

CO/WY - Reaching Out



Greetings Colorado/Wyoming Optimists,

As this Optimist year comes to a close, I would like to thank all of you for the dedication and work you have done in serving our district, clubs, communities, and, of course, our youth. You have chosen to dedicate parts of your private lives to this service and of that you have my highest admiration.

As the year closes, I would like to thank the following Optimists for their service to their clubs and/or district:

District Committee Staff:

Abigail Nicholas, DTC: Conf/Conv EMCEE,
 Barb Dank, Boulder Luncheon: JOI-Chair,
 Bill Cassel, Wheat Ridge: Childhood Health & Wellness-Chair
 Bob Hamblin, Windsor Gardens: Foundation Representative
 Bob Meyer, Monaco South: Junior Golf-Chair
 Cameron Banninga, Windsor: Lt Governor-Zone 1
 Connie Ackerman, Littleton: Marketing-Chair, Brain Bowl-Chair
 Earleen Oswalt, Ft Morgan Sunrise: Lt Governor-Zone 2
 Gary Banninga, Windsor: Officer (GE), Policy-Chair, Candidate Qualifications-Chair
 George Buzick III, DTC: Grant-Chair, Lt Governor-Zone 8
 Jeff Gartz, DTC: Essay-Chair
 Kiki Mc Gough, Westy-Broomfield: Community Programs & Projects including OWLS-Chair
 Kris Gresl, LAPD: Scholarship-Chair
 Laura Mitchell, DTC: Treasurer
 Linda Williams, Tamarac: Leadership-Chair, Lt Governor-Zone 6
 Lisa Banninga, Windsor: Ambassador to International Convention
 Mary Grace Wake, Windsor Gardens: Officer-Past President, Conf/Convention-Chair
 Nancy DeNiro, Tamarac: Communication-Chair, Newsletter Editor
 Nicole Powell, Academy: Fun & Fellowship-Chair
 Sara Tanner, Boulder Luncheon: Secretary

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District Officers

- ☐ Governor— Bill Ashbee,
Boulder Luncheon OC
- ☐ Governor— Elect — Gary Banninga,
Windsor OC
- ☐ Secretary: Earleen Oswalt,
Fort Morgan Sunrise OC
- ☐ Treasurer: Laura Mitchell
DTC Optimist Club
- ☐ Immediate Past Gov: Mary Grace
Wake, Windsor Gardens OC

Lt. Governors

- ☐ Zone 1: Cameron Banninga, Windsor
- ☐ Zone 2: Earleen Oswalt, Ft Morgan Sunrise OC
- ☐ Zone 3: open
- ☐ Zone 4: Bob Hamblin, Windsor Gardens OC
- ☐ Zone 5: Douglas Smith, Littleton OC
- ☐ Zone 6: Linda Williams, Tamarac OC
- ☐ Zone 7: Tom Mehl, Gateway, OC
- ☐ Zone 8: George Buzick, MSOC

Important Websites

Optimist International:
www.optimist.org

OI Foundation: oifoundation.org/

CO/WY District:
www.optimistcowy.org/

CO/WY Brain Bowl:
www.optimistbrainbowl.org/

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Steve “Yoda” Gorrell, Westy-Broomfield: Oratorical-Chair, Finance-Chair, Parliamentarian
Terri Kearney, LAPD: Growth-Chair
Tom Mehl, Gateway: Lt Governor-Zone 7
Tony Carpenter, Wheat Ridge: SW Region VP, Board-Past President
Wade Hammond, DTC: Sergeant at Arms

Certificate of Recognition-Clubs

Membership Growth & Retention:

Bronze Medal: DTC OC, Abigail Nicholas-President
Bronze Medal: Monaco South OC, Andy Tawt-President
Silver Medal: Ft Lupton OC, Steve Moore-President
Gold Medal: Heather Gardens OC, Sue Brandreth-President
Gold Medal: Aurora-Gateway OC, Sheila Woolfork-President

Certificate of Recognition-District Members

Excellence-Treasurer: Laura Mitchell, DTC
Excellence-Lt Governor: Tom Mehl, Aurora Gateway
Best of the Best-Leadership Chair and multiple contributions: Linda Williams
Best of the Best-Conf/Conv Chair and multiple contributions: Mary Grace Wake

Proclamation:

I proclaimed August 23rd, 2025, as Steve “Yoda” Gorrell day for dedicated service to OI and District over the years. This includes advisors to multiple governors.

End-of-Year District Convention Speech – Governor Bill Ashbee

Good afternoon, fellow Optimists, friends, and champions of hope. It is with deep gratitude and pride that I stand before you today as Governor of the Colorado/Wyoming District of Optimist International. Serving this district over the past year has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Together, we’ve not only upheld the Optimist Creed—we’ve embodied it in every project, every meeting, and every act of service.

This year has been filled with challenges, yes—but more importantly, it’s been filled with triumphs. From community outreach programs to scholarship programs, to fun, informative, and productive gatherings, we’ve proven that optimism isn’t just a belief, it’s a movement. And it’s alive and thriving in every corner of our district. See Pueblo and Ft Morgan Sunrise for example.

I’ve seen firsthand the power of your dedication. You’ve mentored, volunteered, fundraised, and led with heart. You’ve lifted others up, even when the world felt heavy. And you’ve reminded me, time and again, why this organization matters.

As we close this chapter, I want to say thank you. Thank you for your trust, your support, and your unwavering commitment to making a difference. I may be concluding my term as Governor, but I am not stepping away. **Continued next page....**

Continued from page 2..... I remain committed to serving this district wherever I am needed—whether that’s behind the scenes or beside you in the field. Let us carry forward the momentum we’ve built. Let us continue to inspire, to serve, and to lead with optimism. The future is bright, and it’s ours to shape.

So, here’s to the year we’ve had and to the many more ahead. Together, we are the Colorado/Wyoming District. Together, we are Optimists.

Thank you, and let’s keep the spirit alive and let’s continue toward my theme of
“Let’s Become One”

CO/WY District Optimist 2025 Convention Review Mary Grace Wake

Let’s Become One

Celebrate

Fun and Fellowship!

The goal of fun and fellowship was accomplished at the Convention. The fun included games, bunny races and participation in the Murder Mystery Dinner. **Bob Meyer’s** cherished pink bunny won the bunny race. At the Murder Mystery Dinner, **Bob Hamblin**, after intensive detective work, was found guilty of murdering 3 people! We got to know each other better at the barbeque dinner on Friday night, our fabulous meals, and our round table discussions.

A Highlight of the Convention was motivational speaker **Cathy Reilly** who sparked us to gain more members, serve more kids, and be of service to our community.

We were honored to have **Tony Carpenter, SW Region OI VP** as our Optimist International representative. Tony, also a member of the Wheat Ridge Optimist Club, praised our District for all that it accomplished last year.

Bob Hamblin of The Optimist Club of Windsor Gardens, elected as Governor-Elect, gave an inspiring talk. **Gary Banninga**, Windsor Optimist Club, Governor Designate delivered a snapshot of the goals for this next year. His theme is Igniting the Power of Optimism. He announced that the first quarter conference will be November 8. The location is TBD.

As Governor, **Bill Ashbee** gave out many awards to individuals who had helped make his year successful. In lieu of a Governor’s roast, members told stories about Bill, and he was thanked with a gift for his dedicated service.

Mary Grace Wake presented Bill with a large check for \$1120.00 from Fund 2 orgs. for the shoes the District collected. We made an impact on the environment, and our shoes are helping entrepreneurs in 3rd world countries to earn a living.

Members engaged and shared at the round table discussions. Notes from the sessions are being compiled. Members’ feedback is that they gained new ideas and ways of accomplishing gaining

members, building clubs, fundraising, marketing, OWLS, and interacting with the community.

The members who attended had only positive statements about the Convention, and everyone had a wonderful time. Thank you to those who participated and contributed to making the 2025 Convention a success.

To the Conference/Convention Committee

The following committee members: **Bill Ashbee, Linda Williams, Kris Gresl, BJ Burleigh, Lisa Banninga, Laura Mitchell, Gary Banninga, Abigail Nicholas, Nancy DeNiro, and Connie Ackerman** helped plan and coordinate 3 District conferences, and the Convention. All these events were very successful! I am sure each of you who attended has a special memory. I appreciated all each member of the committee did. It was a pleasure being the Chair of this talented, creative committee.

Mary Grace Wake

Convention in Photos



Emcee Abigail Nicholas



Gov Bill Ashbee



**Loveland Mayor,
Jacki Marsh**



**OI Vice Pres SW Region,
Tony Carpenter**



**Keynote speaker:
Cathy Reilly
One Spark Lights the
Fire, Together We Fuel
the Flame**



**Steve (Yoda) Gorrell holds proclamation
from Gov Bill (see Gov report)**



Mary Grace presents Gov Bill with proceeds check for \$1,200 from Shoe Project



Gary presents Gov Bill with Bronco Helmet



Centerpiece for Mystery Dinner, I Love the 80's to Death



VP Tony Carpenter installs incoming officer for CO/WY District



These 5 pics are from the mystery dinner.

District Oratorical 2025-2026 Steve Gorrell District Chair

The Oratorical Contest is open to students who have not reached the age of 19 before October 1, 2025, 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: "The Moment I Realized I Belonged--My Definition of Community" 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 11, 2026.



1st , 2nd and 3rd place Regional winners will then go to the District Finals being held on April 25,2026 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.

Last year's District Winner-Rhoen Nevins sponsored by the Optimist Club of Windsor, won the Southwest Regional Contest in St Louis and won a \$5,000 dollar scholarship. He did not place in the top 3 of the World Contest. Rhoen Nevins was the 2nd Colorado-Wyoming District entry in the World Contest to win the Southwest Regional contest!

The Club contest must be completed on or before March 25,2026. 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, 2026 for the Regional Contest

All contestants must speak on the official topic in the first sentence of the speech. Timing will begin with the first spoken word.

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. Schools have started. 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, Kris Gresl (414-915-2236), or me.

Steve Gorrell

Colorado-Wyoming District Oratorical Chairperson

Sgorrell1@yahoo.com 720-308-1982

Optimist Jr Golf Bob Meyer

Each summer, hundreds of young golfers from around the world gather at Trump National Doral in Miami—not just to test their skills, but to discover who they are becoming. The Optimist Junior Golf Championship, hosted by Optimist International, welcomes boys and girls ages 10 to 18 from 32 countries and has become a proving ground not only for golf talent, but for character, community, and growth. Since 2019, the tournament has called Doral home, with a partnership in place through 2027.



For **Cheryl Brenn, Executive Director of Optimist International since 2021**, this tournament embodies everything the organization stands for. “Every young person just deserves the opportunity to discover their potential,” she said in a recent conversation. “That’s what drives us—watching them grow, on and off the course.”

Some of the biggest names in golf once stood where these young players now stand. Tiger Woods competed in the Optimist Junior Golf Championship as a child, as did current PGA Tour star Scottie Scheffler. While not every participant will go on to a professional career, the skills they learn—resilience, sportsmanship, discipline—are ones they’ll carry for life.

The path to Doral begins locally. Across North America and the Caribbean, hundreds of volunteers help organize qualifying events in their communities. It’s a grassroots effort powered by passion and dedication. Roughly 40 volunteers dedicate nearly three weeks of their time each summer to support the championship in Miami—often using their own vacation time and covering travel expenses out of pocket. “They do it out of love for these kids and the love of the game,” said Brenn. **“That’s what makes our tournament different.”**

Once on site, the experience becomes more than a competition. It’s a memory-making week filled with glow golf, longest drive contests, and college coach panels. Players get to learn, laugh, and build friendships that often outlast their tournament scores. Family involvement is central too—parents are encouraged to come, cheer, and be part of the community. Many families return year after year, not just because their children qualify again, but because they feel a sense of belonging.

Success at the Optimist isn’t measured solely by birdies and bogeys. It’s in the 10-year-old who breaks a course record, yes—but also in the player who bounces back from a tough round with grace. It’s in the new friendships, the life lessons, and the growing confidence that comes from realizing your own potential.

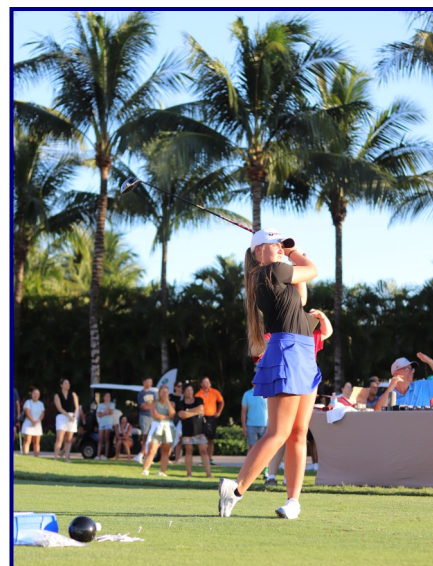
Cheryl Brenn hopes to find ways to re-engage with former participants, particularly those like Tiger Woods and Scottie Scheffler who’ve gone on to great success. “Their time is limited, but we’d love to bring some of them back to inspire today’s players,” she said.

Continued next page.....

Continued.....For young golfers dreaming of qualifying, Brenn's advice is simple and heartfelt: practice, practice, practice. And for those without a local Optimist Club, she urges them to reach out to Optimist International. The organization is committed to helping young people everywhere find their way—on the course, in their communities, and in life.

The Optimist Junior Golf Championship is more than a game. It's a celebration of youth, possibility, and the power of a single opportunity to open doors, shape futures, and build lasting optimism—one swing at a time.

We were represented by 44 Colorado junior golfers and 1 Wyoming junior golfer at THE 2025 OPTIMIST. **If you have any questions, please contact Bob Meyer at 303-919-4532 or at meyerrob@comcast.net. Bob can also visit your Club to talk about the Junior Golf Program.**



The Optimist Club of Windsor Gary Banninga, Optimist Club of Windsor

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL ORATORICAL WORLD CONTEST '25

On July 17-8, 2025 the annual Optimist International Oratorical World Contest was held in St. Louis, MO. The CO/WY District winner Rhoen Nevins who was sponsored by the Optimist Club of Windsor participated in the contest.

Thursday July 17th was the Regional competition. **Rhoen Nevans** had a great performance and was awarded the Southwest Regional Championship.

Friday July 18th was the World Championship competition. **Rhoen** again had a great speech. However, due to a very competitive field he finished just out of the top three places.

Rhoen was very thankful for this opportunity to compete at the Club, Zone, District, Region and Championship levels. The scholarship monies will help him in his future educational pursuits. We received a wonderful handwritten note from Rhoen and his mother expressing their appreciation for this experience.

Many thanks to the Optimist Club of Windsor Oratorical team, as well as **Steve Gorrell District Oratorical Chair, Kris Gresl Scholarship Chair and Michael Chavez**. As a note of our District's success in the Oratorical competition, Rhoen was the second winner in the Southwest Region, after last years winner **Hana Ahmednur**.

Looking forward to next year's competition, lets keep getting great students to participate.

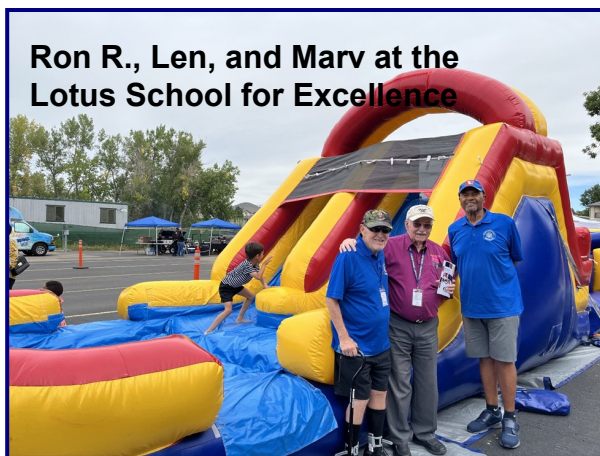
Gateway OC On the Go



Our club President, **Sheila Woolfolk** and Secretary/Treasurer, **Tom Mehl**, An opportune time to show respect for law enforcement with a free breakfast.



Honoring Law Enforcement on Respect for Law.....Honored Sgt **John Filippone**



Ron R., Len, and Marv at the Lotus School for Excellence

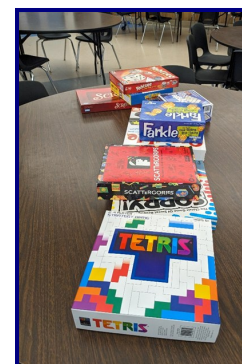
Bruce Williams, Son-in-law of Pres **Sheila Woolfork**, was honored at Respect for Law. Pictured are Officer Williams and his wife, **Serena**.



Gateway Optimist Club bought snacks and played board games with the kids residing at **Denver Children's Home**



Above: **Karen, Kim, and Tom** with **Rachelle Matossian** with Lotus School for Excellence. GOC ran the spin wheel table and donated the money for inflatable obstacle course



Windsor Gardens Optimist Club

32 AUCTIONS

visit our site:

<https://www.32auctions.com/WG025>

STARTS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10TH at 6:00 pm

Thru

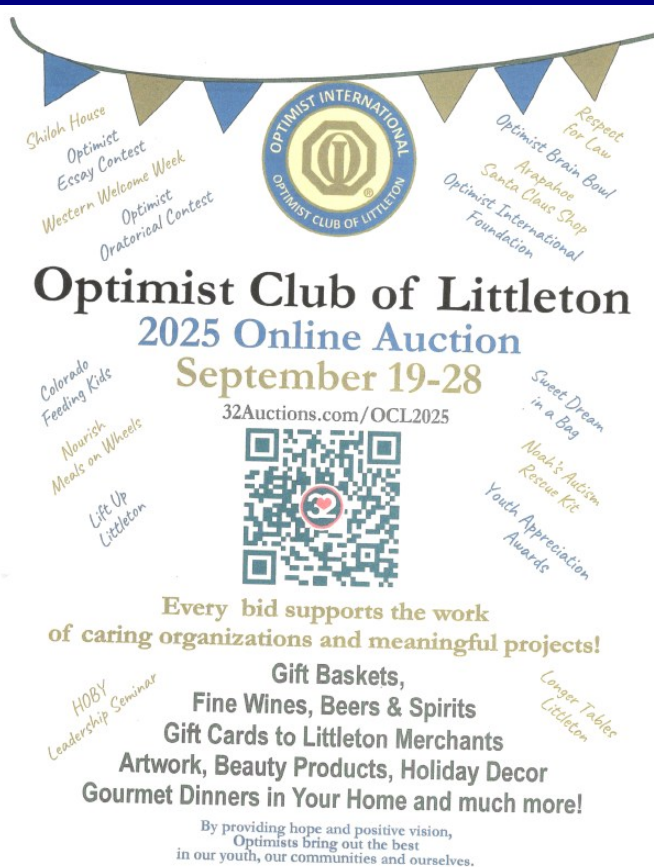
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19TH at 5:00 pm

All proceeds to help the children and organizations who sponsor children.

R.O.T.C., Pickens Technical College, Place Bridge Academy,

For more information contact Laura Wells with any

questions 303 868-3587



Optimist Club of Littleton
2025 Online Auction
September 19-28
32Auctions.com/OCL2025

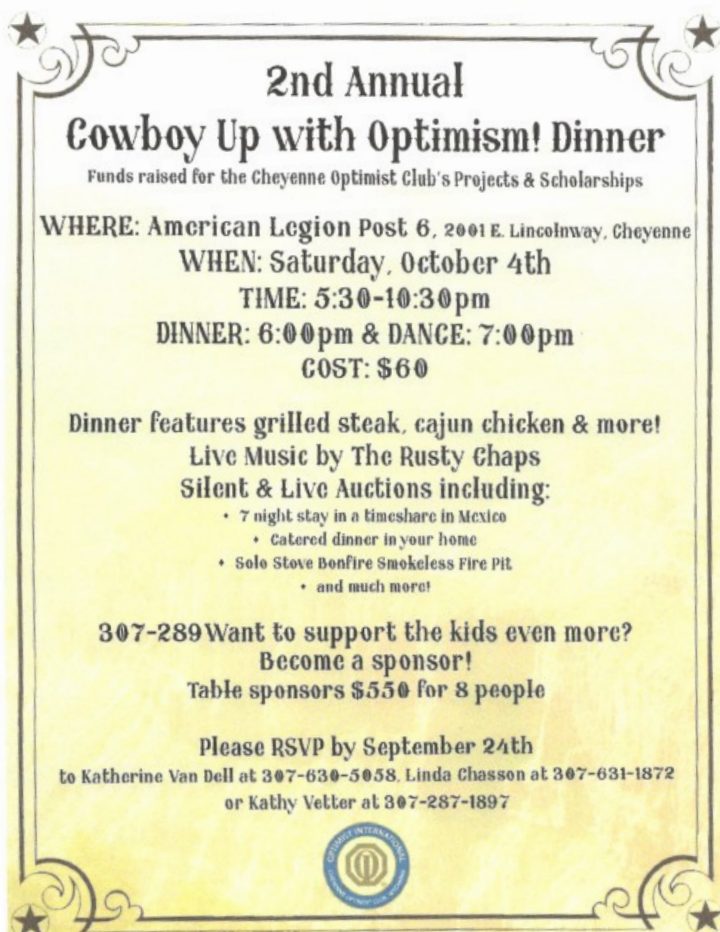


Every bid supports the work of caring organizations and meaningful projects!

Gift Baskets,
Fine Wines, Beers & Spirits
Gift Cards to Littleton Merchants
Artwork, Beauty Products, Holiday Decor
Gourmet Dinners in Your Home and much more!

By providing hope and positive vision,
Optimists bring out the best
in our youth, our communities and ourselves.

Shiloh House
Optimist Essay Contest
Western Welcome Week
Optimist Oratorical Contest
Colorado Feeding Kids
Neuroish Meals on Wheels
Life Up Littleton
HOBY Leadership Seminar
Respect for Law
Optimist Brain Bowl
Arachnoe Santa Claus Shop
Optimist International Foundation
Sweet Dream in a Bag
Neah's Autism Rescue Kit
Youth Appreciation Awards
Longer Tables Littleton



2nd Annual
Cowboy Up with Optimism! Dinner
Funds raised for the Cheyenne Optimist Club's Projects & Scholarships

WHERE: American Legion Post 6, 2001 E. Lincolnway, Cheyenne
WHEN: Saturday, October 4th
TIME: 5:30-10:30pm
DINNER: 6:00pm & DANCE: 7:00pm
COST: \$60

Dinner features grilled steak, cajun chicken & more!
Live Music by The Rusty Chaps
Silent & Live Auctions including:

- 7 night stay in a timeshare in Mexico
- Catered dinner in your home
- Sole Stove Bonfire Smokeless Fire Pit
- and much more!

307-289 Want to support the kids even more?
Become a sponsor!
Table sponsors \$550 for 8 people

Please RSVP by September 24th
to Katherine Van Dell at 307-630-5058, Linda Chassen at 307-631-1872
or Kathy Vetter at 307-287-1897



Optimist INTERNATIONAL
Denver Tech Center Optimist Club
2025 Online Auction
32Auctions.com/DTCOptimist2025

Start November 7 5pm
End November 16 6pm



Goal: \$6000

Beautiful Gift Baskets, Gift Cards,
Fine Wines & Spirits, Artwork, Jewelry
Beer Options, Beauty Products, Holiday Decor
Gourmet Dinners in Your Home and much more!

By bidding on one or more of these fabulous treasures,
you become an active participant in each one
of the DTC Optimist Club's projects.

Breakthrough T1D - Shiloh House - HOBY
Sweet Dream in a Bag - Colorado Feeding Kids
Treasure House of Hope - Fire Fly Autism
Oratorical Contest - Essay Contest
Optimist Brain Bowl - Respect for Law
Optimist International Foundation - Junior Golf

Thank you for your support!