Sun Sand & Sage

New Mexico/West Texas Optimist — Fall, 2026



Dear Optimist friends,

Our theme for 2026–2027 is "Investing in Youth". The young people pictured on our district p serve: every child deserves someone who believes in them and helps them see what is possible.

Across New Mexico and West Texas, our clubs make that investment every time we mentor a youth program, or create a place where young people feel welcome. I thank each member for t energy you give to your community. Those efforts are the successes on which we will build.

We also know that some clubs need more members, new leaders, and stronger connections wi can meet those challenges with honest conversations and practical action. I will listen to what them to share ideas that work, and help more members find a meaningful way to serve.

Investing in youth also means investing in the future of our clubs. Invite a friend to a project. I member to lead. Tell the story of a young person your club has helped. Each step can bring fre mission and help us reach another child.

I believe in what District 19 can accomplish together. Let us celebrate our clubs' successes, hel through challenges, and make this a year in which more young people experience the hope an

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH CONTESTS 2026-2027



Topic
"How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me"

ORATORICAL CONTEST

Beginning in 1928, the Oratorical Contest has become the longest-running program of Optimist International. The contest is designed for young people to gain experience in public speaking and provide them with an opportunity to compete for multiple college scholarships with a pre-assigned topic.

District Scholarships:
First Place: $2,500 • Second Place: $1,500 • Third Place: $1,000
with a chance to win up to $22,500 at the World Championships level

ESSAY CONTEST

The Essay Contest is sponsored by Optimist International to give young people the opportunity to write about their own opinions regarding the world in which they live. The approach can encompass a young person's personal experience, the experience of their country or a more historical perspective. In addition to developing skills for written expression, participants also have the opportunity to win a college scholarship!

One District Scholarship of $2,500



Topic
"Finding My Voice in a World Full of Noise"



Topic
"How My Actions Strengthen Those Around Me"

COMMUNICATION CONTEST FOR THE DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

This contest offers an opportunity for students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to present their thoughts in the community, gaining skills, which can only come from signing or speaking to a large audience. Patterned after the Optimist Oratorical Contest, the contest offers youth the chance to compete in speech or sign language with the chance to win a college scholarship.

One District Scholarship of $2,500

KIDS SPEAK OUT! SPEECH CONTEST

All young people can compete in the Optimist Oratorical Contest. The "Kids Speak Out" contest is a "pre-Oratorical" program that provides a more equitable competition for younger speakers.



Optimist INTERNATIONAL

Follow complete Official Rules posted on www.optimist.org

Club News

Rio Communities



The Club is starting a new year of the Chess Club in the schools

On October 10 they will be holding a Golf Tournament and on October 13, they will hold a Bike Safety fair.

THE Optimist Club of Albuquerque

They will be helping with the 13th annual Scare-A-Thon at the Sheraton Albuquerque Uptown Hotel from 5 to 8 Friday Oct. 30. They are also looking at several possible new members.

Cielo Vista Optimist Club



They are continuing to honor a police officer of the month. They are planning to do a Truck or Treat at a local church parking lot. During the holiday season, they will bell ring for the Salvation Army and on Christmas Day they will take a meal to a stand alone Emergency Room. They will also be "adopting" some children on the Angel Tree so they will have a better Christmas than they would have had otherwise. They will also "adopt" a couple of senior citizens who do not have families and give then a special Christmas.

The Las Cruces Optimist Club

Las Cruces is a very busy club. They will be holding a Jr. Handball Tournament and participating in the National Night Out on October 6th. They are also working with the Coats for Kids program and have started their annual Poinsettias fund raiser.

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District News

We have had to say goodbye to some beloved Optimist friends. Some have gone to a better place and then some just left Texas and New Mexico, which I'm not sure is a better place. Nevertheless, we will miss them all.

Our last quarterly conference/convention was held in Las Cruces.

The next conference will be in El Paso on November 14 -15. We will be looking forward to seeing members from ALL our clubs in the district there to represent and give their clubs a voice in the decisions that will be made at the board meeting. There will be training that will benefit everyone and, yes, a little fun and games along the way. Hope we will see YOU there.



There’s something special about being together at the Optimist International Convention. It’s where Optimists from different communities, districts, and even countries come together to connect, learn, share ideas, celebrate successes, and rediscover the energy that comes from being part of something bigger.