



# SWIS District Newsletter 2020 – 2021



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*To inspire youth of Southern Wisconsin to  
be the force of positive change now and in  
the future.*

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## From My Home to Yours

SWIS District Newsletter Editor: Amanda Szymkowski



Hey Optimists! Recently returning from the Optimist International Convention in Atlanta, I wanted to take this opportunity to share my reflections. However, finding the words to summarize the experience is proving to be difficult, so let's start typing and see where we end up.

The first Convention I attended was in Louisville. I was swept away by the history and 100 years of Optimist International. The most impactful moment for me was the parade of flags when I really realized that our Optimist reach is far greater than our backyards. This year, I realized that reach is also beyond service. Convention is more than inspirational keynotes, presidential addresses, panel discussions, and training workshops. Yes, those things are important, but also, there are Optimists. The kindest, most genuine humans coming together to recharge our optimism and, in the process, creating a beam of light, a lightening storm, a fireworks display on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

The pandemic offered us a really unique experience of diving into the virtual world, meeting Optimists from throughout the U.S., Canada, Caribbean, and beyond without leaving our homes. We leaned on each other. We shared stories of sadness and anxiety. We made silly jokes and laughed until we cried. Then, when we had the opportunity to meet in person, it felt like a family reunion. What a joy it was to finally hug the lovely Optimists that I had been chatting with and learning from previously through a computer screen. This begins what my friend Liz described as *summer camp*: a vacation bubble free from chores and responsibilities and filled with late nights, endless laughs, and a story reel that makes our Optimism come true. Because not much goes as planned or predicted, but Optimists always look at the sunny side. Here's a few:

Cory and I may have gotten distracted by and then officially lost in the city, but there is no one else with whom I'd rather arrive an hour and a half late to the district dinner. Josh and I may have had to nurse a small hangover, but there is no one else with whom I'd want to drink homemade red wine. Liz and I may have jumped out of our skin whenever the emcee would yell "Time!," but there is no one else I'd want sitting next to me and the speaker during trivia. Victor and I may have started out as frenemies, but there is no one else I'd want as my twin water sign.

And then the sun started to set on our summer camp, which meant it was time to say good-bye. But there are easier, more yearbook ways to say that:

- *H.A.G.S* (Have a Great Summer).
- *K.I.T* (Keep In Touch). And
- *Save this autograph; it'll be worth something someday.* (Oh, did you not have a Tony in your graduating class?).

And then we come home. We scatter bags and suitcases around our tiny apartments. We order pizza because our refrigerators are empty. We scroll through photos. And we reflect on how lucky we are to be Optimists. Because being an Optimist means surrounding yourself with people who feel like sunshine and make you shine brighter than you did before. And when we start to miss everyone, just think about what Josh said to me before I headed home: "Well, you just need to get your a\$\$ to Reno."



## Maxine's Message:

Maxine Lane: SWIS District Governor 2020-2021



This past year will go down as one of my most memorable accomplishments. It will also be filed in a special folder marked “things I miss the most.” Let’s take a look into “A Year in the Life of SWIS District Governor Max.”

For me, I started out nervous, hesitant, and asking myself: *What’s right? What’s wrong? WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?* I then took a step or two back and realized “I’m an Optimist”, what can possibly go wrong when I’m working alongside Optimist Friends and Optimist Leaders willing to help and guide me?

All the fear and nervous energy left and only Optimistic, Uplifting and Creativeness existed. My theme for the year “The Power of One” was my strength throughout the year and shaped my conferences. I would be remiss if I did not thank and acknowledge Jim Kondrasuk for the inspiration that played a part of me selecting my theme. I believe through “The Power of One” I found my legacy. Let’s take a look!

“Be So Strong That Nothing Can Disturb Your Peace of Mind.” This verse of the Optimist Creed came into play right from the start and I held on tight through the writing of this article. It helped me deal with, get through, accept and understand my limitations due to COVID. We thought and were hopeful it would go away much sooner and faster; however, here we are continuing to deal with something we have no control over and know very little about. Sadly, this limited my freedom to visit many of the clubs; however, I was able to visit a few in person and/or by Zoom. Optimistically, we dealt with it and survived honorably.

We started our year with a great meet-n-greet in Sun Prairie with most of the team members from “The Max Force” and we could not have done what we did without “The Magnificent Seven”. Our first two conferences were virtual; however, we were very happy and grateful for the attendance. We stepped out of our comfort zone for third quarter and met in person and once again we were not disappointed with the number of members that faced their fears and traveled to Platteville.

I recognize and proudly acknowledge my speakers, starting with a local doctor, a Veteran that served three White House Presidents and he himself served our country. This was the first virtual conference and with the theme “The Power of One” what better group to honor, remember and salute than our Veterans, consisting of family, friends and Optimist Members.

Second quarter was no disappointment and was certainly a demonstration of “The Power of One”. Two ladies unrelated however they had something in common. They were both parents of Autistic Children. One going on to create a support center in Southwest Wisconsin and the second, having her child diagnosed with a brain tumor at the age of six. We ask ourselves, “How much ‘Power of One’ can one person have?”

By third quarter, we had completed the annual Oratorical, Essay and CCDHH contests and it was a pleasure to hear from the participants from the SWIS District. What can one say except, WOW. If nothing else can motivate you to become involved in your club, these young people should inspire you to do so.

Although not yet completed, fourth quarter will perhaps be the closure needed for my year. A guest speaker, who as a mother, has experienced the ultimate heartbreak with the suicide of a son and who is now doing her part to help other, old and young alike, to avoid such a permanent solution to problems.

My last article as Your Governor! Thank you for believing in me, Thank you for your support, Thank you or allowing me to serve the SWIS District as your Governor.

Maxine Lane  
SWIS District Governor

## **Birthday Award**

Families enjoy sharing birthdays as does our SWIS District Optimist Family. Joanne Ganske was the lucky winner for the months of April, May and June, receiving a free registration to one of our quarterly conferences.

## **First-Timer Recognition**

New faces are always a welcome addition to our conferences. It was a pleasure to welcome Kathie Newman, Optimist Club of Sauk Trails-Madison, to her first SWIS District Conference. Kathie received a \$10 certificate to apply towards a future conference.

## **Unsung Hero Award**

Presented to Bonnie Spindler, Third Quarter Conference, May 8, 2021. Bonnie is the epitome of Optimism. She has earned the respect of many and will continue to do so for many years into the future. Bonnie joined Sauk Trails-Madison Club in 1997 and became a life member in 2005. She has served her club and/or the district in some capacity every year since 2002. She has been instrumental in providing training, guidance, words of wisdom and her expertise to incoming SWIS District Governors. A Friend is someone who steps in rather than stepping aside. Bonnie is always willing to step in and help.

## **Guests**

- Zachary Ludlum, Essay Contest Winner, and parents Shaun and Andrea Murray
- Maria Schmitt, Oratorical Contest Winner, and parents Lisa and Bob Schmitt
- Erik Tomas, CCDHH participant, and Platteville Optimist Member, Terri Ellis

## **Keynote Speaker: Terry Gorman, Great Plains Regional VP**

It was a pleasure to welcome Terry Gorman as a Keynote Speaker to our conference on May 8. A native of Southwest Wisconsin, Terry now lives in Minnesota and serves Optimist International as Great Plains Regional VP. Terry is a key component in communicating with six District Governors covering Southern Wisconsin (SWIS), Wisconsin North Upper Michigan (WINUM), Alberta, Montana, Saskatchewan, Northern Wyoming (AMS&NW), Dakotas, Manitoba, Minnesota (DMM), Nebraska (NE) and Iowa (IA). Terry entertained the members with a presentation about a three-legged stool and how we sometimes find ourselves balancing ourselves like we do a three-legged stool.

## **A Toast to Don Rudolph**

Member of LaCrosse Optimist Club

In Remembrance

February 4, 1931 – February 24, 2021

Joined 1988, Life Member 1992, Diplomat Member 1996

We acknowledge and extend a salute to Don, as he proudly served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He continued his military career and served in the U.S. Army Reserves and the Minnesota National Guard, retiring as a Command Sergeant Major. Don proudly served his club, the SWIS District and the Clubs in Dmitrov and Dubna Russia.

Presented May 8, 2021 - Maxine Lane, SWIS District Governor

A 'Special Thank You' to John Stuber, LaCrosse Optimist Club member for being present to accept this testimonial and present the certificate to Don's wife on behalf of the SWIS District



## SWIS District 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Conference

**Date:** Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup> - Saturday, May 8<sup>th</sup>

**Location:** Country Inn and Suites, Ft. Atkinson

## Raffle Items Needed

If you can donate a basket, please contact  
Wayne Dieckhoff  
OIF Representative  
[wdadj@litewire.net](mailto:wdadj@litewire.net)



### Hospitality

Our first for Governor Max and she is excited to share social time with fellow Optimist members. Our meeting time is very important; however, the time together socially is also important to continue building on friendships. Join us from 8:00 to 10:30 Friday evening.

### Let's Have Some Fun!

A game of recognition: Send to Governor Max a picture of yourself, can be electronic via email to [msmacy105@yahoo.com](mailto:msmacy105@yahoo.com), as a youth and please put your name on the back of the picture if you send by snail mail. We will combine on a poster board, unidentified, to see who can correctly identify the most correctly. A list of names will be provided to match name(s) with pictures. Available for viewing at the hospitality as well as the general session on Saturday.

### Birthdays:

July, August, September: If you are celebrating a birthday in one of these three months, email your name and date of your birthday to Jo'El, [jpoptimist@outlook.com](mailto:jpoptimist@outlook.com) for a chance to win a FREE conference registration.

### Guest Speaker:

Meet Teri Ellefson, her husband Kurt and daughter Sam. Missing from the family picture and posted alongside is a picture of their son, Jacob. On June 7, 2012, their world changed, Jacob died on June 7, 2012 by taking his own life at the age of 14. What happened to Teri's family was sudden and very unexpected. We will hear Teri speak of her son,

Jacob, the love, the hurt, the disbelief, the not knowing why and her personal endeavor, her 'Power of One' to help others talk about how they are feeling instead of making a permanent decision related to a temporary situation, then she will have achieved her goal. We will learn about Jacob's SWAG as we meet and listen to a Mother, Wife, Creator and Director of Jacob's SWAG Foundation.

### Optimist International Special Guests:

- Patsy Gardner, President Designate
- Terry Gorman, Great Plains Regional VP

### Registration:

Register for the Conference Today! Register [here](#) or contact Jo'El to sign up over the phone (262) 620-1588.

### Overnight Accommodations:

Reserve your room by July 31st. Rooms are available for \$114 (plus taxes and fees). Simply call the Country Inn & Suites and ask for the "OPTIMIST" block of rooms (920) 542-1600

### Friday Evening, August 13, 2021

- **6:30 PM – 8:00 PM:** Executive Board Meeting
- **8:00 PM – 10:30 PM:** Hospitality Night

### Saturday, August 14, 2021

- **7:00 AM – 8:00AM:** Past Governors Breakfast
- **8:00 AM – 9:25 AM:** Lt. Governor & Club President Training
- **9:25 AM - 3:30 PM:** Convention General Session



Dear fellow Optimist: I just returned home from Atlanta, Georgia, where more than 400 resilient Optimists came together for the 103rd Optimist International Convention. Hundreds more rallied online in our first hybrid event. For fifteen long months, we have waited for the pandemic to end and for life to return, to what we will probably call a new normal. As Optimists, we cannot wait. Optimists must remember we have the power to lead the way to rally our communities and clubs to success as the pandemic recedes. We will innovate and initiate different ways to achieve our goals. The fourth quarter is the time we put all our efforts into success.

What does success look like for an Optimist Club? I believe it means our members are positive-minded, happy, and engaged, and we are doing our best to flood our community with the same attributes. It means that the Optimist organization is growing in membership and service. A successful Optimist Club leaves its legacy for the children and community it serves. Most importantly, it is leaving its indelible mark of optimism in its community.

**To help your Optimist Club achieve success, I recommend taking the following actions:**

- **Invite at least one person** to visit your club, which I asked everyone present at the convention in Atlanta to do. Please note, I am not asking you to get them to join. I am just asking you to invite someone to see your club in action or at a club gathering. If you provide optimism and purpose, people will join.
- **Consider starting a new Optimist Club** in a neighboring community and then do it! Starting a new Optimist Club is one of the best ways to share optimism. Every community needs an Optimist Club to provide hope and positive vision to youth and the members of the new club. By the way, an Honor Club upgrades to Distinguished Club when they start a new Optimist Club.
- Review the steps to be an **Honor Club**. Honor Club is truly about setting a model for success and leaving a legacy. There is still time to achieve all elements. Please contact me, if you don't see a way to get there, and I will assist you.
- Complete the steps to be a **Certified Optimistic Optimist Club**. Your club has probably performed all the steps by now – please tell us about it by clicking on each link of the pledge form and sharing your story. Marketing tip: take each story and share it on your social media channels and with your local newspaper. Tell the world what your Club did to become a Certified Optimistic Optimist Club.

On July 22 & 23, 2021, watch the Optimist International Oratorical World Championships online and cheer your District's contestant to victory.

Find out when your District Convention will be held and make plans to attend with other members of your Optimist Club. Whether you attend live or virtually, the opportunity for learning and fellowship are immense. Boost your Optimism and your Optimist Club's success by being engaged.

Rally until the end. That is the best way to success.

Sincerely,  
Mark Weinsoff  
President 2020-2021  
Optimist International

## Optimist International Convention 2021

### **Maureen Crombie:**

I just returned home from the 103rd Optimist International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a Convention like no other. It was exciting to see Optimists in person especially when you only knew them virtually these past fifteen months. It was wonderful to have 400 plus Optimists attend the Convention and hundreds more rallied online in our first hybrid event. Kudos to Vern Andren for being recognized as a builder of Excellence for the formation of a Belize club and Josh Zaidel for being recognized as Vice President designate for 2021-22 in our Great Plains Region. Josh also participated in a panel discussion on virtual activities. Past Optimist International President and OI Foundation Board Member Jim Kondrasuk was recognized. Let's not forget Joanne Ganske and Sue Kranz for doing many of the behind the scenes to get ready and the work they did during the convention. The night of our district dinners we were able to do a hybrid dinner with those that were attending the Convention. It was a convention with keynote speakers, entertainment, the Expo, OI Foundation celebration of their 50th year, Business Sessions and so much more. I also learned that in the next Optimist year, we will be celebrating our 100th year anniversary of the Optimist Creed! The OI convention motivated me and created many opportunities to bring back to our communities so that we can thrive and move forward from this pandemic. One Village - One Community - One District at the same time. Now more than ever the world needs Optimism.



### **Joanne Ganske:**

Seeing dear Optimist friends from many states in the USA and the very few who could make it from Canada and the Caribbean was a highlight. Being the SWIS District Ambassador and carrying one of the flags of our 32 Optimist Countries on the stage was a special treat for me. Enjoyed our SWIS dinner group outing and taking a tour of the city. Spent many hours helping the OI staff in their office on site and doing 'go-fer' duties with fellow Optimist, Sue Kranz. Was a fun convention. Joanne

**Janesville Wednesday Morning Optimist Club**

Jan Bier

The Janesville Wednesday Morning Optimist Club is back to meeting in person. Our next step back to normality will be to invite in guest speakers. At the end of the school year, we awarded three scholarships to very deserving students from Craig High School. In June, the city of Janesville hosted the Tour of America's Dairyland Bike Race for two days. Contestants came from around the world! We sold cheese curds and root beer floats. We made some money and some new friends! Our next event out in the public will be the Thresheree which is held over Labor Day Weekend. We're hoping for good weather – a chance to sell our cheese curds and floats, and another opportunity to spread the word of Optimism!

**Metro Milwaukee Optimist Club**

Club President: Amanda Szymkowski

The Metro Milwaukee Optimist Club started a book club! To ease us in, we decided to split the book into three sections. Each month, we discuss the next section. We plan to have a new book each quarter. Our first book is “No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality” by Michael J. Fox. The first 2 sessions were virtual. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> and final for this book will be at The Blend in Franklin. The thoughtful discussions so far have made me really excited and proud to be club president this year. I truly feel like we are putting the “Optimism” back in the Optimist Clubs, like President Mark spoke about at the International Convention.



**Socks and Beer**  
Milwaukee Optimist Clubs

Once Milwaukee started to open up a bit, The Metro Milwaukee Optimist Club decided to schedule in-person socials at various beer gardens around the city. We invited members of the Optimist Club of Milwaukee, Friends of St. Francis Optimist Club, and the Southwest Optimist Club as well. All members were also invited to bring guests/potential new members in addition to donating socks for youth in need. The first three were so fun, that we decided to schedule three more beer garden socials throughout the city. Three cheers for Optimism!



**MMOC Book Club**

Join us on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30pm for MMOC Book Club! And be sure to invite your friends!

The Summer Read: “No Time Like the Future: An Optimist Considers Mortality” by Michael J. Fox.

- June 10th: Chapters 1-7
- July 8th: Chapters: 8-15
- August 12th: Chapters 16-23

Sessions 1-2 will be virtual. The 3rd session will be in-person. More details to come.

P.S We will be accepting suggestions for Fall, Winter and Spring book club sessions!



## Club Reports and Deadlines

This is your friendly reminder that the end of the Optimist year is September 30<sup>th</sup> and we will be going into a new SWIS calendar year starting October 1, 2021. Each of the clubs need to finish up the current 20-21 year and prepare for the new 21-22 year as follows:

### **Club Officer Elect Report**

Please, if you have not, complete the Club Officer Elect Report identifying your officers for 21-22. Even if there will be no changes, this confirms with the SWIS District as well as Optimist International that the information they have on file is current. This form is available online at [www.optimistleaders.org](http://www.optimistleaders.org) under Reports Area > Club Officer Elect Report. Thank you in advance for completing this as soon as possible.

### **President's Pride Report**

Just an early reminder as this is not due until on or before **September 30** and can be done electronically up until October 10 to request club member awards. Once again, you can file electronically and can find the report under Optimist Leaders Online Menu, Club Pride.

### **Club Meeting Location**

While you are logged into [www.optimistleaders.org](http://www.optimistleaders.org), you should also check out your Club Location information. Due to Covid, most clubs started to meet virtually or hybrid, changed times, changed locations, etc. Be sure your club location and meeting schedule reflects your current information. Lieutenant Governors will use this information in order to contact and visit clubs in their zones.

### **Thank you!**

Thanks for your follow-up on these areas. This will help with future communication both by e-mail, Facebook, and also by contacting of the Lt. Governor's in visiting with clubs now and in the future.

Bonnie Spindler  
SWIS Webmaster

Maxine Lane  
SWIS District Governor

### **Tickets:**

A lot of clubs requested more tickets than in year's past. This is great news! Our initial supply of tickets short-sided some clubs, but help is on the way! We now have a new supply of tickets. Please let us know if your club needs more tickets than you initially received. We will promptly send you an additional set. We are excited and hopeful for a successful fundraiser this year.

### **Deadline:**

We'd like to receive as many ticket stubs and money by **Wednesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>** as possible, but will accept them through **Saturday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**.

### **Money/Stubs:**

We ask that each club cash in all checks and paper money at the club level and send a club check to us. The check should be made payable to: **Football Sweepstakes**. Clubs should also verify that each ticket stub is completely filled out, especially with the email address. This ensures receipt of winner notifications. Then, clubs should send the check and stubs to:

Fred Dorn  
501 N Madison St  
Waunakee, WI 53597

Let's make this a spectacular year in sales. Remember, all SWIS District clubs that sell the tickets are in this together. The more your club sells, the more return all SWIS clubs acquire in the rebate that we send to each selling club at the end of the selling season. The tickets are an easy sell. What a way to run a fund raising project without the worry of food spoilage or the weather causing a shutdown. How about putting a family members name on a ticket? How about neighbors in your neighborhood etc... Let's go all out this year for a new record in SWIS District Fund CraZR Sales. Contact us with any questions.

Best of luck!

Fred and Maggie  
(608) 849-5290  
[fdorn476@gmail.com](mailto:fdorn476@gmail.com)

### **SWIS District Essay Contest**

Carson Lipinski represented the Sun Prairie Optimist Club in the District Essay contest, and is our 2020-2021 SWIS District Essay Competition \$2,500 scholarship winner! His essay was selected out of all other submissions in the District. Carson is a senior at Sun Prairie High School, and will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison to receive his BBA in marketing. Throughout high school, he has participated in cross country, track & field, theater, National Honor Society, and DECA. He is currently the President of Sun Prairie DECA, where he leads over 100 members in their business pursuits and community service efforts. He is also a manager at Salvatore's Tomato Pies in Sun Prairie and a babysitter. He enjoys collecting sneakers, cheering for Wisconsin sports teams, and boating in the summertime. He is thankful for the opportunity to share his essay on reaching his dreams by choosing optimism!"

### **SWIS District Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH)**

Although our District was unable to have a CCDHH competition this year due to Covid, (Communication Contest for Deaf and Hard of Hearing), we were fortunate that Governor Maxine Lane invited Erick Tomas, a young man who was looking to compete in the CCDHH Scholarship program to be our Special Guest Speaker via Zoom during the Third Quarter Conference in Platteville. Erick said: "I'm Erick Tomas and an 8th grade student at Dodgeville Middle School, but because of Covid I've been attending virtual school all year. My favorite thing to do is anything outside but mostly spending time with my 13 sheep that I've raised since they were babies. My future plans are to join the army and then go to college. I'm so excited, this week I start work at my first job at my other favorite thing which is farming. Thank you again for letting me share my views on how I would make the world better with Optimism."

### **SWIS District Oratorical Contest**

This year, Governor Maxine made some exciting changes to our District Oratorical program by adding a new level to the SWIS Oratorical competition, streamlining the District finals, and adding a \$500 SWIS District scholarship to be awarded. The new competition level was added after the local Zone competition and named the "SWIS Super Zone Regional" competition. The participating Zones in our District were divided into 2 Super Zone Regions-Region #1 and Region #2. On Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, students from each of the Super Zone Regions (#1 and #2) competed against other students in their specific Region. The top 2 students from each specific Region advanced to the SWIS District tournament so that just four students would compete in the new streamlined District tournament finals. Four students advanced and competed in the District tournament to win (1) of four scholarships: \$2,500, \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500. The 1<sup>st</sup> place winner of the SWIS District Oratorical Contest on May 1<sup>st</sup> was Kiyem Obuseh. He will compete in the Optimist International Regional Contest on July 22nd.

**Kiyem Obuseh** represented the Madison Optimist Club and Region #1. Kiyem is our 2020-2021 \$2,500 Oratorical scholarship winner and will advance to compete in the Optimist International Regional Level July 22-23 (virtually) in St. Louis! The winner of the OI Regional level is awarded a \$5,000 scholarship, and will then advance to the Optimist International World competition for a chance to win a \$15,000 scholarship for 1st place; \$10,000 scholarship for 2nd place, and \$5,000 scholarship for 3rd place. Kiyem is in 10th grade, and has multiple interests. His dream is to become the world's greatest Robotician. Kiyem would like to create a robotics company that incorporates his passions: Engineering, Coding, Animation, and Track. Currently, Kiyem participates in Badgerbots as well as Maydm. These programs all help Kiyem work toward achieving his goals and beyond- Healing the World with Optimism!

**Charlotte Chen** also represented the Madison Optimist Club and Region #1. Charlotte is the winner of our 2020-2021 \$1,500 Oratorical scholarship! Charlotte is in the 10th grade. She is an active member of numerous clubs including DECA, Public Health and Advocacy Club, Dance Team, Math Team, and Rocket club. This year, she founded, and is the president of her High School's Economics Club. Outside of school, she loves to dance, play card games and go on walks. Charlotte serves as Secretary for Rozaria Memorial Trust USA, a group of young women dedicated to providing access to opportunities for girls in Zimbabwe. Charlotte plans to major in economics or data science as she considers where she will go to school and make dreams for the future come true!

**Jonah Johnson** represented the Cross Plains Optimist Club and Region #2. Jonah is the winner of our 2020-2021 \$1,000 Oratorical scholarship! Jonah is in 10th grade. He enjoys music, singing, and dancing, and is adding to his talents by taking acting and piano lessons. Jonah loves to entertain, and is a self-professed prankster. He is even considering creating and starring in a YouTube channel. Jonah was president of the National Junior Honor Society when he was in the 8th grade, and is about to be inducted into the National Honor Society for High School!

**Maria Schmitt** represented the Platteville Optimist Club and Region #2. Maria won the new 2020-2021 \$500 SWIS scholarship! Maria is in 8th grade and enjoys playing softball, basketball and volleyball. She is working to save money for an educational trip to Italy next year, and her dream for the future is to become a medical doctor for the L.A. Dodgers. Maria is working on her Silver Award project for Girl Scouts which is designing and producing an outdoor Selfie Stand for the Platteville Chamber of Commerce. She invites everyone to visit Platteville and stop by Katie's Garden at the Chamber. Take a photo and create a great memory!

Please join your fellow SWIS District Optimists in celebrating all of our incredible youth from around the District! And in July, cheer on Kiyem Obuseh, our SWIS District grand prize winner, when he competes in the Optimist International Regional Oratorical Competition with other \$2,500 scholarship winners in the Great Plains Region for the chance to win a \$5,000 scholarship and advance to the World Competition to compete for a \$15,000, \$10,000 or \$5,000 scholarship!

# 2021 Optimist International Oratorical World Championships Schedule

## Thursday, July 22, 2021

\*All times are in Central Daylight Time (CDT)\*

**Stream 1:** <https://youtu.be/omRtNuXw9cg>  
NE & Great Lakes Region, Great Plains Region

**Stream 2:** <https://youtu.be/uuoFPWaEBUI>  
Mid-Atlantic Region, Southeast Region

**Stream 3:** <https://youtu.be/EYyyVy6Cz38>  
Middle America Region, West Coast Region

## Friday, July 23, 2021

\*All times are in Central Daylight Time (CDT)\*

**Stream 1:** 9:00 a.m. CDT  
Saint Lawrence Region  
<https://youtu.be/I9eT90ZRz4E>

**Stream 2:** 12:00 p.m. CDT  
World Championship Contest  
<https://youtu.be/PYr90mUdkb4>

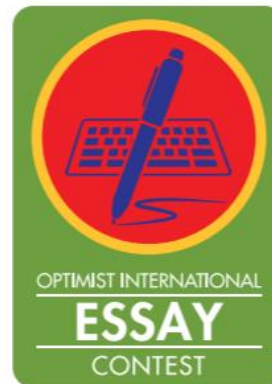
[Click Here to download the full PDF with all Regions, Stream Links, and Timeline.](#)

## Announcing: Optimist International 2021-22 Scholarship Topics

2021-2022 Scholarships: [Flyer](#)



Topic: “Staying Optimistic in Challenging Times”



Topic: “How Does an Optimistic Mindset Change My Tomorrow?”



Topic: “Staying Optimistic in Challenging Times”

# 2021 Keynote Speakers

## Michelle Gielan

Monday, July 1 - First Business Session



Michelle Gielan has spent the past decade researching the link between happiness and success. She is the bestselling author of **Broadcasting Happiness: The Science of Igniting and Sustaining Positive Change** and was named one of the Top 10 authors on resilience by the Harvard Business Review.

Michelle is an Executive Producer of “The Happiness Advantage” on PBS. She formerly served as anchor of **The CBS Morning News**, and her research has received attention from dozens of media outlets including **The Washington Post**, **FORBES**, and **The New York Times**.

Michelle holds an advanced degree in positive psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.S. from Tufts University in Computer Engineering.

To learn more about Michelle’s story, visit her website:  
<https://michellegielan.com/her-story/>

Michelle Gielan has been called “*One of the world’s best experts in positive psychology*” by Dr. Oz, and she appears regularly on National TV programs.

*“Shawn Achor and his wife Michelle Gielan are carving out new territory in the latest science on how positive thinking can literally change the trajectory of our lives.” -Oprah*

## Patrick “Blake” Leeper

Saturday, July 3 - Third Business Session

Sponsored by Optimist International Foundation

Patrick “Blake” Leeper was born on August 31st, 1989, in Kingsport, Tennessee. Born with both legs missing below the knee, Blake still spent his young life focused on succeeding in sports. At nine months old, he began wearing prosthetics and spent his young life thriving in sports. Blake’s top sport was basketball.

During high school, Blake almost quit athletic endeavors – as an aspiring pre-med student, he felt that he needed to apply himself fully ahead of the college admission process. However, a high school teammate, (and current NFL standout) Cody Sensabaugh convinced Blake to continue playing basketball during his senior year.



On Saturday, July 3, during the 3rd / Closing Session at the International Convention, find out more about Blake’s journey through college and on to becoming an Olympian!

To learn more about Patrick “Blake” Leeper, visit his website: <https://www.leeper.run/>



103<sup>rd</sup> Optimist International Convention  
Atlanta, Georgia  
6/29-7/3/2021

Save the 2022 Date!



SEE YOU THERE

June 30 - July 3, 2022



Watch the video [here](#)



Reminder Health and Wellness Grant Applications due  
by August 30, 2021

View the Childhood Health and Wellness Flyer [here](#)

## Choose Optimism Podcasts



Podcast #1: [youtube](#)

Podcast #2: [youtube](#)

Podcast #3: [youtube](#)

You can also find the Choose Optimism podcast on  
Stitcher and Spotify.



### New Member Fee Waived

Beginning June 1, the new Member Fee of \$15.00 has been waived until September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Now is an excellent opportunity for people to join Optimist Clubs and see what we do and how we impact our local communities and how they can be a part of that for free!

**CHERYL  
BRENN**  
Welcome  
to our new  
Executive Director



## Optimist International Welcomes New Executive Director

ST. LOUIS- Optimist International welcomes Ms. Cheryl Brenn as the next Executive Director for the nonprofit, global volunteer organization.

Ms. Brenn currently resides in Clifton Park, New York. She has a master's degree in Leadership and Management and earned the Certified Association Executive designation from the American Society of Association Executives. She has spent the last 14 years of her career with Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY), where she has held various positions, and is currently the Chief International Programs Officer.



## **A Parable**

John Fons

I broke down. After five weeks parked in a driveway in my motor home, after five weeks away from home, attending the needs of a family emergency eleven hundred miles away, I broke down. I rolled to a halt on a rural Virginia highway. My motor home stalled and I broke down.

I tried to restart the engine. It would not restart. My left wheels touched the white line on the pavement edge. There was no turnout. No shoulder and after four hours no help on the way under cloudless ninety-degree skies. I sat helpless in the shade of my motor home and recharged my useless cell phone with the motor home generator and I broke down.

Ever felt like that? Every been helpless and angry about it? Ever watch other people going on their way and not be able to go on your own?

That's what happened to me. Then something else happened and that is what I want you to know.

I got a miracle.

This is not a religious story. If you want religion or if you prefer to associate miracles with religion, church is best, but this is not a church story. This is the story of a man who stopped and asked if I needed help, and this is the kind of man who stopped.

A man with groceries on the front seat of his car coming back from town. He'd seen me broken down hours earlier on his way in the opposite direction. He saw me there now and stopped. He sat there with me for hours while his wife expected him home with the groceries.

With his help we contacted the Highway Patrol and eventually a tow truck forty miles up the road big

enough to handle my rig. Darkness came. I got into the man's car. The tow truck crew followed to his farm. I found myself deposited beside a corn field on a dead end lane. The man who stopped provided an extension cord a dozen yards from his tool shed to my motor home.

Before I tell you more about what he did, let me tell you more about him.

A seventy-four-year-old disabled Viet Nam War veteran, this United States Marine was a 'tunnel rat' in Viet Nam, a soldier who crawled into holes with a .45 caliber Colt pistol and a flashlight to find the enemy. They found him first and detonated an explosive charge that blew him out of the hole like a cannonball. His clothes were torn away, his laced boots blown off and most of his face. He woke up on a hospital ship, days later out in the Pacific. Back home the government paid him \$51 per month for his wounds. No one wanted a disabled, disfigured Viet Nam vet. He went homeless and stayed that way for years. He went to prison for beating a man with a tire iron. He went through a couple of marriages. He worked coast to coast as a short order cook. He finally settled with a good woman on a remote farm in Virginia and he found me sitting on the side of the road. He said I looked defeated.

With every reason in the world not to stop, not to give a damn about anything, this hard working, beer drinking, hard swearing, chain smoking, disabled Marine stopped. He volunteered and this is what he did.

(continued on page 16)



## **A Parable (continued)**

John Fons

After letting me spend the night on his property, he called me into his antiquated log farmhouse next morning for breakfast. After breakfast he worked with me under the motor home to remove the failed electric fuel pump and fuel filter mounted between the rear axle and fuel tank. He joked it would be easier for him under there him being so short and me being so tall.

After all, he joked, he was tunnel rat. So he did most of the work. We worked under there for hours. He drove us twenty miles later that Sunday into town and we found the exact part we needed at an auto supply store. Another miracle. We went back to the rig. We installed the new fuel pump. I mostly handed him the tools

We got it fixed.

The motor home ran. We celebrated by going back into town after we got cleaned up. He introduced me to his veteran buddies at the local AmVet post. We had a couple beers. Then we went to dinner, my treat. I spent a second night on his property. The following morning he and his wife prepared a big breakfast of fried potatoes and onions, sausage, eggs over easy, toast and coffee and sent me on my way.

Never in my life have I ever experienced such acts of charity or expressions of concern and compassion from a stranger.

Ever.

And this is not a religious story.

This is a story about you and me as Optimists.

We call ourselves Optimists and we feel sorry for ourselves in a world of political and social unrest and turmoil. We flatter ourselves we have a special burden, the times aren't right and sometimes we hesitate to do anything, because the world is so opposite, so negative, so big and we are so small as Optimists.

The reality is we have competition. We are not only in competition with our own fears and others who may have their own idea of what to do or not to do for better or worse, we are in competition with men like this disabled United States Marine who all on his own, with no club or creed or quarterly district conference to attend, changed the world for good. He changed my world. He helped me on my way. He made my way possible and in doing so I have a friend for life.

We can do the same.

I got a miracle in the form of a disabled United States Marine. I made him an honorary member of the Sauk Trails Optimist Club, but the only way I can truly honor him or this Optimist organization to which I belong is to be just as ready, just as willing and just as devoted to others in every hour of their obvious need as he was in mine.

The Marines say Semper Fi.

The Optimists say Promise Yourself.

Let's combine them.

Let's say: Promise Yourself to be so Faithful to the Needs of Others and You are Always Faithful to Yourself.

Then let's do it.

# SWIS District Governor's Team 2020-2021

[https://swisdistrict.org/resources/district\\_officers.asp](https://swisdistrict.org/resources/district_officers.asp)



Maxine Lane  
Governor



John Fons  
Gov Elect



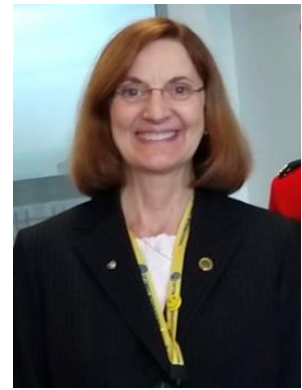
Howard Crofoot  
Treasurer



Joan Bahr  
Secretary



Wayne Dieckhoff  
OI Foundation Rep



Joanne Ganske  
OI Ambassador



Barb Brinkmann  
Leadership Dev



Jessica Hodgson  
Essay Chair



Maureen Crombie  
Tri-Star Chair



Christine Diekhoff  
CCDHH Chair



Tom Carls  
Jr Golf



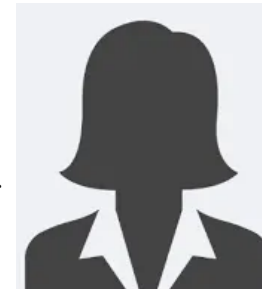
Bonnie Spindler  
Webmaster



Megan Larrabee  
JOI Chair



Amanda Szymkowski  
Newsletter Editor  
Marketing & Communications Chair



Jo'el Pearlman  
Oratorical Chair  
Event Planner

# SWIS District Governor's Team 2020-2021 Growth Committee



Gary Engelke



Vern Andren



Maureen Crombie



Elizabeth VanNatta



Phillip Sheahan



Rich Voegel



Don Kresch



Jeanne Voegel



Tom Bier



Dave Lowe



Sherry Fickau

# SWIS District Finance Team & Lieutenant Governors 2020-2021

## Finance Team



Jeff Kuckenbecker  
Finance



Sue Kranz  
Finance



Wayne Dieckhoff  
Finance



Duane Borgen  
Finance

## Lieutenant Governors



Jerry Kuhnz  
Zone 1



Todd Paulus  
Zone 2

## Lieutenant Governors



Dave Lowe  
Zone 3



Phillip Sheahan  
Zone 4



Eileen Engelke  
Zone 5



Elizabeth VanNatta  
Zone 5



Bonnie Spindler  
Zone 6



Fred Dorn  
Zone 7



District Newsletters



Youth Programs



Conferences



District/Club Events

## 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.

Visit the SWIS District Website today!

[www.swisdistrict.org](http://www.swisdistrict.org)

### Bonnie Spindler

Chair, SWIS District Website

[blspindler@charter.net](mailto:blspindler@charter.net)

(608) 850-9561

## Thank You and Come Again!

Thank you to everyone who contributed articles to this edition of the SWIS District Newsletter. I couldn't put out this quarterly publication without you – and I very much appreciate your time!

If you are interested in contributing to the next edition, please send me your: Club Stories, District and Zone Events, Committee and Chair Updates, Member Acknowledgments, and other articles that you would like to share. I will gladly accept them at anytime.

If you are ever unsure of submission deadlines, please reference the SWIS District Conference schedule found [here](#). The date that registration opens, is the date that I try to send out the newsletter.

And lastly, I'd like to thank you, the reader! The fact that you are reading this whether you are drinking your morning coffee or orange juice, or waiting for your oil to be changed, or enjoying your lunchbreak from work – your time means a lot to me. And your feedback is appreciated.

Hope to see you next quarter!

Amanda Szymkowski  
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Marketing and Communications Chair  
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