



CO/WY - The Connection



Governor's Corner

Connecting with Governor Mary Grace Wake

Hello Optimists in District 25,

What a busy 2nd quarter this has been. In January, we were honored to have a visit from **Optimist International President, Tracy Huxley**. She had firsthand look at our Brain Bowl and a chance to interact with our committed and friendly members. On her first day, she was welcomed by 60 Monaco South and Tamarac members. Then she visited the unique **Phoenix JOI club at Justice High School in Lafayette**. She dialogued with the senior students discussing how the creed and the camaraderie of the club has changed their lives. We did a quick tour of Boulder (she loved seeing dogs and the Ramsey house). Next, was a **reception at City Park Golf Club** attended by 40 District leaders. She wowed us with her passionate words and ideas. On Saturday, she spent the day at the **Brain Bowl**. She was overwhelmed by the number of kids, all the volunteers and the contest itself. We certainly have a unique project. She is still talking about all she experienced in Colorado.

A BIG thank you to all of you who were involved in the **Brain Bowl**. Special appreciation to **Connie Ackerman, Gunar Neumann, and Laura Mitchell** for their organization and leadership.

Last week we had another great conference. I was happy that there were 7 first timers. I think we all felt we had a healthier mind after all the mindful exercises. Thank you to **Charlie Neumann, Conference Chair and Linda Williams, Leadership Chair** and all those who contributed to a successful conference.

Now we look forward to the third quarter. This is the time to recruit new members because there is no OI membership fee. **View OI President Tracy Huxley's video, "Are you ready to Welcome a New Member?"** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfYlxf3vZL8>

Connecting with Optimism, Governor Mary Grace Wake

Pictures of Tracy's visit on page 2...

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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
- OI Foundation:** oifoundation.org/
- CO/WY District:** www.optimistcowy.org/
- CO/WY Brain Bowl:** www.optimistbrainbowl.org/

OI President, Tracy Huxley - Pictorial of Visit to CO/WY District



Tracy was welcomed to CO/WY District by Gov **Mary Grace Wake** (L) and Gov-elect, **Bill Ashbee** (R). She visited the MSOC meeting (below)



Reception at City Park Golf Club was opportunity to meet with 40 district leaders. **Linda Williams** -



With **Charlie and Gunar Neumann**



Dynamic Speaker



Above—Lunch at the Brain Bowl with Gov **Mary Grace**. Below **Connie** put her to work at start of day



Phoenix JOI Club at Justice HS in Lafayette welcomes Tracy

CO/WY District 2nd Qtr Conference February 24, 2024

Creating a Healthy Mind

BREATHE! That was the watchword for the 2nd Quarter District Conference held on February 24th at the Assistance League of Denver. The theme for the day was **Creating a Healthy Mind** and we had three speakers talk about different techniques to reach calmness and mental equilibrium.

Lori Schlotzhauer, Mindfulness and Executive/Career Coach, spoke about The Power of Breath and gave us opportunities to practice a special breathing technique to relieve stress. (top) **Dee Marie, Certified Yoga Therapist** and Boulder Optimist Club member, showed us how yoga and mindfulness instruction in schools can help children learn better (center). **Nataly Cano, author** and Mile Hi Optimist Club member, talked about the value of journaling to expand our awareness of ourselves and our life goals. (bottom)

Along with the impactful messages of the speakers, we also had time to acknowledge **District Club honors** from Optimist International. Both the Optimist Club of Littleton and the Windsor Gardens Optimist Club received recognition as Honor Clubs for the previous Optimist Year. **More pics on next page.....**

Tamarac Optimist Club was acknowledged as a Distinguished Club for the same year. **Linda Williams** was awarded the Distinguished Lt. Governor plaque for her work with Zone 6 last year. (See the pics and article written by Jeanette Thompson in this newsletter to find out about District awards that were given.)

February 24th was a day of sunshine, goodwill, and camaraderie.



Save the Date

Mark your calendars to join us for the next conference on **April 27, 2024** at the Family Resource Pavilion to listen to the finalists of the **Optimist Oratorical Contest** and the **CCDHH Oratorical Contest**, as well as the **Essay Contest winner**.
It will be a day of celebration.

CO/WY District 2nd Quarter Conference Pics



Abigail Nicholas,
Conference Emcee



Gov Mary Grace
Wake welcomes
attendees



Daniel Johansen,
Buena Vista OC—
Vintage Car program



Lisa Banninga,
Windsor OC
Kindness Week



Sheila Woolfolk,
Gateway OC's
fundraisers

CO/WY District Awards Program Jeanette Thompson



This program is designed to recognize those Optimists that have gone above and beyond the expectations as a member of a club. At the recent Conference the following Optimists were recognized for the following: L-R in photo

Joel James, Windsor Gardens Optimist Club, Optimist of the Quarter: Joel is a relatively new member who is on the Board, communicates throughout the Windsor Gardens community of 2600 units about the club projects, collects socks for Clothes for Kids. He also is involved in fundraising and planning the Pancake Breakfast!

Jennifer Powers and Ellen Barrett, Windsor Gardens Optimist Club, New JOI Club: They were the dynamic duo Forming the JOI Club at Place Bridge Academy. This is a culturally and linguistically diverse Denver magnet school that provides education for Refugee and Newcomer students from 64 different countries.

Carolyn Bamford, Tamarac Optimist Club, Team Reading Project: Carolyn's team is focusing on 1st graders and Kindergarteners in 9 elementary schools coordinating 155 volunteers and reaching out to 1,295 children and giving each student a book.

Loretta Blessinger, Tamarac Optimist Club, Optimist of the Quarter: Loretta was recognized for her involvement in many projects: Flower Project, Visual Arts, Reading, Newborns in Need, Santa Claus Shop and set up crew.

Deborah Martens, Gateway Optimist Club, New Member category: Deborah was honored for her work organizing and becoming the club liaison for the JOI Club at Grandview High School. The JOI Club boasts 24 active members and a very successful food drive filling 120 collection boxes in the classrooms!

NOT PICTURED: Laura Mitchell, DTC Optimist Club, Optimist of the Quarter: Laura was the overall director of the Brain Bowl and also helped to redesign the registration system for conferences and the convention.

Conference & Convention Chair Update: 19 Clubs Registered

Since the 2nd Quarter Conference was held at the Assistance League of Denver on Feb 24, 2024. They presented each attendee with a \$5.00 off coupon to spend that day with a minimum spend of \$10.00. They staffed extra volunteers to accommodate the shopping spree who were wonderful to work with, and a shout out to the Event Coordinator Jamy Jones. A special thank you to the following: Abigail Nicholas, Bob & Linda Hamblin, Nadou Lawson, Gunar Neumann, Wade Hammond, Pearl Meulemans, and Laura Mitchell, Registrar A great team effort to another successful conference. Respectfully, Charlie Neumann, Conference & Convention Chairperson

Get Connected Linda Williams

Please join us the second Tuesday of each month for our Connections Forum, which meets over Zoom from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. Enjoy important topics and follow-up discussions. The topic for March is Fundraising, including how to get sponsorships for your projects.

If you can't reorganize your schedule to be part of the original meeting, you can always watch the recording of the event by going to the District website <https://www.optimistcowy.org/>. The Connections Forum previous events can be found in the MEMBERS section of the website. Our previous topics have been Membership Engagement, Strategic Planning, Tips and Traps of Club Leadership, and Identifying and Growing Leaders. Check out these topics and bring the information to your club to further the conversations. Connect your club to other clubs' ideas in these forums.

Get Paid for Having Fun!

We're thrilled to share some exciting news — if you're 65 or older and live in the United States, Optimist International has teamed up with Grouper to help cover your membership dues!

What Does This Mean for You?

Grouper will assist in covering Optimist members' membership dues by providing a yearly check for those with qualifying Medicare Advantage or Medicare Supplement plans, up to \$100. This partnership ensures that both long-time members and newcomers can enjoy a break on their yearly dues just for being active and socially connected.

Signing Up with Grouper:

Ready to check if your plan includes Grouper? Simply sign up online at www.hellogrouper.com/Optimist with your health plan info. Grouper will contact you within 5 business days to inform you if you are eligible - then they will send a check regardless of when you last paid your dues!

Catch Up With Gateway OC

Karen Gold



Gateway members held a memorial for member, **Brad Martin** who passed away this year.

Gateway welcomed 5 new members, L-R: **Bob Muniz, Jack Rego, Allen Meyer, Deborah and Hal Martens**

A Sweet Dream in a Bag packing event yielded this array of bedding sets.



Follow-up on 2023 Essay Contest Winner - Taylor Witte

I am so flattered that the Optimist Club is interested in my whereabouts at Georgia Tech. I'm happy to provide some information on what I've been up to, and some highlights of my experience so far:

I am studying Economics and Mathematics and plan to minor in Spanish. I am currently conducting research with Dr. Dylan Brewer on the impact of air quality alerts on consumer behavior using geospatial cell phone tracking and EPA air quality data.

I will be traveling to Ecuador this spring to learn about sustainable agroforestry and complete a construction project for local residents

I competed in the University of Kentucky's CEO Challenge, a national case competition for undergraduate and graduate students, where my team and I were recognized as finalists. On campus, I am a member of the economics club, the Seek Discomfort Leadership Organization, and I serve as an ambassador for the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts.

Overall, my time at Georgia Tech has been transformative and enlightening, and I am so excited for what is to come in the future. As I bear in mind the ideals of the Optimist Club, I challenge myself to think not just about what I stand to gain from my education, but the person I can become for others.

Thank you once again for your time and investment in my future.

All the best,
Taylor Witte



Prospect Valley ES JOI Club Holds First Event Lisa Denton

Lisa Denton, Prospect Valley Elementary School Family Liaison reported on their first JOI event at Prospect Valley. They had a **Hot Cocoa stand** in the morning out in front of the school and then a **Slushee stand** at the dance that night.

They were able to raise almost **\$500** to go to help people affected by war, and are donating the funds to two organizations, The International Red Cross, and Doctors Without Borders.

They had a wonderful time at the event and had 35 of their members who were able to help at the events. All of the members helped with the planning and advertising of the events.



Tania Achiever's JOI Club in Kenya Tamara Kirch

Here are **two videos** related to the **Tania Integrated Centre** and our newly chartered **Tania Achievers JOI Club** sponsored by Tamarac Optimist Club

Video 1) Tania Integrated Centre overview from founder and a board member

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RZvVapxx8m1VVbHDBb5IQiq6J-xdboVF/view>

Video 2) Here's pen pal "letters" from class 8 children (equivalent to freshman in high school)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xcfZkcViodnV6-6b_9tuWJiwlVJfJuxd/view

Tania Achievers JOI Club are **looking for other JOI Clubs who would like to be their Pen Pals**. Please email the Tania Achievers JOI Club Chair, **Tamara Kirch**, at lovethinks@gmail.com if your JOI Club is interested

Tamarac OC Reaches Distinguished Level

At the 2nd quarter conference, the Tamarac Optimist Club received the Distinguished Club Award for the last Optimist Year. All requirements were met including exceeding new members, new project, and sponsoring a new JOI club in Kenya. **Linda Williams** also received the Distinguished Lt Gov award.

Other clubs reaching Honor Club status were Windsor Gardens, Monaco South and Littleton OC.

Pictured L-R: Linda Williams, Nancy DeNiro, Bonnie West, Claire Merrill, Tony Carpenter, Connie Ackerman. In back: Ron Benson, Bob Hamblin, & Larry Pulaski



Windsor OC Promotes Kindness Week

Lisa Banninga

The Optimist Club of Windsor working with the Town of Windsor promotes **Kindness Week** each year. Starting on the second Sunday of February, each of the seven days has a segment of the community targeted for random acts of kindness. They are:

- Sunday; good deeds or acts of service
- Monday; be nice to senior citizens
- Tuesday; give a word of encouragement
- Wednesday; pay it forward
- Thursday; thank an educator
- Friday; thank a first responder or a veteran
- Saturday; be kind to your neighbor

Below: Members assembling KIND bars



In past years our club put up posters and fliers at various business, public and school locations. This year we decided to add to those actions we added steps to promote Kindness to a broader spectrum of our community. **We purchased 540 Kind bars, added a tag to each bar with a short note**, our club name and QR code to our web page on Kindness week. **Severance and Windsor Middle schools each received 180 bars** so the teachers and administration staff could reward students for performing random acts of kindness. This was a big hit with the teachers and other staff members.

In addition we **shared about 100 bars** with senior citizens who have lunch at the **Windsor Community Recreation Center**. The remainder of the bars were provided to club members to give to those that they saw performing various acts of Kindness. Club members gathered on February 1, 2024 to assemble the bars, a good way to celebrate Optimist Day. Thanks to all of our club members who helped with this rewarding project.

District Oratorical 2023-2024 Contest Steve Gorrell, District Chairman

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**"

All contest will be Combined Gender

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

1st, 2nd and 3rd 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 3rd Quarter Conference.** The District's 1st 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. 2nd place District winner will receive a \$1,500 scholarship and 3rd place District winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

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

You can go to 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.

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



CO/WY District Leadership wishes you the very best for these holidays and the months ahead!



Giving Every Living Creature You Meet a Smile

By Bob Hamblin, District Foundation Representative

In every country of the world, no matter what the language, the one **expression that is instantly understood by everyone is a smile**. The natural inclination of every human being is to smile back when someone smiles at you.

Scientists (who evidently get paid a lot of money to study this stuff) have determined **it takes forty-three separate muscles to frown, but only seventeen to smile**. So it actually takes a conscientious effort to NOT respond with a smile. Smiling can lift your mood, alleviate stress, and can even lower your blood pressure. Have you ever noticed how people who are always smiling attract other positive people? We naturally **tend to gravitate more toward someone who is smiling** than frowning. There's just something warm and accepting about a smile that makes you more likable and approachable.

My friends, I believe **one of the greatest traits** that we as Optimists can demonstrate is a genuine love for all living creatures. And a smile is a reflection of that love. It certainly doesn't cost us anything! Perhaps there are some who say it's unrealistic "to wear a cheerful countenance at all times". Yet if **we can make a sincere effort** to live each day with an optimistic, positive outlook toward others, we can't help but smile more!

As Optimists, if each one of us honestly believes that every life is important, and that everyone has been blessed with unique talents and purpose to share with the world, then it only makes sense that each of us bears a responsibility to develop our own gift, and to encourage others to do the same. **When we "give every living creature a smile" we learn to honor all living things, no matter how insignificant they may otherwise seem to us.**

"If you want to discover the true heart of a man, observe the respect he has for the one who cannot bring benefit back to him".



DTC Sweet Dream Packing Event At a New Location Lois Parker

DTC participated in a Sweet Dream packing event on February 27th at the East Community Center in Littleton. Eight DTC members participated: **Connie & George Ackerman, Laura Mitchell, Charlie & Gunar Neumann, Abigail Nicholas, and Wes & Lois Parker**. There were also 2 guests participate: **Ryan Bresnahan and Hannah Mitchell**.

DTC partners with Sweet Dream with a packing event every 2 months or so.

