The Midday Messenger

July 17, 2026

Newsletter of the Davenport Noon Optimist Club

Club Luncheon Meetings

We gather at noon on Fridays to connect with members and guests, enjoy a delicious lunch, and hear from engaging speakers who share programs and initiatives shaping our local community. See our upcoming events.

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Location

River Center, North Building, Iowa/Illinois Rooms, 136 E 3rd St, Davenport, IA

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Board of Directors

Roland Lamantia
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President-Elect

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Pictured: L to R Gary Blinkinsop and HOBY award recipient Henrick Senne.

Helping Students Lead, Serve, and Grow

– By Rex Hutchinson

Iowa HOBY is an affiliate of Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY), a national organization dedicated to developing and inspiring youth to lead with integrity, serve their communities, and create meaningful change. Iowa HOBY empowers high school students, alumni, and volunteers to discover and develop their leadership potential through dynamic leadership experiences and lifelong connections. The program is designed to help high school sophomores (soon to be juniors) recognize their leadership talents and apply them to become effective, ethical leaders in their home, school, and community.

Iowa HOBY hosts a three-day leadership seminar on the campus of Drake University, welcoming school and community-nominated high school students from across the state. The program's mission is to develop and inspire youth and volunteers to have a positive impact on the world.

Our club began sponsoring HOBY participants in 2007 and now supports two students each from Assumption, Bettendorf, and Davenport's three public high schools. This year's participants are Elijah Milton and Henrick Senne from Assumption; William Cox from Davenport Central; Sophie Fuller and Jacob Stichter from Davenport West; Adalynn Cauwels and Mariza Aragon from Bettendorf; and Isabella Block and Daven Winger from Davenport North. Students are nominated by their school counselors. Our club is the largest sponsor of students in the state of Iowa.

Founded in 1958 by actor Hugh O'Brian, HOBY aims to "inspire a global community of youth and volunteers to a life dedicated to leadership, service, and innovation." Leadership seminars are offered in all 50 states, giving students experience in public speaking, networking, and project planning More than 600,000 alumni nationwide have participated in HOBY Leadership seminars.

A special thank you to **Gary Blinkinsop** for chairing our HOBY program!

Iowa District Happenings

– By Jane Schmidt, Iowa District Governor

Our Child Health & Wellness project with Meals from the Heartland is scheduled for the afternoon of Aug. 29 during our district state convention in Dubuque. Our goal is to package 20,000 meals for designated Iowa food pantries.

This project will help address food insecurity for Iowa families while giving our district the opportunity to work together at convention on an effort that benefits many people.

Watch this YouTube video to learn more: https://youtu.be/ODaC81XVbx0.

Note: At its July meeting, our board approved a $1,000 grant to support this project.

New DeWitt Optimist Club to Hold Charter Meeting

Our club, the Bettendorf Optimist Club, and Governor Jane have worked diligently over the past three months to build a new Optimist Club in DeWitt. Their efforts will culminate with the charter meeting on Monday, July 27, 6 PM at the DeWitt Community Library.

Because we are co-sponsoring the new club, we hope many of our members will attend to show their support. Please consider bringing a package of children's diapers for the club's first project.

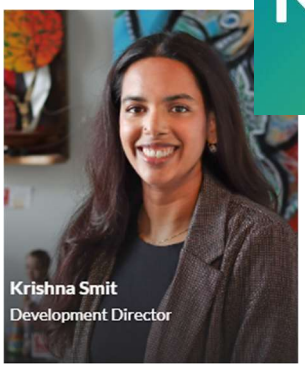
A special thank you goes to **Jim King** and **Terry Hendershott** for leading our new club building efforts in DeWitt.

If you know someone in the DeWitt area, there's still time for them to become a charter member.

Iowa District Convention Comes to Dubuque

The Iowa District Optimist Convention is coming to the scenic banks of the Mississippi River in Dubuque, August 28-30. Join Optimists from across the state for a weekend of inspiration, fellowship, and service. Come celebrate our impact and recharge our mission for the youth of Iowa! See the May District Newsletter pages 10-12 for more information and to register.

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Krishna Smit, Development Director, Quad City Arts

What do you do for fun when you are not being an Optimist? Exercise or sit outside in my garden.

When you think "Optimism," what's the first word or image that pops into your mind? Sunrise or the beginning of something.

Which line of the Optimist Creed resonates with you the most? Promise Yourself... it puts the responsibility on the individual to devote themselves to helping the organization and community succeed.

What is one thing that never fails to put a smile on your face? A good cup of coffee or matcha.

What is your "superpower" in everyday life? My Superpower is being someone people can lean on.

What community causes or youth projects are you most passionate about? Anything related to mental health or uplifting young women.

Do you have a favorite local charity or organization you already support? Besides Quad City Arts, Argrow's House.

Think back to a coach, teacher, or mentor who impacted your youth. What did they do that you want to pay forward? Many teachers and professors have served as mentors for me. They really listened to what I was interested in and supported my dreams, even if they were a little unrealistic. They provided me with guidance and skills to build my confidence.

What unique skills, hobbies, or professional talents do you love*?* I do love to cook and bake different things for my family.

Are you a "big picture brainstormer" or a "detail-oriented executor"? Detail oriented for sure.

Is there a specific club committee or role you are curious about learning more or becoming involved with? I think in my first year I am interested in learning more about this group.

What is a fun or surprising fact about you that most people don't know? Most people don't know that I used to play clarinet and violin.

If you could write a headline for the local newspaper about a major positive change in our community, what would it say? Quad Cities Cares about Mental Health.

What is your favorite way to recharge your batteries when you need a boost? When I need a boost, I turn to Whitey's Ice Cream for a little pick me up, especially in the summer.

Bringing Convention Inspiration Home

– By Brian Baxter, President-Elect

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the 108th Optimist International Convention in Jacksonville, Florida, representing the Davenport Noon Optimist Club as your incoming president. My goal was simple: learn from Optimists across North America and bring back ideas that can help strengthen and grow our own club.

The convention opened with an inspiring ceremony featuring flags from the many countries and regions represented, talented local high school musicians and dancers, and recognition of both first-time attendees and longtime Optimists—including one member with an incredible 58 years of service. Hearing hundreds of Optimists recite the Optimist Creed together was a powerful reminder of the values that unite us.

Throughout the convention, I was impressed by the tremendous impact Optimist International and the Optimist International Foundation have on young people. We heard from JOI participants, learned more about Junior Golf and other youth programs, and celebrated the accomplishments of a past Oratorical Contest winner, Sara Grace Abernathy. A recurring theme was supporting the Foundation through the "Dime-a-Day" program, which helps fund programs and opportunities for youth around the world.

One of the most inspiring speakers was President-Elect Michael Goldman, who shared his personal story of overcoming challenges as a legally blind leader while encouraging every club and member to focus on growth. His simple challenge—add just one member per month—demonstrated how small, consistent efforts can create significant results.

Several leadership and club development sessions offered practical ideas that I believe can benefit us. We learned about the Club Health Awards Program, which focuses on community impact, member engagement, foundation support, leadership development, and membership growth. I also attended sessions on volunteer engagement and strategic communications. One message stood out clearly: we do amazing work, but we need to do a better job telling our story. Consistent social media, photos, and sharing our successes can help attract new members and expand our impact.

Another session highlighted what today's volunteers are looking for in organizations. Members want meaningful service, fellowship, recognition, and meetings that are engaging and enjoyable. Ideas such as celebrating member milestones, sharing "sunshine news," incorporating icebreakers, and creating opportunities for fellowship can help strengthen club culture and member retention.

The convention also provided updates on new resources available to clubs, including recruitment micro-grants, training opportunities through the Optimist Institute, enhanced impact reporting tools, youth protection initiatives, and emerging technologies that can help clubs operate more effectively.

Most importantly, I left Jacksonville energized and optimistic about the future of our club. The Davenport Noon Optimist Club already makes a meaningful difference in our community. As we begin a new Optimist year, I look forward to working with all of you to build on our strengths, share our story more effectively, welcome new members, and continue bringing out the best in the youth, our community, and ourselves.

July 24th
Club Luncheon | **Kids for Vets** | River Center

July 27th
Charter Meeting | **DeWitt Optimist Club** | 6 PM | DeWitt Community Library | DeWitt

July 31st
Club Luncheon | **Davenport Junior Theatre** | River Center

Aug 6th
Board Meeting | 4 PM | Rudy's Tacos | 2214 E 11th St | Davenport

Aug 7th
Club Luncheon | **Business Meeting** | River Center

Aug 12th
Foundation Board Meeting | The Filling Station | 305 E 35th St | Davenport

To see the **full calendar** of events, times, and locations, visit Davenport Noon Optimist Club - HOME

Congratulations to **Brian Baxter**, the Quad City Symphony, and St. Ambrose University on their joint announcement of a proposed $24 million shared music center capital campaign.

We'd love to celebrate with you! Please send your **Sunshine** notifications, birthdays, and special announcements to

Davenport.Noon.Optimists.Club@gmail.com.

Scenes from the Optimist International Convention

Pictured Top to Bottom, L to R: The Iowa District contingent including our own Brian Baxter; Beautiful Jacksonville, Florida; Iowa District Governor Jane Schmidt addresses the convention; The Opening Ceremony of Flags from Optimist club countries; and a big time welcome to Optimists around the world recognizing first time attendees.