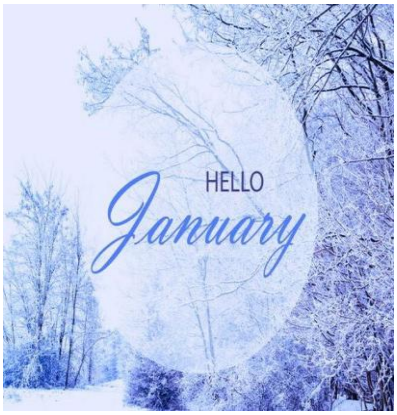
The Optimist Outlook – January 2026



Bismarck Optimist Club

A Look Ahead to…

January Programs, Julie Jeske, Chair

January 5th – Fill Caring for Kids Backpacks

January 6th – Ron Walters, Heartview Foundation

January 8th – Board of Directors Meeting

January 13th – Mary Reiser, Rock the Red

January 20th – Julie Bosch, Team Kaizen

January 27th – Nikhil Kalothia, Bismarck Mandan Tennis Association

Recap of December Programs, Laurie Hatzenbuhler, Chair

December 1st – Filled 30 Caring for Kids Backpacks

December 2nd – Social at Broadway Grill and Tavern

December 4th – Board of Directors Meeting

December 9th – Meeting cancelled due to weather

December 16th – Amy Chang, Bella Health and Wellness

December 23rd – No noon meeting – **Merry Christmas!**

December 30th – No noon meeting – **Happy New Year!**

Upcoming Program Chairs:

February: Sarah Miller
March: Cindy Clairmont
April: Rob Koppinger

Contact: jillian.lagasse@hotmail.com for more information

Welcome New Member

Amy DeWitt

Member Anniversaries

Chad Johnson – 9 years

Keith Magnusson – 47 years

7th Annual Optimist Toy Drive

The recipient this year was Dakota Children's Advocacy Center Closet of Caring.

On December 22nd about 550 toys were delivered to them!

BISMARCK OPTIMIST CLUB

CONTACT
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Committee Chair
701-226-6285
ktorske@bravera.bank

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 16, 2025

Local Optimist Club to Sponsor Essay Contest For Students

BISMARCK, ND – The Optimist Club of Bismarck is encouraging area students to contemplate the phrase "**How My Acts of Service Help Me Understand What My Community Means to Me**" as part of the Optimist International Essay Contest for the 2025-2026 school year.

The Optimist Club will judge the local students' essays, based on the theme of "**How My Acts of Service Help Me Understand What My Community Means to Me**" and determine the top winners. The top winner will receive $500 and the winning essay will be sent to the district level where a $2,500 college scholarship will be awarded to the winner.

Students wishing to participate in the essay contest can find out more about the contest by contacting the club at 701-226-6285 or ktorske@bravera.bank. Essay submission deadline is February 9, 2026.

Optimist International is one of the world's largest service club organization with 80,000 adult and youth members in 2,500 clubs in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, and throughout the world. Carrying the motto "Friend of Youth," Optimists conduct positive service projects that reach more than six million young people each year. To learn more about Optimist International, please visit the organization's website at www.optimist.org.

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Gift wrap 2025 is officially "wrapped up!" Gross proceeds from sponsorships, wrapping and donations are $21,967.52!

Thank you to all our members and non-members who participated to make this, our club's largest fundraiser, a success. It takes many Club members, friends, families, and employees of our sponsors to cover all the shifts. A HUGE THANK YOU to the committee for coordinating all the pieces and parts to make it all happen!

Pay-It-Forward sponsors this year include Dakota Community Bank, Bravera Bank, Basin Electric, Capital Credit Union, First Western Bank, Kirkwood Bank & Trust, First International Bank, Gate City Bank, Choice Bank, and Secret Santa.

The Committee: Alicia Vollmers, Sarah Miller, Tami Emter, Jerry Haas, Julie Jeske, Rob Koppinger, and Roger Anderson

Power Up Your Optimism for 2026

As the New Year kicks off, a lot of people are focused on their New Year's resolutions. Here's one to consider adding to your resolutions list - consider inviting a guest to join you for Optimist in the month of January! If the guest becomes a member of our club, you will receive a $25 gift card. Not a bad way to kick off 2026, right? Also, your guest will have the opportunity to draw a power-related item from our mystery box at our weekly Optimist meeting. We can't really share what is all in the box, but they will not be disappointed!

A huge shout-out to our fellow Optimists that have recruited new members since Power up your Optimism kicked off in September. Julie Jeske-2 new members, followed by Sylvia Burgess, Daryl Kerzman and Wes Engbrecht each bringing in one new member!

New members provide new energy and ideas for our Optimist Club, so let's do our best to start the new year off strong by recruiting some more new members to our Bismarck Optimist Club!

POWER UP
YOUR
OPTIMISM

Mary (Mabin) Reiser

Hometown/Family: Born on Christmas Eve in Minot, ND, I grew up in a family deeply rooted in faith, fun, and service. To this day, I treasure the time I spend each week with my 91-year-old mother and my two siblings, Patty and Mike.

I met and married my husband, Jeff, 40 years ago, and together we've raised three adult children—each now married—who have blessed us with six wonderful grandchildren.

The attached photo was taken recently and offers a glimpse of our tight-knit family, now spanning four generations here in Bismarck.

Education/Career: After graduating from St. Cloud State in Minnesota, I moved to Bismarck and began a lifelong career in customer service and leadership. Over the years, I worked for several wonderful organizations including Aetna, United Blood Services, and Pearson Professional Testing, but I found my true passion and most rewarding chapter of my career in 2014 when I joined the American Heart Association as the regional School Engagement and Corporate Events Director. I retired this past May but continue to stay connected by serving on the AHA's statewide advocacy committee and the local Rock the Red for women's heart health executive board.

Volunteerism: Retirement has opened up the opportunity to focus even more on giving back. Joining the Optimist Club has been one of the most rewarding experiences - I love its commitment to supporting youth in our community, the year-round variety of volunteer opportunities, and the friendships I'm gaining along the way.

I also have enjoyed combining travel to visit friends with volunteering for ***their*** events. In the past few months, I've had wonderful and inspiring experiences helping out with the Duluth Air Show, the Detroit Lakes Heart Walk and the Fargo Great North Pole Gala.

Hobbies: I am an avid walker, biker, swimmer, yogi, and healthy home chef striving to inspire my friends and family to take care of their hearts and have fun in the process.

Favorite Quote: When I earned my first promotion, I received a congratulations card from my brother. Inside, he wrote:

"Remember, you have not reached a higher level of prominence, you have been called to a higher level of service."

Committee Feature – Super Bowl Board Contest

It's Super Bowl time again and we are ready to battle for a big pay-out on the Super Bowl board! See the information below so we can start selling the 100 board spaces. The deadline for all spaces to be sold is January 30th.

Put on your favorite team gear, unless it's purple because they aren't going to make it, and prepare to win!

Committee Chair: Wes Engbrecht

Rules of the game

- The game consists of a board with 100 squares.
- Each square is available for purchase at $20: cash, checks, or Venmo @Wes Engbrecht
- The purchased squares will be assigned with a random number generator.
- The top and side rows will correspond to numbers zero to nine which are picked randomly, with the rows assigned to one of the competing teams.
- If you have the box that corresponds to the second digit of the score, you win!
- Payouts will be $150 for each of the first three quarters and $300 for the final score. This is a fundraiser for the club, so we do keep some of the proceeds.
- If you have any questions regarding the game or the rules, please contact Wes Engbrecht at wese@capitalelec.com or (701) 400-2751.

Contest will be open until Jan. 30th, 2026

Super bowl is on Sunday, February 8th, 2026

2025-26 Board of Directors:

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

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

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

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

Past President: Julie Jeske, email: jjeske@bravera.bank

Director: Cindy Clairmont (2 years remaining) email: c_clairmont@hotmail.com

Director: Laurie Hatzenbuhler (2 years remaining) email: laurieh@bis.midco.net

Director: Brent Helm (2 years remaining) email: brenth701@aol.com

Director: Sarah Miller (1 year remaining) email: sarahm@kirkwoodbank.com

Director: Maddie Berger (1 year remaining), email: mberger@bravera.bank

Director: Jerry Haas (1 year 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.