

Once as a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, a noted professor remarked, "So now you're a Master of Theology. Who are you trying to kid?" Now as Governor of the Optimist SWIS District of Southern Wisconsin the question remains the same. Without you, without the individual members and without the clubs to which you belong as Optimists, I am nothing. I will do my best to encourage, challenge and remind each of you of the opportunities and responsibilities we have as Optimists. We are all volunteers. We don't get paid. We actually pay for the privilege of serving others and especially the Youth. We got a bargain. Thank you for the title of Governor. The SWIS District slogan I give to you I first apply to myself. Prove It.

Governor's Update

You and I have a job to do.

"Wait a minute," you say.

Are you ready to work?

"What's the job?"

What difference does it make?

"Well, I can't tell you if I'm ready to work or not unless you tell me what the job is."

You're an Optimist, aren't you?

"Sure, but."

But what?

"I'm not going to jump into something before I know what it is. That wouldn't be reasonable. I mean, what are you asking me to do?"

Friend of Youth. That's our motto. That's our job.

"I know, but."

But what?

"I've got a lot on my mind these days. Have you read the news? Have you seen the numbers? Have you got any idea what's going on out there?"

Yes.

"Well, you come in here asking if I'm ready to work. I'm just saying I'll need to fit it into my schedule. I'll need to see if I'm available and then, well, if it all lines up just right, we'll see."

Can you think of anything more important than being a Friend of Youth at any time, especially times of uncertainty, conflict, danger or change?

"That's not the point."

What is the point?

“I have bills to pay. I have responsibilities. I get tired at the end of a long day. I need my time off and I’ve got my own family to think about.”

I’m not asking you to give any less to the commitments you’ve already made.

“What are you asking?”

I’m asking you to give more. I’m asking you to go beyond the routine. Go beyond the essential. Find ways to give as an Optimist to those who need it most, especially as a Friend of Youth and be amazed how much more you can do and how good it makes you feel to do it.

“Like I said, I’ll see what I can do.”

You do that and remember, if you’re not doing anything Optimistic in your life, in the life of your family or the life of your club or your community, you’re not doing anything at all.

“What if I’m just thinking about it?

Sooner or later someone is going to ask you to 'Prove It.

“Someone like you?

Someone like me.

JOHN FONS, SWIS Governor 2021-2022

=====

Governor's 3rd Quarter MESSAGE:

SWIS Optimists:

There’s a joke I often tell.

It goes like this.

“What’s the difference between an Optimist and a pessimist?”

You’ll notice I spell ‘pessimist’ with a lower case ‘p’.

The answer usually comes back, “I don’t know.”

That’s my cue.

“A pessimist says, ‘Things can’t get any worse.’”

Then comes the punch line.

“The Optimist says, ‘Oh yes they can!’”

Did you get that?

Would you like me to repeat it?

Don't mind if I do.

"What's the difference between an Optimist and a pessimist? A pessimist says, 'Things can't get any worse. An Optimist says, 'Oh yes they can!'"

Serve it up any way you want. It's an easy recipe.

Kind of like your Grandmother's oatmeal cookies.

When you think about it, that's another form of Optimism. After all, what could be more mundane or unremarkable than oatmeal dumped in a bowl? Your Grandmother (note the capital 'G') had a way of making the best of whatever came along, including your Grandfather.

You can do the same.

We're doing it right now in the Optimist SWIS District. Pay attention. The ingredients are at hand.

In February we enjoyed a full-course 2nd Quarter Conference at the Comfort Inn & Suites / North Star Conference Center in DeForest. We mixed in JOI Clubs from Lake Mills and Monroe; added Quilts from the Brodhead Club Quilt Project; spiced it up with the WaunaStrummer Ukulele Band from Waunakee and topped it off with Special Guest Speaker Rebecca Butler-Mona, Optimist International President 2018-2019 and currently International JOI Club Chair. Rebecca knows three times as much as anyone else when it comes to JOI Club formation, outreach and activities.

What's cooking for the 3rd Quarter Conference May 13-14, again at the Comfort Inn & Suites / North Star Conference Center in DeForest?

Hope you're hungry.

We're serving up your favorites.

There will be Oratorical Contest competition throughout Saturday morning, May 14, by Oratorical finalists and hopefully for the first time in years, participation by students in our Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Luncheon at the 3rd Quarter Conference will include a unique musical experience with a performance by virtuoso accordion artist Sergei Belkin. Born and raised in Ukraine, Sergei will astonish with his symphonic skill upon this most complicated of musical instruments. As a boy, Sergei says he put his accordion case in the snow at home and slid downhill to his music school in Ukraine.

Another virtuoso, this time in the most complicated realm of competitive business and service to the public is Craig Culver, owner and originator of Culver's Restaurants. Welcome the creator of Delicious to our 3rd Quarter Conference as Craig Culver has graciously consented to attend and present awards to our contest and scholarship winners.

That's the Main Menu.

Save room for desert.

Friday evening, May 13, the SWIS District Executive Committee will duly consider whether or not and if so how to distribute tens of thousands of dollars in District funds and review District activities to date. And as a man once said standing in the midst of a three-ring circus,

"It's only the beginning, folks. It's only the beginning."

The Main Attraction in our SWIS District must not merely be the few days of our Quarterly Conferences, but the entire year and every day of every year.

Craig Culver says, "Welcome to Delicious."

We must say, "Welcome to Optimism."

Sergei Belkin plays beautiful music in a war-torn world.

We must harmonize our efforts as Optimists throughout our local clubs and communities.

Every student who stands before us to present a speech or essay puts their fear and anxiety aside to communicate the very Optimism we Promise Ourselves we believe.

We must Prove It to these students, Prove we hear what they say and we will do it.

Those are the ingredients. That's what we're cooking up for the 3rd Quarter SWIS District Conference in DeForest, Wisconsin, May 13-14.

"The pessimist says, 'It can't get any better.'"

The Optimist says, "Oh yes it can!"

John Fons, Governor 2021-2022

=====**Governor John's 4th Quarter Message**=====

SWIS Governor, John Fons 4th Quarter Reflection:

In the time I have been Governor of the SWIS District I have learned a few things about people and about myself.

You'd think I already knew enough.

In business you learn about people, but in business there's always money involved and quite often, in fact almost always, money gets in the way. Then there's other work. In my case church work, because I took a seminary degree. In which case God seems sometime to get in the way, because people who believe they have a special deal with God can be just about impossible to deal with any other way.

And then, of course, there's Optimism, which turns out to be the one group of people I've had more association with than any other common denominator in my life. Imagine that. I didn't at first. I never came to realize until now, when my term as District Governor is nearly over that Optimism and its people have become my own creed.

Except for my family, there is no other assortment of people I've dealt with more consistently on a regular basis in my entire life. It hasn't been for money and it hasn't always been easy, but I'm prepared to say as with my own family it's the one I've been given, the one I'm stuck with and the one who's stuck with me and I'm proud to be an Optimist.

We've had a few laughs this year. We've shed a few tears. We lost some members and we've gained a few. All told we're successful and that's what it takes to be a family for better or worse and since we've all meant well, it's more than likely for the best.

Do you remember the slogan I offered when I began my term?

Prove It.

Do you remember what I said?

I said numbers and goals didn't mean as much to me as One Child helped along the way. One Child and then Two Children and then Three, but One Child at a time and we could compare numbers and goals whatever the outcome later on.

Well, I found my One and then another and when I come to think of it another and if I keep on going, that number is bound to keep getting bigger. So I'll keep on being Optimistic and I won't spend a lot of time looking back, just looking ahead, not as your Governor, but just as Optimistic as my first day in office and just as appreciative of the people I've met along the way who have become and always will be my Optimist Family.

JOHN FONS, SWIS Governor 2021-2022