



# Optimistically Speaking

The Newsletter of the Optimist Club of Greater Vienna - May/June 2026

## News and Notes

### Calendar

#### Board Meeting

13 May 2026  
7 PM (virtual)

#### Farmers Market

Starts 2 May  
Volunteers Needed  
Saturdays 8-12

#### Optimist International Convention

28 June

#### Jim Huston Award

16 May  
Farmers Market

#### Respect for the Law and First Responders Awards

TBA Mid-June  
Farmers Market

### The Magic of the Vienna Farmers Market

There's something magical about wandering through the Vienna farmers market on a sunny morning—the buzz of shoppers and vendors, the colorful displays of fresh produce, and the irresistible aroma of baked goods and treats. From heirloom tomatoes to fragrant bouquets that brighten any room, there's no shortage of treasures to discover.

The Vienna farmers market is also a hub of entertainment. Local musicians set the soundtrack for your stroll and children often start up an impromptu dance party. You might even find yourself humming along to a classic tune.

All of this makes Vienna's farmers market more than a shopping trip—it's a celebration of community, creativity, and local flavor. Whether you're picking up fresh ingredients for dinner, discovering new treats, or just soaking in the lively atmosphere, there's something for everyone. So grab your reusable tote, bring your curiosity, and let the market work its magic.

*The Vienna Optimists will begin the 2026 season of the Farmer's Market in May with a full roster of seasonal vendors. In addition to the fresh and prepared food vendors, Pooch Parking will be available at the Optimist tent.*

*Your help is needed and appreciated. Please sign up at [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0848A4A923A1F94-59948664-vienna#](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0848A4A923A1F94-59948664-vienna#/)*



Serving the youth of greater Vienna for more than 65 years!

Visit us:

[www.OptimistClubofGreaterVienna.org](http://www.OptimistClubofGreaterVienna.org), [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#)



## **The Power of Volunteerism: Building A Stronger Community Together**

In a world that feels fast-paced and divided, volunteerism remains a powerful way to create meaningful connection and lasting impact. It doesn't require wealth, status, or specialized skills—only a willingness to show up and contribute. And its effects extend far beyond the initial act of giving. Volunteerism strengthens the fabric of communities. Working at the Optimist's Farmers Market, assisting in the Christmas tree sale, or taking on a vacant club position, each contributes to a shared sense of responsibility and belonging.

Importantly, volunteerism is evolving. Virtual opportunities and micro-volunteering (short, flexible commitments) are making it easier than ever to get involved, even with busy schedules. This shift opens the door for more people to participate in ways that align with their interests and availability. However, barriers remain. Lack of awareness, perceived time constraints, and uncertainty about where to start can hold people back. Current members and board officers can help answer questions.

As we look ahead, the call to volunteer is not just about filling gaps—it's about reimagining what communities can be when people actively invest in one another. Every hour given, every skill shared, and every connection made contributes to something larger than ourselves. Volunteerism isn't just an act of service. It's a commitment to the idea that we all have a role to play in shaping a better, more connected world.

*Interested in getting involved? Please talk to Wendi Carroll or another Board member. There is something for everyone! **And remember—your time matters more than you think.***

## **Club Members Support Special Olympics Track & Field Meet**

The Optimist Club of Greater Vienna proudly participated in the Northern Virginia Special Olympics Track and Field Meet at Episcopal High School in Alexandria on 25 April. Our volunteers coordinated every track event—from the 100-meter dash to the 5000-meter race and relays—and assisted the video-timing operator with database entry, ensuring each athlete's name, number, and performance were accurately recorded.

Despite the cool and breezy weather, the meet ran smoothly and every event was successfully completed. The true highlight of the day, however, was watching the athletes themselves: nervous at the starting line, then relieved, joyful, and proud as they crossed the finish. Equally moving were the parents, whose pride in their children's accomplishments was unmistakable. That shared joy is what made our participation so meaningful.

A heartfelt thank-you to our dedicated volunteers! Special recognition goes to:

1. **Mike Battaglia**, who organized our club's participation
2. **Tom Spengler**, who managed on-field activities
3. **Dan Gropper**, who performed database entry
4. **Steve Spengler**, who served as starter
5. **Katelyn Spengler**, who coordinated athlete setup at the starting line

Thanks to their efforts and enthusiasm—the event was a tremendous success.

### **Socials Coming Up!**

**Keep an eye on your emails for notifications of club socials coming in the next few months. Cost is covered in your membership – all you need to do is sign up and show up at the appointed time and place. We would love to see you!**

## JOI Club Achievements

We asked students of three high school JOI clubs and the faculty mentor of the Louise Archer ES to tell us the highlights of the 2025-26 academic year for the clubs. This is what they said:

James Madison HS JOI Club created cards in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. All cards were donated to INOVA patients and families. The club made breast cancer awareness bracelets, which were also donated to INOVA as a gesture of support and encouragement. Other activities included creating Veterans Day cards, making tie-blankets, organizing a candy drive, and decorating holiday ornaments. The club hosted a vision board activity to encourage goal-setting, made cards for residents in senior homes, created friendship bracelets to donate, decorated pillowcases, and organized a dog toy-making event (for donation to animal shelters). The year will close out with painting of rocks with positive messages to place around the community and making stress balls to support students during exam season and raise awareness about mental health.

Flint Hill Upper School JOI Club has been busy with a number of service projects this year, with a focus on helping the elderly and youth. They hosted an activity booth at the school's spirit alley for homecoming putting together activity packets for National Childrens Hospital patients. Numerous kids, parents, students and alumni stopped by the booth and helped put together over 160 activity packets, which included crayons, stickers, construction paper and coloring pages. The club put together additional activity packets at a regular club meeting which were delivered to a local pediatric hospital. Some club members also helped out with the Vienna Optimist Club's annual Christmas tree sale. They have partnered with a local assisted living facility and have led bingo and trivia games with them on a number of occasions. For Valentine's Day, they delivered roses to the residents at the assisted living facility and played bingo with them that day.

George C. Marshall Octagon Club has been busy as they gained new membership and now have over 35 participants which is a huge increase. Some of the introductory events included presence at Statesmen Start and an interest meeting. The club then started off the year creating dog toys. It was the first time for this activity and it was a huge success. The members dozens of dog toys for donation to a local shelter and this is likely to be a routine activity. In November and December club members spent many hours at the Optimist Christmas tree sales in Vienna. Meetings after winter break were a struggle given multiple weather cancellations but the club did complete card writing for hospitalized kids. Most recently members participated in another new activity and decorated bird boxes to help counteract the snow that prevented birds from being able to access food. In the coming weeks, the club will finish off the year with bracelet making, partnered with the Madison Optimist Club, for the children hospital at Inova. The club is excited about their new members and bright future!

Louise Archer ES JOI Club continued a weekly project where members put together and then deliver the Food for Others weekend food bags. These go to classrooms for teachers to distribute on Friday mornings. Other projects this year included: making snack bags for local shelters, compiling hygiene kits for the Lamb Center, and collecting pop tops for the Ronald McDonald House. The club also had a speaker come to talk about how animal rescue programs work and how to volunteer. They are currently running a food drive at Louise Archer and put together winter break grocery bags for families. The club members run and organize a food pantry, make blankets for kids at family shelters in Fairfax County, design kindness cards for staff, and make Valentine cards for local nursing homes.

**These Junior Optimists are incredibly busy with impactful projects while maintaining their school work and other activities.**

**They are an inspiration to each of us and we thank them for a job well done!**

## From President Wendi Carroll

Greeting Friends!

As our days start to get longer and sunnier, I find my energy slowly starting to return from what seemed like a very long winter. Part of that energy comes from excitement at what lies ahead. The opening of the Farmers Market, pouring wine at Chillin on Church, greeting families at the Caboose and celebrating the youth in our community through scholarships and sponsorship, all are wonderful reminders for me of the connection, energy, and service that define who we are as Optimists.

Even more special is the recent official Virginia House of Delegate's resolution made in our honor for the enduring commitment to empowering young people and strengthening the community. This recognition reflects the meaningful impact this club continues to have on the lives of young people and families in our area. Moments like these don't happen by accident; they are the result of your time, generosity, and belief in bringing out the best in youth.

At the same time, we do need to have an honest conversation about where we are as an organization. Our board and membership have experienced decline in numbers, and while those who remain are deeply committed, the current board structure is not sustainable. If we want to continue offering scholarships, hosting events, and showing up for our community in the ways we value, we must begin to rebuild—intentionally and together. This isn't just about filling roles; it's about strengthening the future of this club.

In the coming months, I encourage each of you to consider how you might lean in—whether that's stepping into a leadership role, inviting a new member, or simply engaging more consistently. Growth doesn't happen all at once, but it does start with a willingness to act. We have something truly special here, and with renewed energy and shared responsibility, I believe we can not only sustain it—but help it thrive for years to come.

In this vein, we have postponed elections until we have enough candidates to support a full-staffed board. I thank everyone who completed the recent leadership survey and those who have thought long and hard about how their interests and talents can best combine to help our organization grow. If you have been contemplating getting involved, this is your sign to jump in. The more the merrier!

If you are new to the club (or feel like you have been on the periphery lately) and are interested in fun, simple ways to get to know other members and feel connected to our community, I highly encourage you to join us at any or all of the following:

- Set-up, Pooch Parking, Membership Table or Clean up at the Farmers Market <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0848A4A923A1F94-59948664-vienna#/>
- Staffing the Caboose during Viva Vienna (5/23-5/25), Flag Day (6/14) <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0848A4A923A1F94-61583504-redcaboose#/>
- Participating in the repainting project for the Caboose – email [dmulville1@gmail.com](mailto:dmulville1@gmail.com)
- Pouring at Chillin on Church on June 12 <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0848A4A923A1F94-59948664-vienna#/>

Thank you all for everything you do to make our community a happier, healthier and more enjoyable place to live. I look forward to seeing you all soon!

With gratitude,  
Wendi Carroll

## **Board of Directors 2025-2026 Optimist Club of Greater Vienna**

President	Wendi Carroll
Secretary	Jacque Brewer
Treasurer	Michele Wright
Immediate Past President	
VP, Community	Kara Ariail
VP, Digital Communications	Brian Isaac
Director, Newsletter	Jacque Brewer
VP, Membership	Dan Woltman
VP, Youth	VACANT

## **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 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.

*Christian D. Larsen*