



# CO/WY - The Connection



## Governor's Corner

**Connecting with Governor Mary Grace Wake**

**Hello Everyone,**

At the end of the first quarter, I believe we have **Connected with Optimism!** Let me share some of my highlights of the last few months.

Most of all I have enjoyed meeting more of you and visiting many clubs throughout the state. **I have had the pleasure** of installing officers, giving out trophies at the Jr Golf tournament and attending meetings. I have been overwhelmed at all the projects clubs are doing for kids. I am **particularly pleased** with all the existing JOI clubs and congratulations to the **new JOI clubs**.

**Clubs have connected with each other** to share projects and social events. **Gateway and Heather Gardens** had a watch party for a Bronco game. **Purpose Driven and Lake Arbor** have joined as one club. Clubs' social events have allowed me and members to connect with each other. I loved the swing dancing at **Monaco South**, and the dinners I had in **Buena Vista and Greeley**.

In addition, clubs are **interacting with their communities**. Examples are serving at a community-wide pancake breakfast; displaying flags in the community on holidays; a Halloween fair and a fishing derby. In December, many members will help lay wreaths on Veterans' graves.

The biggest highlight of this quarter was the **1<sup>st</sup> Q Conference**. Praise to all of you who ventured out in the snow for an inspiring and fun conference. (see article on the conference.) The most significant business by the Board of Directors was approving the designation of the **Autism Rescue Kit Project as a District project**. All clubs will have an opportunity to participate in this unique project.

At this time of year, many clubs are helping at **Colorado Feeding Kids and helping supply Food Banks**. The Holidays are a perfect time to honor the teachers in the schools you serve and provide gifts to the students. Also, it is exciting to hear about and attend the club socials going on for the Holidays.

**Holiday Greetings to All of You.**

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### District Officers

- Governor: Mary Grace Wake, Windsor Gardens OC
- Governor— Elect: Bill Ashbee, Boulder Luncheon OC
- Secretary: Earleen Oswalt, Fort Morgan Sunrise OC
- Treasurer: Pearl Meulemans, Tamarac & University Hills OC
- Immediate Past Gov: Tony Carpenter Wheat Ridge OC

### Lt. Governors

- Zone 1: Linda Chasson, Cheyenne
- Zone 2: Gary Banninga, Windsor OC
- Zone 3: Burke Kaiser, Buena Vista
- Zone 4: Tom Mehl, Gateway OC
- Zone 5: Linda Williams, Tamarac OC
- Zone 6: Jon Wachter, MSOC
- Zone 7: Tom Overton, MSOC
- Zone 8: Kathy Greb, Arvada Lake Arbor

### Important Websites

**Optimist International:** [www.optimist.org](http://www.optimist.org)

**OI Foundation:** [oifoundation.org/](http://oifoundation.org/)

**CO/WY District:** [www.optimistcowy.org/](http://www.optimistcowy.org/)

**CO/WY Brain Bowl:** [www.optimistbrainbowl.org/](http://www.optimistbrainbowl.org/)

# CO/WY District 1st Qtr Conference October 28, 2023

## Connect with Optimism

### With Ourselves, Each other, and the Youth

The Schoolhouse at Main Street in Parker CO

On a snowy day, 72 members representing 17 clubs attended the Conference. Starting the day was “**the Joy Seeker**”, **Lisa Dimino White** who gave an upbeat, touching, and humorous talk encouraging us to find bursts of joy in our lives. Her message facilitated high energy and a positive tone for the day. This was followed by a breakout session that helped us get to know each other.

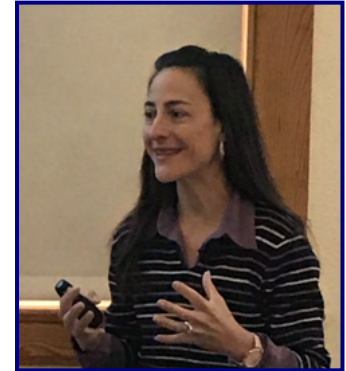
We were honored to have **Kevin Ailara, OI SW Region VP**, visiting our District. He continued with an inspiring message to members and clubs. He emphasized members having the big “O” and the engagement of all members. He told about the **C.A.R.E.** program and mentioned the **OWLS** program. He commented that our District is doing really well and has fun and he had enjoyed learning more about all the activities at the Executive Committee Meeting.

Our last speaker, **Jolynn Garlow, an Optimist, and an adolescent life coach** gave us helpful tips to spread optimism to the youth of today. She showed some poignant videos of working with youth.

In addition to the program, the venue was unique, and the food was perfect for a cold day.

Our hands-on project for **Colorado Feeding Kids** was packing boxes of food. Our members packed 2100 boxes which were given to Secor Cares, a nonprofit in Parker caring for people with Suburban poverty.

Compliments to **Charlie Neumann, Conference Chair**, and the many others who helped to make this conference a memorable event.



## Save the Date

Mark your calendars for **February 24, 2024** for our **Second Quarter District Conference**. We'll meet at the **Assistance League of Denver** for a day of activities centered around the theme of **Creating Healthy Minds**. Join with your fellow Optimists to learn techniques for your own mental health as well as how we can have a better impact on the youth we serve. **After all, we have “promised ...to talk health, happiness, and prosperity.”**



## CO/WY District 1st Quarter Conference Pics



Abigail Nicholas, Emcee



Gov Mary Grace with Kevin Ailara, OI SW Region VP



Jeanette Thompson, Awards

## Windsor Gardens Celebrates 55 Years



2023-2024 Optimist Club Board of Directors. Front row (L to R): Shirley Cox, Gary Roll, Sally Westerberg, and Carol Brooks. Back row (L to R): Joel James, Joe Hayashi, Susan Connors, Mary Grace Wake and Bob Hamblin.

### WG Optimist Club Celebrates 55th Anniversary



#### CLUB ACTIVITIES

*We're all about children.*

- Scholarships to Pickens Technical College
- Support for Junior Optimist Club at Place Bridge Academy
- JROTC oratorical contests
- School supplies and clothes for children
- Annual pancake breakfast fundraiser
- Monthly speakers from community groups who support kids

*Photos from Joel James.*



The Thomas Jefferson JROTC Color Guard presented the flag.



Speaker Beatrice Bruno  
"Drill Sergeant of Life"

# Optimist International - C.A.R.E. Program

Abigail Nicholas

The C.A. R. E. Program is an annual Club retention program which will celebrate the accomplishments of the Club and Members, address any issues arising within the Club in a non-confrontational manner, take time to recognize Members of the Club for exceptional volunteer work and sets out the groundwork to help the Club excel:

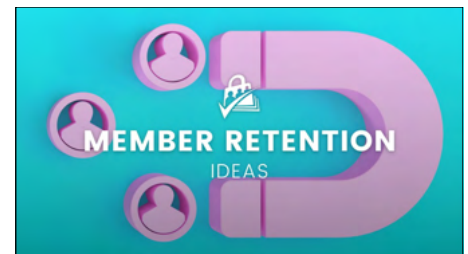


## C.A.R.E. - Celebrate...Address...Recognize...Excel

**Why use this program?** Because every Club has its ups and downs, celebrations, and struggles. It's human nature when a group of individuals work together to undergo times of "storming". There will likely always be personality conflicts. If we allow a negative atmosphere to prevail for too long then our Clubs, its members and ultimately the community will all suffer. We put effort into recruiting new members. We need to put equal effort into retaining members as well. A structured, annual program within our Clubs which focuses on resolving issues and rewarding and celebrating accomplishments will strengthen our membership and allow everyone to feel they have a voice and an influence.

This is a four-step program which will lead your Club to the following benefits:

- ★ Members feel appreciated.
- ★ Issues are addressed and given direction for resolution.
- ★ A stronger sense of team is fostered.
- ★ Membership is retained with stronger members.
- ★ Productivity is elevated.
- ★ The community witnesses a harmonious happy group of individuals.
- ★ Members set an example to the youth in their community.



**For more information contact the District Membership Retention Chair, Abigail Nicholas, by text or call to 303-919-6569 or email to [abigailnicholas@msn.com](mailto:abigailnicholas@msn.com)**

## Optimists Working Toward Learner Success (OWLS)

Optimist International is piloting a new initiative this year with a focus on supporting a safe and productive learning environment for our children in elementary school. **OWLS (Optimists Working Toward Learner Success)** will be a framework to explore the wonderful work we do to support children through the Optimist Clubs.

The idea is to **gather information from clubs** this year via a very short survey to determine what clubs are already doing. The vision is for OWLS to become a signature program for OI as a way to truly support the success of our young learners with information and resources to expand our efforts. So many of the clubs in the district are already connected to schools in a variety of ways, from food pantries and hygiene items to holiday toys and warm clothes as well as recognizing student citizenship. **We are looking forward to hearing what you are already doing and to acknowledge your projects as well as share ideas with other clubs.**

The OWLS structure looks at tiers of supports (much like schools are doing these days with academic and behavioral interventions) across these main areas:

- **Fundraising** (to support the organization, nutrition and basic needs);
- **Donating** (school supplies, clothing, hygiene items, bench buddies);
- **Volunteering** through reading buddies, math tutors, fieldtrip and classroom helpers and  
Involving elementary schools in **Optimist Programs** such as Kids Speak Out, Photography and Visual Arts.

**There is a very informative webinar on the Optimist Institute in the Media** area which talks about how, as a club, you determine what you are able to do to support your schools and then set up a meeting with the school to see how you can support them.

**In the meantime, always feel free to drop Kiki McGough an email to share the work that you are doing so we can start to create some resources for our Colorado Wyoming district.**

Kiki McGough, Programs Chair    [kikimcgough@gmail.com](mailto:kikimcgough@gmail.com)

Link to program:

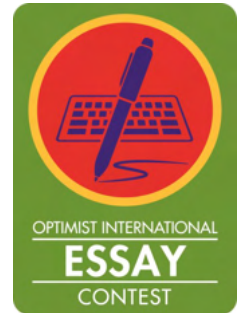
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# 2023-2024 OI Essay Contest

## Topic: "Optimism: How It Connects Us"

### Purpose:

This contest is sponsored by Optimist International to give young people room to develop their own views around a central idea. In addition to the opportunity for written expression, participants have the chance to win a college \$2500 scholarship!



### How to Enter:

Interested contestants should submit essays on the assigned topic to their local Optimist Club. The essays are judged at the Club level, and the winner of each advances to the District level. All Club submissions should be run through a plagiarism checker before being forwarded to the next level.

### Eligibility:

The contest is open to contestants under the age of 19 as of October 1st of the current Optimist International contest year (October 1 – September 30) and who have not yet completed secondary school or its equivalent.

### Length:

700-800 words (Title, footnotes and bibliography are not included in the final word count.) Hyphenated words count as one (1) word. Words are to be counted manually.

### Judging Deadlines:

The deadline for contestants to submit essays to each Club is determined by the sponsoring Club. The deadline for Clubs to submit their winning essay to the District Chair is February 28, 2024.

### Clubs Duties:

Each Club is encouraged to select an Essay chair. It will be the duty of the Essay Chair to promote the contest at public and private Middle and High Schools in their area as well as home schooled students. **Contact Essay Chair Jeff Gartz at [jeffgartz@gmail.com](mailto:jeffgartz@gmail.com) or at 303-842-6680 for more Information.**



**CO/WY District Leadership wishes you the very best for this holiday season and the new year ahead!**

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## Searching for Successful Projects

During the first quarter, has your club had a successful project or fundraising event?

At the next Conference, Governor Mary Grace Wake wants to spotlight several clubs to tell about their successful projects. Please email Mary Grace at [mgwake695@gmail.com](mailto:mgwake695@gmail.com) explaining your project: How many kids did you serve? How much money did you earn? Why was it successful? How many volunteers were involved? Was the community involved? Also, who was the Chair of the project? Please have these to her by February 1.

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## Become Connected

Linda Williams

We have a new online venue called **Connections Forum** where we can connect about a different topic each month. The intention of the Forum is to provide information and an opportunity to share ideas about broad topics affecting each club, and every Colorado/Wyoming member is welcome to join the conversation. Each **Forum will be only 30 minutes long – just enough time to present ideas you can take back to your club to continue the dialogue.**

On November 14<sup>th</sup> our first conversation had the topic title of *“Catch and Release or Catch and Engage?”* Abigail Nicholas, District Membership Engagement Chair, led the discussion with core ideas about engaging new and veteran members in Optimist activities. If you missed it, go to the Colorado/Wyoming website, <https://www.optimistcowy.org/>, in the Resources folder inside the Members section.

Please join us at the next Connections Forum on December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. when Jerry Krause, a member of the Littleton Breakfast Optimist Club, will share the club’s journey to create a strategic plan for their future. Connect with other District members to learn about “It’s Never Too Late to Rejuvenate.”

**NOTE:** Each month we will send out Connections Forum emails from the District with the Zoom link and topic for the month. We hope you will connect with other district members and share your ideas.

# 1st Quarter Happenings in Gateway OC

Karen Gold

Our **Broncos Watch Party** was a success at Rendezvous Restaurant in partnership with Heather Gardens Optimist Club. Former Broncos that helped us raise money for kids. Bolded names are Gateway members:

Greg Boyd Defensive lineman 1976\_1985,  
**Don Latimer Defensive Nose Guard 1978\_83**,  
Ken Lanier Offensive Lineman 1981\_1992,  
**Marvin Montgomery Offensive Line 1971\_1976**,  
**Laron Jackson Offensive Line 1971\_1974**



We lost a friend and a GOC member Thanksgiving Day. He was a member since 2011. **Brad Martin**. He inspired us to get a sock drive going for the homeless just weeks before he died. He was a hero to the homeless.



**CU Parking fundraiser** was a lot of work, early hours and great fun. We got to invite non-members to help us out and see a game or two.

**Grandview HS JOI Club's Fall project** was holding a food and toiletries drive for under privileged families at their school. Anything left over, they decided to bless **More Life Center** with.



Stocking shelves at More Life Center. Pastor Ayinde, Nate & Robert at More Life Center transport truck

GOC has formed another partnership and JOI Club at Gateway HS.

New members **Jack Rego, Bob Muniz, and Ev Sequiera** formed an ad hoc fundraiser by competing in water running.

We are participating in a **coat drive for Prairie MS and Overland HS**. We will be donating to Gateway HS Shop with an Oly (High School kids take elementary kids shopping for their families with donated money).





## NOAH's Autism Rescue Kit

Bill Cassel– Childhood Health and Wellness Chair

On Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> we visited **Lakewood Boy Scout Troop 448** for an Autism Rescue Kit assembly project. **This Cuper Troop is not only home to Noah, the inspiration for our Rescue Kits.** In four previous assembly meetings since spring 0f 2021, the scouts have assembled over three hundred and fifty kits for the Optimist Club of Wheat Ridge.

This Tuesday, somewhere in the boxes of assembled kits is number one thousand. Noah couldn't be there as he graduated high school and is attending University of Colorado. A big thanks to all of the Optimists in the Colorado/Wyoming District for their support in this project and assisted in many ways. 2024 starts the program of selling kits to providers and families affected by this



neurological disorder. Kits will still be available to first responders as no cost. **Additional Information is available through the Optimist Club of Wheat Ridge website, [www.wheatridgeoptimist.org](http://www.wheatridgeoptimist.org) or emailing Bill Cassel at [autismrescuekit@gmail.com](mailto:autismrescuekit@gmail.com).**

## 2023-2024 Scholarship Competitions

Cris Gresl

COMWY has once again retained 3 remarkable men to chair the OI Foundation scholarships this year!

**Steve Gorrell**, ([sgorrell1@yahoo.com](mailto:sgorrell1@yahoo.com)) will be chairing the **Oratorical contest** where the topic this year is: **How to Change the World With Optimism** (see next page for details)

Regionals will be held via zoom on April 13, 2024.  
*All Oratorical paperwork is due April 1, 2024*

**Jeff Gartz** ([jeffgartz@gmail.com](mailto:jeffgartz@gmail.com)) will be chairing the **Essay contest** where the topic is:

**Optimism: How It Connects us.** (see page 5 for details)  
*Essays and paperwork are due February 28, 2024.*

**Joe Priester** ([joepriester@hotmail.com](mailto:joepriester@hotmail.com)) will be chairing the **CCDHH contest** where the topic is: **How to Change the World With Optimism**

*Videotaped recordings are due April 22, 2024.*

With Optimism,  
Kris Gresl District Scholarship Chair

## District Oratorical 2023-2024 Contest Steve Gorrell, District Chair-

The Oratorical Contest is open to students who have not reached the age of 19 before October 1, 2023, and are not enrolled as a degree seeking student of a post-secondary institution or have not won the OI Regional Contest in St Louis.



This year's topic is: **"How to Change the World with Optimism"**

**The Club contest must be completed on or before March 23, 2024.** Clubs must submit ALL

Oratorical paperwork, with **Club's check made out to the Colorado-Wyoming District in the amount of \$20.00 per contestant to: Steve Gorrell, 14734 Vine Street, Thornton, CO 80602 by April 1, 2024 for the Regional Contest**

**Clubs will send their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place winners to the Regional Contest. The Regional Contests will be held via Zoom on April 13, 2024.**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place Regional winners will then go to the District Finals being held on April 27, 2024 at Family Resource Pavilion, 9700 E Easter Ln, Centennial, CO 80112 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Conference.** The District's 1<sup>st</sup> place winner will receive a \$2,500 scholarship and then will be able to go to the Regional/World Championships Contest at St Louis University in St Louis, MO. Where the possibility to win up to additional \$20,000 in scholarships. 2<sup>nd</sup> place District winner will receive a \$1,500 scholarship and 3<sup>rd</sup> place District winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

**You can go to [www.optimist.org](http://www.optimist.org). Programs-scholarship contests-oratorical contest. From there you can download the rules and application for the contest.**

You may hold your Club's contest in person or via Zoom.

Schools have started. ***Now is the time to contact your local schools to get them involved in the Oratorical Contest!***

If you have any questions, contact your Lt Governor or me. **Steve Gorrell, Colorado-Wyoming District Oratorical Chairperson 2023-2024 Sgorrell1@yahoo.com 303-920-2366**

### **Greeley Luncheon OC— CHRISTMAS PROJECT COMPLETED**

Special thanks to **Joy Roden and Susan Brown** who delivered the gifts to the police department for the Santa Cop program. This year we had 2 families, a single mom with 6 kids, and a single mom with 2 kids. Nearly 10 bags of clothes, toys and other items were purchased for these families, along with \$100 each for the purchase of groceries for a holiday meal. In addition, \$200 worth of toys were donated for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program.

Thanks to **Mike Boyles** for accepting and delivering these toys to the Marine Corps. Donations have also been made to **The Boys and Girls Clubs of Weld County and the Weld Food Bank**, each in the amount of \$500. Our club members were very generous this year with their cash contributions, and time spent shopping, wrapping and supporting this year's **Christmas Project**.

# Lake Arbor Optimist Club Updates

Kiki McGough

Lake Arbor Optimist Club was recognized as a Silver level sponsor for the **Colorado Native Outreach Project Gala** where **Steve Selle** was recognized as the **Volunteer of the Year**. **Ken, Terri and Kiki** attended with **Steve and his wife, Debbie** and were excited to have **Mary Grace** join us. Steve and his bike team work tirelessly collecting, refurbishing and distributing bikes to local elementary schools and homeless members of our community. They also prepared 8 bikes for Irene, our club member who is the Executive Director of Colorado Native Outreach Project to transport monthly to Native American reservations in 3 states. We are so proud of Steve.



**We are pleased to announce that the merger of the Lake Arbor and the Purpose Driven Club has been completed.** We were thrilled to have **Mary Grace Wake** join us for the formal induction of the club officers and board on November 21.

The club participated in the **robotics competition** in 2 locations last month and on December 2 braved the cold and wind to decorate the outdoor areas of Arbor View Senior Living.

We are excited for our upcoming **Santa Workshop with Hope, Connection and Community.**

# Cowboy Up with Optimism! Dinner

Funds raised for the Cheyenne Optimist Club's Oratorical and Essay Scholarships

**WHERE:** American Legion, 2001 E. Lincolnway

**WHEN:** Saturday, January 27, 2024

**TIME:** 5:30-11:00

**BBQ:** 6:30

**COST:** \$55

**Cowboy BBQ catered by LCCC Dining Services**

**Live Music: Life in the Past Lane**

**Live & Silent Auctions including:**

- ♦ 7 night stay in a timeshare in Mexico
- ♦ handmade quilt
- ♦ catered dinner
- ♦ and much more!

**Want to support the kids even more?  
Become a sponsor!**

**Table sponsors \$600 for 8 ppl**

**Please RSVP by January 20th**

**to Katherine Van Dell at 307-630-5058 or Connie Hein at 970-581-9239**

