

The 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 to 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 time 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, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.*

--Optimist International

Purposes

To develop optimism as a philosophy of life utilizing the tenets of the Optimist Creed;

- * To promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs;
- * To inspire respect for the law;
- * To promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people;
- * To aid and encourage the development of youth, in the belief that the giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life and the world.



**Indiana South District
Optimist International**

40th Annual Indiana South District Convention

505 Mariott Dr. Clarksville, IN

Clarksville, Indiana

August 28-29, 2026



Message from Governor Monica...

Dear Members of the Indiana South District, As we enter the last quarter of our year together, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your unwavering commitment to service and to making a lasting impact in your communities. Your dedication has carried us far, and together, we have accomplished remarkable things. Now is the time to finish the year strong! Our work is far from over. The needs within our communities remain, and there are always new opportunities to serve, to uplift, and to inspire. Let's build upon the momentum we've created and continue to reach out, share the spirit of optimism, and invite others to join our mission. Each new member strengthens our clubs and multiplies our capacity to do good. Our youth hold the future in their hands. As Optimists, it is our privilege and responsibility to help them see a world filled with possibility and hope. If you sponsor a Junior Optimist International (JOI) club, encourage graduating seniors to stay engaged and start their own clubs or join your ranks, so they can continue to make a difference with their peers and nurture their spirit of optimism into adulthood. Let's use these final months to grow even stronger, to continue making ripples of change—one member, one act of kindness, one hopeful young person at a time. Every club and every member matters. Your efforts inspire hope and optimism for generations to come. Thank you for your passion, your service, and your dedication. Together, let's ensure the Indiana South District finishes this year with strength, unity, and a renewed commitment to our mission.



**See you at the 2026-2027
1st Quarter Conference**

November 7th, 2026
Richard A. Carlucci Aquatics Center
651 Vestal Road, Plainfield, IN 46168

Liz Christman, OI Vice-President



Dear Optimist Friends, It is my honor and privilege to serve as your Regional Vice President for the Middle America Region. From the very first time I volunteered with an Optimist service project, I felt something click: a deep alignment between who I am and what our Optimist organization stands for. Hope. Action. Community. Growth. That's the heart of Optimist International, and it's what fuels my commitment every single day. Professionally, I've spent 25+ years in education and nonprofit management. That journey gave me the skills and perspective to lead, but more importantly, it grounded me in service. Today, I work as a project manager by day-and pour my energy into being an Optimist by night (and let's be honest, most weekends too). While I've served in many roles throughout my Optimist career, the ones closest to my heart have been Governor of the East Missouri District (2020 - 2021) and International Leadership Development Chair (2023 - 2024). In those roles, I've had the joy of nurturing leaders, building connections and helping others discover just how powerful they can be when they lead with hope. But beyond the titles, what truly fills my cup is being out in the community-volunteering side by side, learning from others, and doing the hands-on work that reminds us why we do what we do. My guiding light is a line from our Creed: "To think only of the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best." It's a bold standard and a daily practice. This year, I promise to walk beside you with optimism, courage, and a deep respect for the work you're doing in your clubs, your communities and your hearts. Here's to a year of purpose, connection, and unstoppable hope. I can't wait to see all that we'll accomplish -- together.

**Thank you to the Past Governors'
Association for supporting Convention printing expenses
and years of service to the Indiana South District!**



Message from Governor-Elect Jim Tribble...

Welcome to Clarksville and the 2026 Annual Convention of the Optimist Indiana South District. The LDC and the Executive Committee have worked together to put in place a program which we believe is worthy of your time.

Hopefully, at its conclusion, it will be viewed as two days in which we shall have enjoyed a great dinner theater performance in the company of good friends and then moved on to the business of the Optimist Indiana South District.

What is that business?

First, it is the coming together to reinforce our commitment to the purposes of Optimism and its Creed. While our club's impact is local, our organization's reach is across Indiana South and much of the world.

Second, it is an opportunity to learn about the responsibilities we share as officers and members.

Finally, it is a chance to have some fun and enjoy each other's company. Take advantage of that opportunity.

Our commitment to the purposes of Optimism calls each of us to commit to identifying and recruiting members of our communities who share those ideals. We need to work continuously to raise awareness of our mission to improve the lives of children in our communities.

The training offered at the annual convention both reinforces that which we already have experienced and brings us up to date on OI programs and policies. Through this training we all become better, more productive Optimists.

This year, we shall be conducting a short quiz game which we hope will be a bit of fun and that it expands your knowledge about OI and the Indiana South District.

It is my intention to be a resource to the entire district, but to do that most effectively I shall need you to reach out to me for participation and support when needed. As Kent Reyling noted, we are "Better Together."

Convention Agenda

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28th

**4:30 p.m. Joint Executive Committee (Wallace/Tribble Teams)
York Room**

6:00 p.m. Dinner & Evening Entertainment-Derby Dinner Theater

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23rd

7:00-7:45 a.m. Past Governors' Meeting-Derby Room

8:00-9:15 a.m. Old Timers/New Timers Breakfast

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Open Convention | Governor Monica |
| • Invocation | Chaplain Tony Trimble |
| • Pledge of Allegiance | Veterans |
| • Introduction of Guest Speaker | Governor Monica |
| • Breakfast | |
| • Introductions-1st Timers | Governor Monica |
| • Countdown | Dave Osborne |
| • Adjourn-Optimist Creed | Gov.-Elect Jim |

BREAK (15 MINUTES)

9:30-9:55 District Board Meeting

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| • Call to Order | Governor Monica |
| • Approval of Minutes | Deb Kelb |
| • Financial Report | Deb Kelb |
| • Policy and Zoning | Tony Trimble |
| • Candidate Qualifications | IPG Walt Willms |
| • Convention Overview | LDC Committee |
| • Adjourn | Governor Monica |
| • Transition to Breakout | |

10:00 a.m. Joint Officer Training

Lt. Governors & Presidents-Tribble Team-**Shakespeare Room**

Club Secretaries/Treasurers-Wallace Team-**Elliott Room**

ALL OTHER ATTENDEES-Chaucer/Byron Room

Optimists in Action

Was that Elvis I Saw?

Transition to General Session

11:00 a.m. General Session-Chaucer/Byron Room

- OI VP Message Liz Christman
- How to Run a Club
Essay Contest Tony Trimble
- Setting up a Club Foundation Kevin Kessinger
- OI Institute Bill Cherolis
- Club Health-
Stop-Start-Continue Andy Tice

BREAK 15 MINUTES

12:00 a.m. Luncheon Meeting-Derby Room

- Welcome Governor-Elect Jim
- Invocation Chaplain Tony Trimble
- Lunch
- Minute Now Events Report
- SMART Goal Setting
- New Business-History Quiz Game
- Awards/Pictures
 - Adjourn with Optimist Creed

BREAK 15 MINUTES

District Humanitarian Award Recipients

Indiana District

1983-84

Herman Greenwood

1985-86

William "Bill" Scott

Indiana South District

1986-87

Cyril Block, Jasper

1987-88

Jerry Martin, Indianapolis

1988-89

Gayle Manaugh, Hanover

1989-90

Dave Berkley, Columbus

1990-91

Jeffrey Stratton, Petersburg

1991-92

Frank Peebles, Clay County

1992-93

Glen Bowers, Danville

1993-94

Connie Daugherty, Jeffersonville

1994-95

Irv Bittler, Columbus

1995-96

William M.S. Myers, Indianapolis Downtown

1996-97

Reada Barnhart, Speedway "500"

1997-98

Carl Smith, Plainfield

1998-99

Mickey Higdon, Jr., Clarksville

1999-00

Brenda Hurm, Jasper Luncheon

2000-01

Mario "Mark" Wilson, North Vermillion

2001-02

Ralph Kennedy, Santa Claus

2002-03

Mike Smith, Jr., Georgetown

2003-04

Doris Stone, Jeffersonville Evening

2004-05

Karen Decker, Jeffersonville Falls City

2005-06

Oren "Doc" Sutherlin, North Vermillion

2006-07

Bill Drake, Mill Creek

2007-08

Paul Grant, Avon

2008-09

Thomas Logsdon, Santa Claus

2009-10

Cheryl Curry, Indianapolis Downtown

2010-11

Bill Nelson, Mill Creek

2011-12

Rick France, Indianapolis Downtown

2012-13

Daniel Keefe, Santa Claus

2013-14

Dawn Wickham, Plainfield

2014-15

Ken Loudonback, Indianapolis Downtown

2015-16

Trish Vaal, Santa Claus

2016-17

Tom Thake, Santa Claus

2017-18

Andy Harris, 500 West

2018-19

Greg Kuhn, Indianapolis Breakfast

2019-20

Vally Allen, Indianapolis Downtown

2020-21

Rick Johnson, Greensburg

2021-22

Merrill Smith, Greensburg

2022-23

Sue Fuhrman, Santa Claus

2023-24

Brook Reinoehl, Clay County

2024-25

Jeff Heathman, Santa Claus

2025-26

Jessica Heathman, Santa Claus

District Distinguished Optimist Award Recipients

Indiana District

1977-78 William "Bill" Scott, Jeffersonville
 1985-86 John Reel, Plainfield

Indiana South District

1986-87 Dale Voight, Jasper
 1987-88 Victor Hurm, Jr., Jasper
 1988-89 Don Mershon, Mooresville
 1989-90 Philip Powers, Indianapolis Downtown
 1990-91 Dr. Greg Berger, Jasper
 1991-92 Jim Crowe, Avon
 1992-93 Joe LaFauci, Columbus
 1993-94 Mike Woodward, Plainfield
 1994-95 Kent Reyling, Jasper
 1995-96 Don Pifer, Columbus
 1996-97 Stan Stewart, Jasper
 1997-98 O. Ray Marvel, Greenwood White River
 1998-99 Paula Reyling, Jasper
 1999-00 Carolyn Wischmann, Indianapolis Breakfast
 2000-01 Ken Kolmerten, Indianapolis Downtown
 2001-02 Rick France, Indianapolis North Side
 2002-03 Steve Arisman, Speedway "500"
 2003-04 Bethe Arisman, Speedway "500"
 2004-05 Linda Stein, Mill Creek
 2005-06 Judy McDowell, Wabash Valley
 2006-07 Mario "Mark" Wilson, North Vermillion
 2007-08 Pat France, Indianapolis Downtown
 2008-09 Herman Greenwood, Speedway "500"
 2009-10 Ron Fuhrman, Santa Claus
 2010-11 Paul Grant, Avon
 2011-12 Kathy Williams, Jeffersonville
 2012-13 Andy Tice, Plainfield
 2013-14 Mike Novak, Greensburg
 2014-15 Gerald Lawrence, Greensburg
 2015-16 Jerry Schue, Santa Claus
 2016-17 Cheryl Curry, Indianapolis Downtown
 2017-18 Chuck Curry, Indianapolis Downtown
 2018-19 Sandi Holstein, Fishers
 2019-20 Elbert Bradshaw, Indianapolis Breakfast
 2020-21 No Nominee
 2021-22 Frank Fowler, Santa Claus
 2022-23 Sue Cherolis, Santa Claus
 2023-24 Jessica Heathman, Santa Claus
 2024-25 Ed Rinehart, Santa Claus
 2025-26 Melissa Eckert, Jasper

1:35 p.m. Afternoon General Session Room-Chaucer/Byron

- Call to Order Governor Monica
- Governor-Elect Election Ron Fuhrman
- Gov.-Elect Election Results Ron Fuhrman
- Gov. Incentives, Awards, etc. Governor Monica
- Committee Reports (Golf, RFL, CCDHH)
- OI Foundation & Happy Dollars DFR Mike Novak
- Memorial Service Gov. Monica & Tony
- Resolutions Tony Trimble
- Darrel's Digital Diary Darrel Paul
- LDC Debrief LDC Committee
- Final Comments
- Adjourn with Optimist Creed

4:30-5:00 p.m. Governor's Reception-Derby Room

5:00 p.m. Governor's Banquet-Derby Room

- Welcome & Introductions Andy Tice
- Invocation Tony Trimble
- Pledge of Allegiance Veterans
- Boo-Boo Award
- Humanitarian of the Year John Evans/
Lisa Rollins
- Distinguished Optimist of the Year
- Dinner
- 2026-27 Officer Installation OI VP Liz Christman
- Remarks from Gov.-Elect
- Remarks from Gov. Designate Jim Tribble
- Governor's Message Monica Wallace
- Adjourn-Optimist Creed



Wendy Dant Chesser

Indiana House of Representatives

State Representative Wendy Dant Chesser serves House District 71 in the Indiana House Representatives. She was sworn into office on June 4, 2024. Rep. Dant Chesser serves on the following House committees: Commerce, Small Business, and Economic Development;

Financial Institutions; Insurance; and Roads and Transportation. After her first Legislative Session in 2025, the Indiana Chamber recognized Wendy as a "Champion Freshman Legislator" for her votes on legislation promoting business growth in Indiana.

Wendy graduated with a degree in business management from Indiana University Southeast. In 2010, she received her credentials as a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) from the International Economic Development Council. In both 2022 and 2023, the Indianapolis Business Journal (IBJ) named Wendy one of the "Indiana 250," recognizing her as one of the most influential business leaders in the state.

Wendy has worked extensively to bring high-paying jobs and business development to Southern Indiana in her previous and current positions. She is currently employed by the River Ridge Commerce Center, one of the nation's premier business and industrial parks. This follows her decade of service as President and CEO of One Southern Indiana which oversaw a 1,000+ member Chamber of Commerce. She supervised business attraction and talent development programs to bring economic growth to Clark, Floyd and Scott Counties. Wendy is now part of the team charged with redeveloping the River Ridge Commerce Center, a former military ammunitions facility emerging as the premier business park in the Midwest. Wendy spent her early career serving with the Indiana Department of Commerce and the Indiana Rural Development Council.

Wendy is a past and present member of several organizations. She currently serves as Legislative Committee Chair and Past Chair for the Indiana Economic Development Association. In Southern Indiana, she has served on the Boards for the Kentucky Derby Festival, Southern Indiana Works, the Louisville Zoo Foundation, Ivy Tech-Sellersburg Regional Campus Board and the YMCA of Greater Louisville.

Wendy is a Jeffersonville native and currently lives in the city with her daughter, Joslyn, and partner, Eric.

Past Governors' Association

Indiana District (abbreviated)

Patrick Grady	1955-56
William "Bill" Scott	1971-72*
John Reel	1981-82*

Indiana South District

O. Ray Marvel (H/DO)	1986-87*
Donald Miller (H/DO)	1987-88*
Elbert Bradshaw	1988-89*
Lou Moschell	1989-90
Rex Leonard	1990-91*
Ron Fuhrman	1991-92
Stan Stewart	1992-93
Paula Reyling	1993-94
Tracee Lutes	1994-95
Kenneth Kolmerten	1995-96
Paul Grant	1996-97
Mike Woodward	1997-98*
David Kirkman	1998-99*
Bob Thompson	1999-00
Linda Stein	2000-01
David Wischmann	2001-02*
Gerald Lawrence	2002-03*
Rick France	2003-04
Jim Fleming	2004-05
Steve Arisman (H)	2005-06
Rich Slayton	2006-07
Jerry Schue (H/D)	2007-08
Tony Trimble	2008-09
Sandi Holstein	2009-10
Kathy Underwood	2010-11
Chuck Curry	2011-12
Patricia France (H/D)	2012-13
Frank Fowler	2013-14
Mike Underwood	2014-15
Herman Greenwood	2015-16*
Dave Osborne	2016-17
Mark Wilson	2017-18
Mike Novak	2018-19
Bev Oerhle	2019-20
Bill Cherolis	2020-21
Mike Novak	2021-22
Kent Reyling	2022-23
Greg Kuhn	2023-24
Walt Willms	2024-25

* Deceased; H = Honor District; D = Distinguished Governor
DO = Distinguished and Outstanding Governor