Governor 2018-19

Welcome to New Optimists!

WOW! Congratulations to these new members and to the Optimist members who sponsored them between May 4 through August 16.

<u>New Optimist Member</u>	<u>Optimist Club</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>
John Deselm	Highland	William Wagner
Mark Carlson	Moline Breakfast	Tom Reagan
John Crist	Taylorville	Gary Spurling
Dudley R Crow	Marshall-Clark County	FOO
Kristine Kilburg	Moline Breakfast	Tom Reagan
Cindy Lindsey	Moline Breakfast	Mike Tyler
Brian Lindsey	Moline Breakfast	Mike Tyler
Constance Branstrom	Glenview	Karen Paszkiewicz
Timothy Huelsman	Waterloo	Kermit Constantine
Stefan Gregson	Waterloo	George Obernagel
Kate Zimmerman	Milan	Tom Brown
Nicholas J Larkin	Wilmette Lunch	Ben Wozney
Nancy Roach-Wilder	Deerfield	Ron Schwartz
Susan Craig	Delavan	Wendy Hart
Tina Conover	Delavan	Mary Hartzler
Mark P Cunningham	Delavan	Barbara Day
Rachel D Fleming	Champaign-Urbana	Marty Schmidt
Katie Galbas	Glenview	Lisa Synnestvedt
Abigail Hakemian	Moline Breakfast	Pat Wendt
Bill Rosborough	Moline Breakfast	Pat Wendt
Steven Pfettscher	Highland	Craig Loyet
John Kipskind	Highland	Rick Duft
Craig Marti	Highland	Scott Geest
Kurt Vonder Haar	Highland	Jeff Foehner
Zach Bickline	Highland	Nicholas Sparlin
Sam Munie	Highland	Marshall Rinderer
Andrew Abendroth	Highland	Ryan Tallman
Danny Beer	Highland	Rick Ringwald
Jason Koerkenmeir	Highland	Mike Ammann
John Taylor	Highland	William Wagner
Jake Whitby	Chillicothe	Ann Belter
Cheryl Gnepper	Chillicothe	JB Culbertson
Cheryl Farwell-Duckworth	Chillicothe	Joyce Close

We now have a total of 136 new Optimist members in Illinois since October 1, and I know that number will keep growing! Every time we welcome a new member, we increase our ability to serve the youth and our communities, so the real winners here are the kids. Keep up the good work, everyone!

Governor Sandi has issued a challenge to every Optimist Club in Illinois to end the Optimist year on September 30 with 2 more members than they had on August 1. Congratulations to three clubs who've already added 2 or more new members since August 1 – Moline Breakfast (2), Highland (10), and Chillicothe (3). Let's make your club the next one to add to this growth list!

As you continue your club's efforts to recruit new members, remember these special incentives, where the new member pays just \$30 Optimist International dues and \$13 Illinois Optimist dues for the first 12 months of membership:

Homecoming – welcome a former Optimist member back to Optimism
(available through September 30 – Centennial promotion)

Teachers (includes administrators, aides, etc., both actively working and retired)

\$30<30 – new members who are not yet 30 years old

Your Optimist Club adds value in your community. Ask your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to be part of that value. You and they will be glad you did!

Moline Breakfast Optimists in Action



The Moline Breakfast Optimist Club recently purchased three kayaks for the Quad Cities Conservation Association for use in their youth education programming. Sam's Club donated a fourth kayak to the group in recognition of the club's gift.

Club members were invited to watch an event where the young people were enjoying using the new kayaks. Great chance to see our gift in action!

President Nick Maro, Board Member Bob Clancy with his grandchildren, and President-Elect Bob Moore were part of the Moline Breakfast Optimist team giving Tootsie Pops to kids outside Walmart on a recent Saturday. The club uses the event to promote club activities in the community.

Donations received are used to support our annual Coats and Shoes that Fit program, benefitting needy youngsters in area pre-school programs.



Thanks to Terry and Noma Wright for 25 Years!



Behind every great Optimist event are the people who make it happen! Anyone who's ever attended the Illinois Qualifier for the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship knows that Terry and Noma Wright are the heart and soul of our tournament. It shows in everything they do to make the tournament a success for each of the young golfers who participate.

Terry and Noma were recognized by Governor Sandi Schmidt for their 25 years of outstanding service to the tournament and the youth golfers. Their commitment, dedication, and focus on making this the very best tournament for youth golfers matches those same traits in the young golfers who are working to perfect their golf games. Thank you, Terry and Noma, for all you do!

What a wonderful world we'd live in if we could instill these lessons in everyone, not just our kids! This poem (author unknown) reminds me of the tenets of the Optimist Creed.

10 Lessons I Want to Instill in My Kids

If you made a mistake, apologize.
If you're thankful, show it.
If you're confused, ask questions.
If you learn something, teach others.
If you're stuck, ask for help.
If you're wrong, fess up.
If you love someone, tell them.
If you trip, get back up.
If someone needs help, help them.
If you see wrong, take a stance.

Notes from the Governor Designates Pen

I want to share some thoughts about the Illinois District. As I prepare to assume the role as Governor on October 1, I think it important you know something about me personally and as an Optimist. I grew up on a grain and livestock farm outside Pawnee, Illinois, the youngest of five children. My first leadership role was as President of my FFA chapter. Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) is my alma mater. Prior to graduation in 1974 with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Industries, I served as president of the Block and Bridle club and competed inter-collegiately on the Livestock Judging Team. My junior year I was selected to be a Summer Agribusiness and Management trainee with Ralston Purina. Upon graduation I worked nine years for the University of Illinois as a county extension adviser in Agriculture. As an advisor I worked with the 4H program in Montgomery and Union counties. In 1983 I was approached by a bank to come to work for them as an Agricultural loan officer. This resulted in a 35 year career as a commercial loan officer. I retired in June of 2018.

Forty-five years ago I met and married Judy (44 yrs). We both were employed by the U of I at the time. Judy retired a few years ahead of me as a teacher in Family and Consumer Science (Home Ec). Judy is a graduate of Indiana State University with a degree in Vocational Home Economics, and has her Masters in Education from Lindenwood University. We have two children, a son who is a graduate of Tulane University with a Masters in Architecture, and a daughter who graduated from Washington University as a Doctor of Physical Therapy. We have two grandchildren, a grandson (7) and granddaughter, 22 months. I offer this brief personal history, not to be braggadocios, but to help you understand who I am and how my life has been formed. We each bring a history to the Illinois District, and I believe by learning these histories we develop strength through Understanding.

Relevant a word you will hear a lot from me this year. I firmly believe clubs must be and must be seen as relevant in their respective communities. But equally important, the district must be seen as relevant to the clubs which comprise the district. I desire to improve the district's perception among clubs. A question that continues to go through my mind is "how" we make the district more relevant to its clubs and members. I want each of you to know I value your input so feel free to contact me with your ideas and thoughts. Contact me at wwagner6@charter.net or call me at 618-401-0681.

Calendar Mark-Up

Please place on your calendars the following dates for our conferences and convention.

October 18&19 (fall conference and the Hospitality theme will be tail gating.)

January 24&25, 2020 (winter conference with the hospitality will be along the theme of pizza and beer.)

April 17 & 18, 2020 (spring conference with the hospitality theme being either take me out to the ball game or off to the races.)

August 7 & 8, 2020 (District convention the theme is yet to be determined.)

All will be held at the **Decatur Convention and Conference Center in Decatur, IL.** This facility has a large outdoor covered pavilion that will provide us with a large area for the hospitality segment of our conferences. This assumes weather permits our use.

Thank You to the Highland Optimist Club for agreeing to supplement the District's funding of the hospitality function with an additional \$500.

What's Up Doc?

- 1: The Illinois District is positive for membership growth.
- 2: There is interest in new clubs in the Chicago area, Lawrenceville, Harrisburg, and Lebanon. Interest in Optimist is growing throughout the district. **What's up in your community?**

"Prospecting"

"Looking for gold, diamonds and other precious gems."

An area of emphasis this year from the district team will be to find and identify prospects for our team. However you want to think of it, the district's minor league system is weak. Our bench is weak, and our depth chart needs expanding. No matter which sports term you want to use: **"We need to recruit PROSPECTS."** We will be doing this with conference sessions, Lt. Governor input, and direct contact with past and present club officers. Plan to attend the fall conference to assist with this project.

THANK YOU!

I want to extend my personal THANK YOU to the past Governors. As I prepare for the role before me I appreciate what you have done.

To the 14 clubs that have membership growth as of this newsletter's deadline. There are 8 clubs that need to ask 4 or less people to join and get on the roster before 9/30 to have a positive growth for the year.

A Huge THANK YOU Governor Sandi for your leadership efforts during this Optimist year. A tip of the cap to you for a **Job Well Done!**

FINAL POINTS

- 1: **President's Pride reports are due 9/30/2019. The form is on OI web site under Leaders.org.**
- 2: **Mark your Calendars District dates provided above and the National convention June 27-June 30 in CHICAGO LAND (Schaumburg, IL).**

Let's have a great year working and playing together "Bringing Out The Best."

Yours in Optimism!!

**Bill Wagner
Governor Designate**

PS: The next newsletter will feature the Lt. Governors and Committee Chairs.
My notes will not be as long next time either.

Springfield Luncheon Essay Winner



The Springfield Luncheon Optimist Club and member Vinod Gupta recently sponsored an essay contest on the subject "How to Practice Non-Violence". The winner of the contest was Casey Douglass, shown above reading his essay at a meeting of the Springfield Optimist Club. Casey is a student at Chatham high school and was presented with a certificate and a gift from the club for winning this contest.

Blues Brothers In Action



Elwood and Jake Blues (Josh Zaidel, Southern Wisconsin Optimist District, and James Patrick Schmidt, Illinois Optimist District) took a moment out of their busy schedule at the Optimist International Convention in Louisville, KY, to join Governor Sandi Schmidt for a photo. Look for more information from Jake and Elwood as we head toward the iImagine Optimist International Convention in ChicagoLand next summer.

Camp Coco Optimist Day

This year's Camp Coco Optimist Day was held Tuesday June 25th at Lake Bloomington. The theme this year was, "Let the Pirate Shenanigans begin". Our shenanigans involved building Pirate Forts using PVC pipe, Kraft Paper, Duct Tape, and Magic Markers. The weather was sunny and clear, a great relief to all after a rain-soaked June. The forts began to rise and take shape, the PVC pipe forming the frame, and the Kraft Paper forming the walls. The forts were rising out of the grassy field magnificently!

And then the winds came.

Great gusts of wind converted some of the more tightly constructed pirate forts into pirate ships, the Kraft Paper becoming sails that lifted the forts high and then rapidly deconstructed them. There were frenzied efforts to address the wind damage, with some success, although ongoing wind continued to mitigate the progress.

We finally threw in the towel on completing the forts and passed out the water and squirt guns that facilitated the day ending water gun fight. Some fought from within their forts (or, in some cases, shattered remnants of their fort), others chased around field; all had the opportunity to get thoroughly wet.

In the end there was not much left of the forts to show for all the effort, but there were a lot of smiling and happy campers, so the day must be judged an unqualified success.

The number of campers was down significantly this year – only 53, when at the peak there were almost three times that number. Let's hope that represents fewer kids in central Illinois with cancer!

Thanks to all the Optimists who came to participate, we were few but mighty: Chris Smith, Joyce Stoelting, and Dianne Hacker from the Springfield Luncheon Optimist Club, and Pat Wendt, Mike Tyler, Nick Maro, and Bob Clancy from the Moline Breakfast Optimist Club. District Governor Sandi was planning on attending, but was under the weather, so she and Marty had to miss this year. She did pass along that the Moline Breakfast Club had made a \$1500 contribution to Camp Coco (SIU Foundation). Well done! If others would like to do likewise, please give to the SIU School of Medicine Foundation, noting that you wish your gift to go towards Camp Coco. The address is SIU School of Medicine Foundation, 409 W. Calhoun Avenue, PO Box 19666, Springfield, IL 62794. Thanks!!



The Time is Now!

As the days begin to shorten and footballs fill the air, thoughts of school and the kids that enter them can't be helped.

The scholarship programs that the Optimist International Foundation support also begin to be ramped up so as to be there when the kids are ready. Essay, Oratorical and CCDHH all need your help to stay funded for the years to come. Your donations both as a club and individually help to bring out the best in kids every day.

This past year saw some incredible giving on the part of individuals and clubs alike. As of the end of June there were 18 more dime a day contributors and a 50% increase in President club members over last year but the time to give hasn't ended. I encourage everyone who has meant to donate but hasn't found the time yet to come forward and do it now. There are plenty of pins and patches to be given out as donors are recognized for their contributions.

Please use the link below to see where your donations go and how they help youth via the Optimist Clubs throughout the world.

www.oifoundation.org/downloads/Donors-Guide.pdf

Thanks again for your help everyday as Optimists,

Ron Elvin

District Foundation Representative

Highland Optimist Club host “Business after Hours” for the Highland Chamber of Commerce

On July 18th, 2019 the Highland Optimist Club hosted a “Business after Hours” event for the Highland Chamber of Commerce. The Highland Chamber of Commerce hosts monthly gatherings with member businesses that help forge new business relationships in a relaxed and casual atmosphere. This is a free event that is an excellent opportunity to finish the business day in company of fellow members and grow a circle of contacts. The Highland Optimist Club is a member of the Highland Chamber of Commerce and they requested to host the July event to help them promote the Highland Optimist Club. At this event the Highland Optimist Club served chambers members Optimist Pizzas from their pizza wagon along with some other refreshments. This was a well-attended event with over 110 people in attendance. At this event Highland Optimist President-Elect presented a check for \$500.00 to the Highland Chamber of Commerce for the “Street Art Festival” which will be in September. The Highland Optimist Club’s donation will be directed to the Children’s Area of the “Street Art Festival”. Also, Knick got to talk about our club to the member’s attendance and explain all the projects we do throughout the year.



Picture of Highland Optimist Club President Elect Knick Reed (right) presenting a check for \$500.00 to Highland Chamber of Commerce Present George Jones (left) for the Highland Chamber of Commerce “Street Art Festival”





Cousins Coding Program Advances STEM Training And Coding In Morgan Park, Launches Expanded Program At South Shore Cultural Center

Article by Pierre Clark

In a building on 111th Street in Chicago's Morgan Park community that has been owned by the same family for three generations, more than two dozen young people ranging in age from 5 to 15 are learning 21st century skills and strategies to prepare them for their futures in a digital world. Cousins Coding, the Chicago branch of Optimist international, a national non-profit organization that has been in operation more than one hundred years.

These intellectually curious youth, called CEO Superstars, are being trained in STEM subjects and coding by an illustrious group of community experts including Ph.D's, martial artists and engineers, to prepare them for the jobs and positions in a digital future. The program is already a huge success in Morgan Park and the group will be launching a branch of the program in the fall at the South Shore Country Club.



Photo By J'Nae Antoinette

Cousins Empowered Optimist Club of Chicago (CEO), headed by Raimonda Pierce, transported 33 youth and their families to Wakandacon, at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in downtown Chicago on Saturday July 27th at 10:30 am. They hosted a Black Panther Themed Costume Contest, awarding \$100.00 to the first place winner. (\$50.00 & \$25.00 to second & third place winners). The youth, called CEO Superheroes, presented a rap created for them by mentor & musician Trey Station to help them learn the language of coding.

A team of volunteers provides & self-finances this year round STEAM & life skill development strategy based in Morgan Park in the former home of Safari. CEO is now collaborating with the Jackson Park Golf Association headed by Tracy Raoul, to bring the program to the South Shore Cultural Center.

They are creating a documentary entitled Collaboration, with the goal of inspiring enhanced STEAM & life skill development strategies. The team creating this film is headed by director/filmmaker Cydia Flowers, which includes filmmaker Delacy Peters & photographers J'Nae Antoinette, Pierre Clark & David Jenkins. Photographer Preston Thomas captured the Superheroes at Wakandacon.

Their lead mentor is Professor Anthony Jackson, who has earned 2 degrees in Physics and a degree in computer science. He is supported by engineer, entrepreneur, martial arts educator & Vice President of CEO Donta Rice & mentor Asheton Farrow. Gachele Coffey serves as media coach & mental health specialist. Dionne Victoria teaches STEAM through art. Master photographer David Jenkins oversees the implementation of 3 levels of photography skill development.

Their advisory board includes Deborah Farrow, who is an educator with 30 years of experience, entrepreneur/educator & CEO administrator Chaka Farrow & educator Cherie Noisette, who assesses our Superheroes and coordinates academic reinforcement strategies.

Yvonne Orr-El & Pierre Clark oversee resource development and serve on the advisory board, as do educator Alexis Wallace, educator/entrepreneurs Serene Bridgett & Kalana Cale, former attorney now spiritual coach Beth Herndobler, entrepreneur/nurse administrator Cherokee Lewis, entrepreneur/esthetician Jocelyn Rials, educator Theresa Delsoin, entrepreneur/artist Chester Allen, Bishop Dr. Sabree (Cheryl) Myhand, entrepreneur/artist Kellie McCann, author/entertainer/motivator Michael Colyar, entrepreneur/martial arts educator Azziza Muhammad, and strategist Anna Station. Ruth & John Del Re & Terry Wright serve as mentors in the hundred year old organization -- Optimist International.

Visit their Facebook Page: Friends of CEO to see the Superheroes code robots & devices
- <https://www.facebook.com/Friendsofceo/>

For Further Info, Contact Cousins Empowered Optimist Club of Chicago (CEO) 312.479.7702



Highland Optimist Club host “NOW” Event

On July 29th, 2019 the Highland Optimist Club hosted a “Now” event to promote new membership to the Highland Optimist Club. This was a social evening which included a free “Steak Fry” dinner for a member and their perspective guest. This was a well-attended event with over 55 in attendance which included 15 potential new members. As of press time of this newsletter this event had 7 new members join with several more expected to join. The Highland Optimist Club has added 16 new members to their roster during the 2018 – 2019 Optimist year.



Picture of Highland Optimist Club past (President & Treasurer) and current Illinois District Governor-Designate Bill Wagner grilling steaks for the “NOW” event on July 29th, 2019.





Don't Forget To Live The Creed!



Want to see your Optimist Club in the **Land of Lincoln Bulletin**? Send your information to Michael Taylor at michaeldemosstaylor@yahoo.com. Watch for my email announcing the deadline for the next issue, but go ahead and send me your club's information ANY time. I can't wait to see what everyone has been up to!

Action pictures of your club's activities are more fun to share with your fellow Optimists around Illinois, so keep that in mind when sending your information. Always include captions or a story to explain the what your club has done. We will also publish information about your upcoming events – you never know who might show up if they know you have an activity going on.