The Optimist Outlook – November 2026



Bismarck Optimist Club

A Look Ahead to…

November Programs, Jillian Lagasse, Chair

November 2nd – Fill Caring for Kids Backpacks

November 3rd – Dakota Media Access – Tom Gerhardt

November 5th – Board of Directors meeting

November 10th – Mandan Schools Director of Indian Education – Travis Albers

November 11th – Veterans Day Avenue of Flags

November 17th – Mandan Little Learners – Janet Bassingthwaite

November 24th – Innovation School – Kelsey Achtenberg

November 26th – Happy Thanksgiving!



Recap of October Programs, Sarah Rooney, Chair

October 5th – Filled 30 Caring for Kids Backpacks - Sara Pic & Sylvia Burgess

October 6th – Soul 57, Kris Dirk, Program Director

October 8th – Board of Directors meeting

October 10th – Optimist Bowling Tournament

October 13th – Bismarck Mandan Young Life, Medora Lauf

October 20th – Mandan Cares, Renee Murrish & Java, her golden retriever

October 27th – COPS & KIDS, Travis Rau, Police Youth Worker

Upcoming Program Chair:

December – Mary Reiser
January – Jerry Haas
February – Cindy Clairmont

Contact: Rob Koppinger at robk@kirkwoodbank.com for more information

Member Anniversaries

Sarah Rooney – 1 year Laurie Swank – 1 year Tana Sukauskas – 2 years
Brad Thompson – 11 years Kathy Waldera – 16 years Tonya Holmstrom – 18 years
Tom Miller – 26 years Daryl Kerzman – 36 years

Welcome New Member – Bailee Bulman Hanson

Bismarck Global Neighbors Named 2026 Optimist Impact Grant Recipient

BISMARCK, N.D. — October 2026 — The Optimist Club of Bismarck is proud to announce Bismarck Global Neighbors as a recipient of the 2026 Optimist Impact Grant, awarding the organization $5,000 to support the development of its new Youth Village: A Creative Community Space for New American Youth.

The Optimist Impact Grant supports local nonprofit projects and initiatives that make a direct or lasting impact on youth in the Bismarck-Mandan community. The grant reflects the Optimist Club of Bismarck's mission of providing hope and a positive vision while creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential.

Founded in 2015, Bismarck Global Neighbors works to foster the successful integration of New Americans into the community. Its Youth Development Program serves New American youth through programs for students in grades K-12 as well as mentoring opportunities for young people ages 15-24. Global Neighbors currently serves 58 youth between the ages of 10 and 24 through its youth programming.

The $5,000 Optimist Impact Grant will help Global Neighbors establish its Youth Village, an intentionally designed space within the Global Village expansion in downtown Bismarck. The Youth Village will bring together New American youth in a welcoming environment designed to encourage connection, creativity and a sense of belonging.

Inspired by the concept of a "village" as a place of belonging and shared identity, the project will include a flexible gathering area, a "Story Wall" featuring youth artwork and stories, cultural displays representing diverse regions, and creative tools for art, photography and storytelling. The grant will also help launch a Creative Expression Program featuring photography projects, visual storytelling, guided conversations and youth-led activities.

The Optimist Club of Bismarck has supported youth throughout the community since 1971 through service projects, scholarships, and other programs. Previous Optimist Impact Grant recipients include

TR 4 Heart and Soul, Bismarck Parks and Recreation District's Zonta Park, Elks Camp Grassick, Abused Adult Resource Center, Gateway to Science, Dakota Children's Advocacy Center, 31:8 Project, Mystic Smiles and Welcome House.
The Optimist Club of Bismarck will present the $5,000 Optimist Impact Grant to Bismarck Global Neighbors on Friday, Oct. 9, at 12:00 noon at the Bismarck Global Neighbors office (208 E Broadway Ave).

Jillian Lagasse, Committee Chair



Impact Committee members Jerry Haas, Mary Reiser, Jillian Lagasse and Amanda Yellow are pictured with 3 Global Neighbors representatives.



Rob Koppinger recently accepted BSC President's Club recognition awarded for the Optimist Impact Grant provided to Mystic Smiles in 2025.



It is hard to believe but it is time to start thinking about our gift wrap booth!

We will be setting up the booth on Friday, December 4, and wrapping presents from Saturday, December 5-Thursday, December 24.

This is the club's largest fundraiser and we need as many members as possible to help to make this a success!

Watch for the volunteer sign-ups coming soon!

Our 12th Annual Optimist Bowling Tournament took place on October 10th at Midway Lanes and was a smashing success!

We are very excited to report that our gross this year for the bowling tournament, silent auction and 50-50 raffle was $7,402, which breaks last year's record! This year's silent auction was the largest that we have ever had with 58 items and raised the most since we started this event bringing in a whopping $4,090! We sincerely appreciate all of you that generously donated items for our silent auction.

The net proceeds will be split 50-50 between our Optimist Club and this year's charity, Soul 57, which will end up making a positive impact on the lives of countless youth in our community.

We would also like to give a shout-out to this year's award winners:

Grand Champion - BNC Bank

Battle of the Banks competition - BNC Bank

Most Creative Team Name - "Wow, that is a Creative Team Name"

Best Team Spirit - "Mandan Nights- the Ballad of Dickey Slobby"

Highest Team Bowling Score (non-bank) - Splittin' Headaches

When this event started 12 years ago, we had 4 bowling teams and 12 silent auction items. It has been amazing and heartwarming to see how far things have come and the major impact we have been able to make over the years to benefit several organizations that serve the youth in our community!

Thanks again for all your support in making this happen!

Your Optimist Bowling Committee Members,

Jerry Haas
Amanda Yellow
Wes Engbrecht
Sylvia Burgess
Rhonda Krueger
Sarah Rooney
Brooks Grotte

Mandan Nights - the Ballad of Dickey Slobby
Team Spirit Award



BNC Bank – Battle of the Banks and Grand Champions



Splittin' Headaches – Highest Non-Bank Team Score





The Pruess Party – Best Costumes

Wow, that is a Creative Team Name!
Most Creative Team Name Award





A few of the 58 silent auction options



2026 charity supported by proceeds from the tournament

Renee Murrish and K9 Java of Mandan Cares, a critical response team, were presenters on October 20th. While Renee spoke, Java worked the room, stopping with each person in attendance to get to know us. Cindy Clairmont got some extra attention when Java sat beside her in an empty chair!







2026-27 Board of Directors:

President: Rob Koppinger, email: robk@kirkwoodbank.com

Vice-President: Mary Reiser, email: maryreiser85@gmail.com

Secretary: Sylvia Burgess, email: sylvia.sturn.burgess@gmail.com

Treasurer: Tami Emter, email: tamiemter@hotmail.com

Past President: Jillian Lagasse, email: jillian.lagasse@hotmail.com

Director: Cindy Clairmont (1 year remaining) email: c_clairmont@hotmail.com

Director: Laurie Hatzenbuhler (1 year remaining) email: laurieh@bis.midco.net

Director: Brent Helm (1 year remaining) email: brenth701@aol.com

Director: Sarah Miller (2 years remaining) email: sarahm@kirkwoodbank.com

Director: Maddie Berger (2 years remaining), email: mberger@bravera.bank

Director: Jerry Haas (2 years remaining) email: jerry_r_haas@yahoo.com

Optimist Resources:

Email: bis.optimist@gmail.com

Website: www.optimistbismarck.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/optimistclubofbismarck

Twitter Handle: @optimistbis; https://twitter.com/OptimistBis

DMM: www.optimist-dmm.org

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 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 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 & too happy to permit the presence of trouble.