

WELCOME

By providing hope and positive vision, Optimists bring out the best in youth, our communities and ourselves.

• 2025-2026 •



Optimist
INTERNATIONAL

WELCOME

to *Optimist International*

Welcome! Bienvenue! स्वागत है أهلاً وسهلاً ようこそ Merhba! ¡Bienvenido! स्वागतम्
Maligayang pagdating! 환영합니다 ยินดีต้อนรับ Karibu! স্বাগত Welkom!



A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

I am pleased to welcome you to Optimist International, an organization dedicated to providing hope and positive vision to children and communities. Thank you for joining your Optimist Club and committing yourself to positively impacting youth and making your community a better place to live and work.

You are now part of a 106-year-old international service organization dedicated to bringing out the best in youth, communities, and ourselves. Your membership connects you with positive people who know they can make this world better by choosing optimism.

As you begin your Optimist journey, numerous opportunities await: service to youth, personal fulfillment, leadership growth, lifetime friendships, enhanced personal wellbeing, and the chance to inspire others. Choosing optimism has enhanced my life, and I believe you too will find great satisfaction, purpose, and a sense of accomplishment as an Optimist member.

Thank you for CHOOSING OPTIMISM!

Tom Kendo
2025-26 International President

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Welcome to Optimist International!

As a new member, you are joining a global network of volunteers committed to making a positive impact in their communities. We are a diverse group of people from all walks of life, but we are united by our shared belief in the power of optimism.

I encourage you to get involved in the many programs and activities that your local Club has to offer. You will meet new friends, make a difference in the lives of others, and become the best version of yourself in the process.



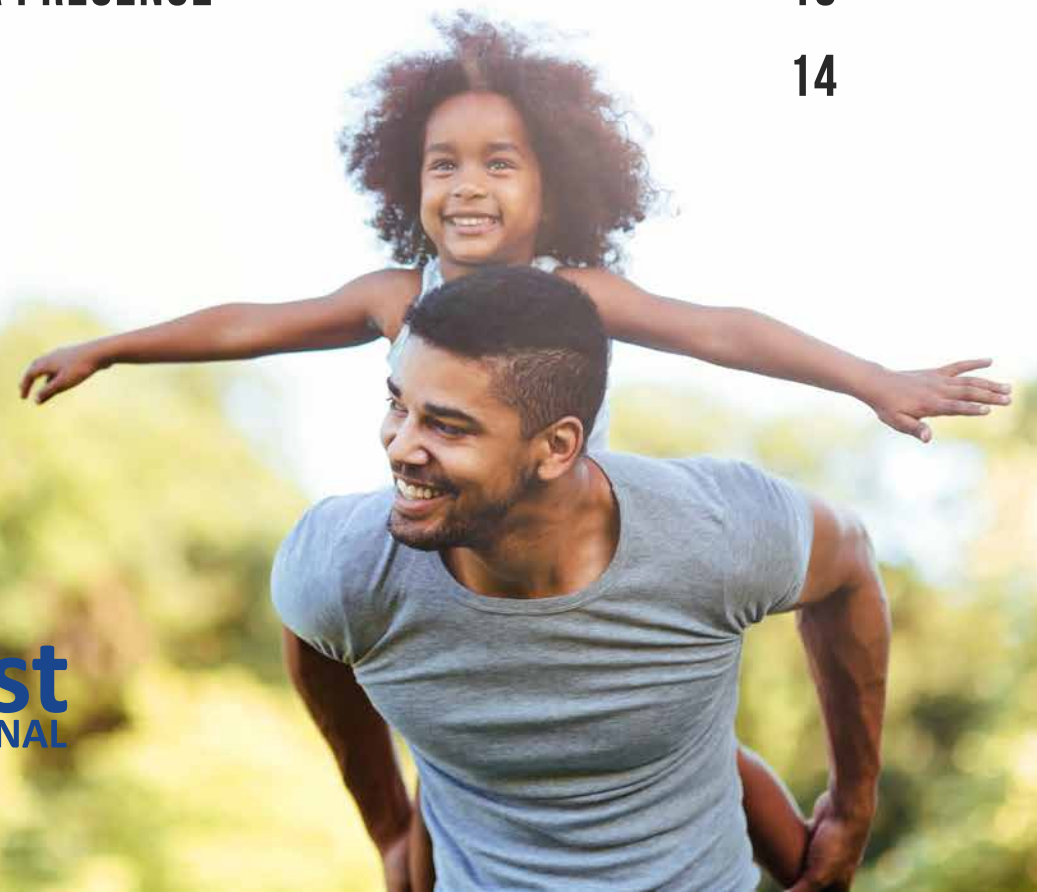
Cheryl Brenn
Executive Director

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Optimist
INTERNATIONAL





LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Leadership Development area incorporates many things that provide benefits to our Members. Webinars are offered on topics that are relevant to both personal development and Club Management. Members are invited to participate during the live session or the recording can be reviewed at the Members convenience.

The Optimist Institute provides opportunities for Members to build skills that will help build their resume and make them more competitive in their respective career fields. There is information for Members about leadership, from determining what type of leader they might be to how to have those “crucial” but necessary conversations. For Member’s who choose to serve in various leadership positions within the organization, there are training sessions for the office that they choose to hold as well as sessions for future leadership opportunities.



FOUNDATIONS



The Optimist International Foundation (OIF) was established in 1971 exclusively for the charitable, literary and educational purposes of Optimist International, a community service-based organization committed to creating a more optimistic future for young people through innovative programs. OIF works with Optimist Clubs located in over 2,000 communities in the United States and the Caribbean.

The Foundation has grown steadily since 1971 and is recognized as a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

The Foundation’s Board of Directors grants funds to Optimist International each year for the development and improvement of International programs. Programs funded by the Foundation serve 1.5 million children annually. The Optimist International Foundation depends on the support from Optimist Clubs and individual Members, the general public, businesses and corporations.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.oifoundation.org/>



Founded in March 1988, the Canadian Children’s Optimist Foundation is a Canadian charity recognized by the Canada Revenue Agency. Formerly known as the Optimist International Foundation of Canada, it only serves the interests of Canadian Optimist members.

All monies raised will remain in Canada and are distributed for purposes of funding, including OI Scholarships, Youth Club (JOI), OI Programs and Activities, and the Optimist training offered to volunteers.

For more information, please visit: <https://optimistfoundation.ca>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

OCTOBER

- Optimist New Year
- Q1 Oct/Nov/Dec
- President's Message
- World Teachers' Day



FEBRUARY

- Optimist Day
- Random Acts of Kindness Day
- IRS Annual Filing due for all U.S. Optimist Clubs, the IRS annual 990 series returns are due
- Junior Optimist Reading Month
- Registration and housing open for the International Convention

APRIL

- Q3 Apr/May/June
- Deadline for Districts to submit Winners for Essay Contest
- National Volunteer Week
- Global Youth Service Day

JUNE

- Webinar: Everything You Need to Know before Attending the International Convention
- National Children's Day
- Optimist International Board of Directors Meeting
- Deadline for Districts to submit Winners for CCDHH
- Deadline for Clubs to submit winners for Visual Arts Competition
- Optimist International Convention



AUGUST

- National Nonprofit Day
- International Youth Day
- District Conventions

DECEMBER

- Optimist Junior Golf: Hugh Cranford All Scholastic Scholarship Application opens
- Club of the Year submissions due



NOVEMBER

- Optimist Junior Golf: Tournament of Champions
- World Kindness Week and Day
- Giving Tuesday
- Leadership Development Webinar
- Optimist International Board of Director's Meeting

JANUARY

- Q2 Jan/Feb/Mar
- MLK Day of Service
- International Quality of Life Month
- International Day of Education

MARCH

- Optimist International Board of Directors Meeting
- International Day of Happiness
- OIF & CCOF Club Grant deadline

MAY

- International Day of Families
- Optimists in Action Month
- Optimist Junior Golf: Hugh Cranford All Scholastic winners announced
- Deadline for Districts to submit winners for Oratorical Contest
- Early bird registration deadline for International Convention



JULY

- Q4 July/Aug/Sept
- International Day of Friendship
- Junior Optimist International Summit
- Oratorical World Contest
- Optimist International Junior Golf Championship

SEPTEMBER

- District Conventions
- International Literacy Day
- International Day of Charity
- Deadline to submit End-of-Year Club Impact Report
- National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
- Celebrate Community Week
- Closing of the Optimist Year



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LOCAL SCHOOLS WITH

OWLS

Optimists Working for Learning Success (OWLS)

Many of our Clubs are already doing incredible work in partnership with local schools, but what if there was a way to highlight and amplify that impact? That's the goal of our newest signature program, OWLS — Optimists Working for Learning Success.

The OWLS program serves as an educational umbrella, helping us track our collective engagement and impact in schools and communities. It provides a focus for Clubs looking for a Signature Program and is a wonderful tool for membership recruitment. By creating an official framework, we can develop stronger partnerships with schools and eventually earn endorsements from national educational associations, becoming the premier service organization supporting local schools.

OWLS projects can include a wide range of activities your Club may already be doing, such as:

- Mentoring and tutoring
- Providing school supplies, hygiene items, or weekend food packages
- Chaperoning field trips, judging science fairs, or conducting mock interviews

To support these valuable projects, your Club can consider obtaining funding from our foundations—the Optimist International Foundation (OIF) and the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation (CCOF). For more information on eligibility and how to apply, please visit the links below:

[OIF Club Grant](#) [OIF Childhood Health & Wellness Grant](#) [CCOF Club Grant](#)

Ready to get started? The path to launching an OWLS program in your community is straightforward:

1. Research & Prepare: Identify local schools and determine your Club's capacity and focus. Prioritize 3 key areas where your Club can assist.
2. Build Relationships: Reach out to school leaders to discuss how you can work together. To help with your initial outreach, download our customizable email template [here](#).
3. Implement: Launch your first activity, monitor its progress, and collect feedback to ensure its success.

By uniting under this initiative, we can create a safe, comfortable, and productive environment for students everywhere. Let's work together to help our students succeed!

2026 OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL ORATORICAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

JULY 16 – 17, 2026



2026 TOPIC

**“The Moment I Realized I Belonged
—My Definition of Community”**

Each Optimist District 1st place winner will compete at the Optimist World Championship Contest.

The 1st place winner for each of the nine World Regions will be awarded a **\$5,000** scholarship. All nine 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.

For more information on all scholarships, visit www.optimist.org/scholarships



Funded by Optimist International Foundation and Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation.

OPTIMIST JUNIOR GOLF



One of the largest and most prestigious junior golf events in the world, the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship is a unique opportunity for junior golfers from around the globe. Each year junior golfers, ages 10-18, participate in Optimist sponsored events. With more than 50 qualifying tournaments, Optimists reach out into their own communities to involve children in the game of golf. The best of these golfers, along with international golfers from around the globe, advance to the Optimist International Junior Golf Championship, which is held at Trump National Doral in Miami, Florida.

Junior golfers and their family enjoy golf, a parent-child tournament, off-course activities, meals and housing all on one property. Nationally ranked by Junior Golf Scoreboard, Golfweek, Global Junior Golf Rankings, and World Amateur Golf and included in the AJGA Performance Based Entry Process, the Optimist Championship attracts over 30 College coaches each year.



Optimist Junior Golf offers five (5) \$1,000.00 Scholarship Opportunities for boys and girls ages 16-18 each year through the Hugh Cranford All-Scholastic Team. Golfers must apply and complete an essay by April 1. Junior golfers selected to the team will receive an automatic exemption into the championship, complimentary registration which includes tournament entry, hotel accommodations and meals plus \$1,000.00 scholarship.

In the fall, the highly-ranked Optimist Tournament of Champions is an invitational and is known for its strength of field.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OPTIMIST JUNIOR GOLF PROGRAM, PLEASE VISIT:
<https://www.optimist.org/golf>



JUNIOR OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

Junior Optimist International Clubs date back to the 1920s, and following growth across local communities, the international organization was established in 1988. We currently have over 400 JOI Clubs with over 8,000 members. It is the umbrella organization which links the local Junior Optimist International Clubs and Members to others throughout the world. Much like Optimist International, Junior Optimist is governed by an International Board of Directors, as well as District Officers. From the Club level on up, Members have the opportunity to develop leadership and teambuilding skills all while helping communities. Each year there is an International Convention, which gives Members the opportunity to share in the decision-making

Junior Optimist International Benefits the Community.

process of the organization, meet young people with similar interests and goals, grow from training seminars.....and have fun!

Students who are involved in Junior Optimist Clubs learn about and practice good citizenship, teamwork, communication and money management. There are

opportunities for personal growth and leadership positions at Club, District, and International levels. Junior Optimist Clubs create

an increased number of young volunteers within the community. They can provide an interesting forum in which to address youth related issues, and it serves as an excellent training ground for future community leaders.



COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Looking for a way to get your local community involved with your Optimist Club? For more ideas and projects to build a stronger, connected community, visit www.optimist.org/communityactivities.

Kids Speak Out!

Encourage younger speakers by hosting a “Kids Speak Out!” program with rules and structures adapted to the needs of your local school. This “pre-Oratorical” contest provides an equitable and supportive competition where the goal isn’t winning but gaining public speaking experience. Your Optimist Club can provide certificates and medals, but the emphasis should be placed on making all participants feel like winners.

Optimist International Visual Arts Competition

This exciting competition is designed to encourage and celebrate youth visual art skills and gives the youth we serve another outlet for their creativity! The contest will be held at the club level and international level. The topic this year is *Be Bold - Be The Change*.

Optimists in Action Month

Optimists have always believed in making a difference to children, citizens in need, fellow Optimists, and themselves. Optimists also believe that the best way to make a difference is through action—positive action. As a result, May has been declared Optimists in Action Month!

Optimists Spark Fun in the Park

A global integration of youth and adults working together. Working with other optimists, your club can create a fun day at the park for the camaraderie of the community while providing an avenue for meaningful interaction and care for children with differing abilities at all levels.

Photography Contest

Host a local photography contest to provide an avenue for a student’s artistic expression through photos that illustrates/exemplifies one of the ten verses/lines of “The Optimist Creed.”

Youth Appreciation

How do we thank thee? Let us count the ways! Optimist Clubs recognize local youth for their efforts in the arts, athletics, academics, and community service work. Youth Appreciation is the perfect opportunity for Optimists to make a difference in their community and demonstrate the Optimists’ commitment to young people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT JUNIOR OPTIMIST PLEASE VISIT:

<https://www.optimist.org/joi/>



INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Join us annually to participate in the informational, exciting, and networking opportunities at the annual international convention:

- Interactive training and workshop sessions provide personal and leadership development.
- The House of Optimism provides an opportunity for philanthropic companies and individuals to gain exposure to the 35,000 plus members of the organization.
- Networking provides opportunities for members to collaborate with like-minded people on developing best practices on how to improve the community in which you live.
- Being held in a different city every year provides mystery and excitement of getting to know all about someplace new.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, YOU CAN VISIT:
optimist.org/convention

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

optimist.org

CONNECT ONLINE

Optimist International is active on several social media channels to provide Members with the latest content and news about our organization. Whether you're looking for information or inspiration, following us can help connect you to Optimist International and Optimists around the world.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR
THE LATEST NEWS AND EVENTS!



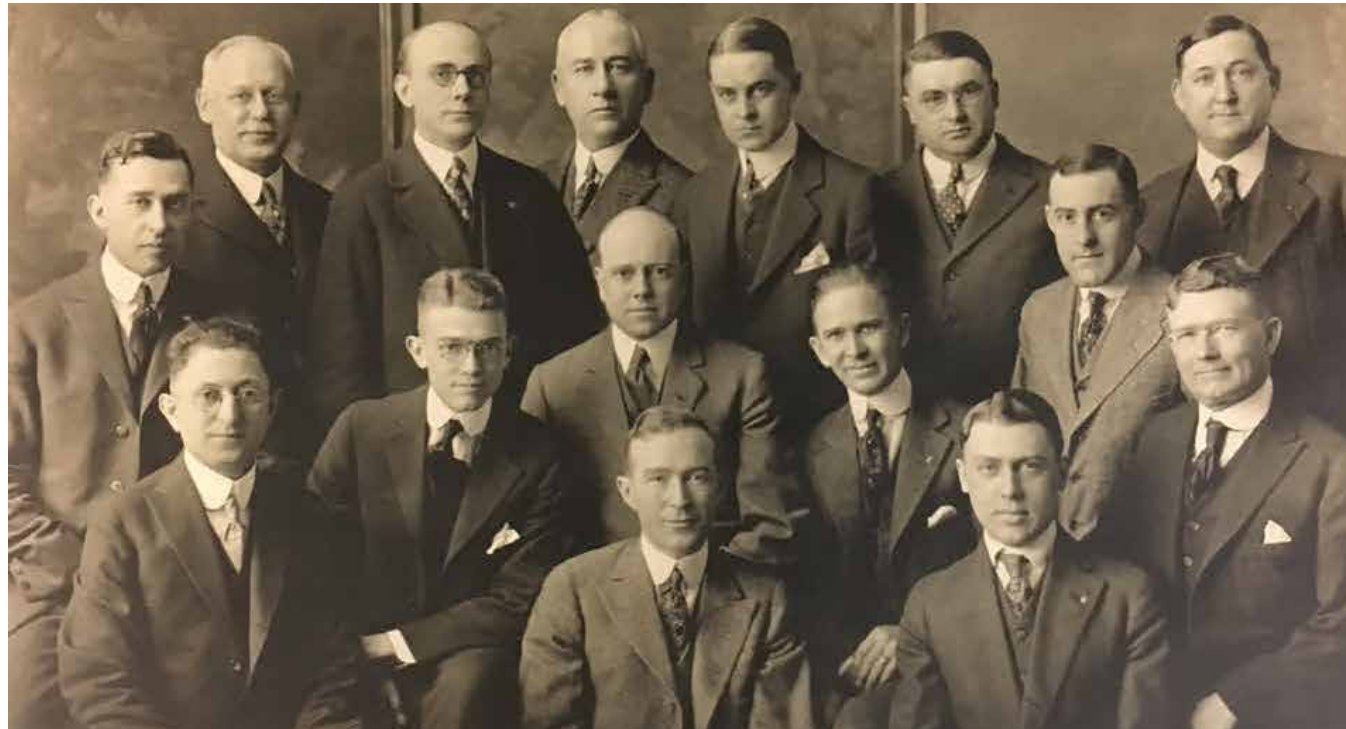
Visit our **CLUB DIRECTORY**, to find out what Clubs are doing in your area. Click on the state that you are in and you will find a list of Clubs in the cities around you.

You can click on the Club you would like to get more information on, and if you would like to connect with them contact membership@optimist.org.



(800) 500-8130
4494 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108.

OUR HISTORY



The original members of the 1916 Optimist Club of Indianapolis, Indiana

The Optimist International Organization was founded at a convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1919, uniting various local and regional clubs, the first of which was founded in Buffalo, New York in 1911. At the convention, the first official charter of the international organization was awarded to the club in Downtown Indianapolis, Indiana which was founded in 1916.

The turn of the century was a turning point in the organization's storied history. Following the International Convention in Reno, Nevada, the inaugural Optimist International Junior Bowling Championships (OIJBC) took place there. Junior bowlers battled for the right to be called "Optimist Champion."

In July 2001, Optimists found themselves seated in the White House, pledging to support U.S. President George W. Bush's goal to mentor one million children. Optimist International President

Bob Garner called the meeting "yet another sterling example of 'Optimists Bringing Out the Best in Kids.'"

Also in 2001, Optimist International introduced the Childhood Cancer Campaign to provide awareness and support of children battling cancer and the challenges their families face. In 2004, the organization made a \$1 million commitment to Johns Hopkins to underwrite a research focus.

In 2005, the Optimist Junior Golf Program expanded to include the Optimist International Tournament of Champions for top-performing junior golfers ages 14 to 18. On October 1, 2006, the first female international president in Optimist history, Ronnie Dunn, took office for the standard one-year term. In October 2007, Theo Golding of Jamaica became the first international president from outside of Canada or the United States.



Ronnie Dunn, the first female president elected to a major international service organization. (2006-2007)



Theo Golding, first international president from outside of US and Canada. (2007-2008)

There are currently more than 40,000 individual members who belong to more than 2,000 autonomous Clubs. Optimists conduct more than 50,000 service projects each year, serving six million young people. Optimists also spend \$78 million on their communities annually.

Optimist Clubs are dedicated to "Bringing Out the Best in Kids" and do their part through community service projects.

Since each Club is autonomous and run by members in their community, Optimists have the unique flexibility to serve the youth of their area in any way they see fit. Optimist Clubs see a need in their community and react to it.

Optimists strive to live up to their name and maintain an upbeat attitude, which they try to pass along to the children they serve. The words of The Optimist Creed are well known to Optimist volunteers and beyond. The creed gives volunteers a focus for personal improvement as they work to better the world around them.



1959



1968



1977



2017



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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