

# Central Fairfax Optimist

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



January-February  
2023

<https://fairfaxoptimist.org>

*“Just 3 Things”*

Central Fairfax Optimist Club P.O. Box 1271 Fairfax City, VA 22038 Email us at [fairfaxoptimists@gmail.com](mailto:fairfaxoptimists@gmail.com) Board meeting 2nd Tuesday each month at the VFW 8469 5703 Vogue Road 730P.M. and Club dinner meetings April-July on 4th Wednesday @ Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd.



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## Happy Kids ... Happy New Year!

The start of the New Year is also the beginning of our active club season. During January through June, our Club routinely has about 10 activities that help us bring out the best in kids. And this year the Optimist International Convention will be in our District!

Did you know that our Central Fairfax Optimist Club is one of just a few Optimist Clubs in the whole Optimist world that supports the Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing? The CCDHH contest started in Virginia and we have kept it going for many years. The 2023 CCDHH winners are: Selma Diriye and Casey McCabe. Be sure to read Anne Grabowski's report on page 3.

Our Club's Essay contest is conducted during January and February. Last year we had no entrants. This year we had 16! You can read all about it on page 4.

Have you checked out our website recently? We keep you informed in several ways. Everyone is welcome to attend the Board meetings where the majority of planning happens. We also send emails on current events. And the website is updated at least monthly. This month there has been several updates with new tabs and pictures. <https://fairfaxoptimist.org>

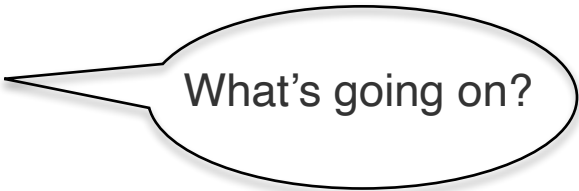
## Hot News

Please pay your **dues** before the end of this month with a check payable to **Optimist Club of Central Fairfax**.

Please consider a generous donation to support our community service. For a tax-deductible **donation**, the check should be payable to **Optimist International Foundation** and in the memo line at the bottom left of the check, enter **Fairfax Youth Fund 16026**.

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### January Attractions 2023

- 4— Inter-Service Club Council 12-1 pm @ the Moose Club 3529 Chain Bridge Rd. Fairfax
- 10 — Club Board meeting 7:30 pm on Zoom
- 13 — Essay Contest entry deadline
- 25— Club meeting 7:30 pm on Zoom

### February Attractions 2023

- 1— Inter-Service Club Council 12-1 pm @ the Moose Club 3529 Chain Bridge Rd. Fairfax
- 2— OPTIMIST DAY
- 3-5— Fairfax City Chocolate Lovers Festival
- 9— CCDHH Contest at Frost Middle School
- 13 — Combined Club/Board meeting 7:30 pm on Zoom
- 24— Info on Limburg Scholarship sent to Woodson, Robinson, Lake Braddock and Fairfax High Schools
- 28— Essay Contest Winning Entry due to District
- 28— Oratorical Contest application deadline

### MARCH 2023

- 1— Inter-Service Club Council 12-1 pm @ the Moose Club 3529 Chain Bridge Rd. Fairfax
- 4— Capital Virginia District meeting and CCDHH Contest at Hilton Garden Inn , 2500 Neabsco Common Place, Woodbridge, VA.
- 14— Club Board meeting 7:30 pm @ VFW 8469, 5703 Vogue Road, Fairfax Station
- 22— Club dinner meeting 7pm for social time; dinner served at 7:30@ Elks Lodge 8421 Arlington Blvd. Fairfax
- 27-28— Club Oratorical Contest via Zoom

### BIRTHDAYS

#### JANUARY

- 8th Kristen Donohue
- 17th Toni Donovan
- 29th Patricia Hertig

#### FEBRUARY

- 4th Michele Hanson
- 5th Dave Gundry
- 11th Carol Williams
- 24th Trinket Troy

#### MARCH

- 19th Susan Bond

### ANNIVERSARIES

#### JANUARY

- 2nd Kim and Ralph Moden
- 7th Douglas and Stephanie Harden
- 11th Kristen and Tommy Donohue
- 29th Pat and George Hertig

#### FEBRUARY & MARCH

None these months.  
Let's recruit someone!!

### FINANCE SUMMARY

(2/13/23)

Operating Account	\$2,331.89
Community Service	\$2,101.73
Youth Fund	\$1,301.93



# Club News

## CCDHH Club Winners!

By Anne Grabowski



The Club's Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CCDHH) contest was held February 9th at Frost Intermediate School. There were 5 contestants that were judged and 6 other students also gave a speech on the same topic: "Discovering the Optimism within Me". The teacher, Erika Pfleugrath, spent a great deal of time with these students to prepare them for this event. The CCDHH winners are: Selma Diriye and Casey McCabe. These two delightful young ladies will go on to the District contest which will be held on March 4th at 2 pm at the Hilton Garden Inn , 2500 Neabsco Common Place, Woodbridge, VA. This is always a wonderful event and if you can possibly attend you would thoroughly enjoy it and the students would greatly appreciate your support.

I want to give a special thanks to Trinket Troy, Michele Hanson, Claudia Pellegrino, and Kim Moden for taking time from their lives to judge for the contest. This is not an easy task but taking time from their busy lives to help make this happen for these students is greatly appreciated.

## A BIG THANK YOU FOR OUR DONORS!

The club appreciates the generous response to the recent request for donations to the Club's Youth Fund. The Youth Fund is used to support our community service programs and scholarships and awards for the kids. Thank you so much to Jeff and Brooke Johnson, Bruce Lauther and Carol Williams for their gifts to the fund totaling \$1,600!



## Club News (continued)

### Essay Contest Results

CONGRATULATIONS to our First Place winner Charles Nguyen! Charles is attending Lake Braddock High School and hopes to attend MIT. His essay was judged by three judges and was clearly the best of the 16 entries.

The Optimist International Essay Contest is divided into two levels of competition: Club (preliminary contest) and District (scholarship competition). The winner of our club contest advances to the District Scholarship Competition. If Charles wins that competition, he will receive a \$2,500 scholarship. The results of the District Scholarship Competition should be announced by April or May. The scholarships are funded by the Optimist International Foundation.

Congratulations also to the Second Place winner, Vivianne Kim from Fairfax High School, and the Third Place winner Sophia Harris from W.T. Woodson High School. Our club will honor the First, Second and Third Place winners with medals and certificates. The other 13 participants will receive a certificate.

Following are the top three essays. They have been single spaced for purposes of this newsletter to save space.

Congratulations to all on a job well done!!

### Charles Nguyen 1st Place Essay

Official Topic: Who is an Everyday Hero that Brings Out the Optimism in You?

#### The Everyday Hero

The word “hero” often conjures images of people adorned in brightly colored costumes shooting webs from their wrists or responding to mayday signals in the sky. These larger than life folks serve to rescue the city on fire, free the damsel in distress or show up simply to save the day. We tend to make-up heroes as something beyond our world and out of reach of our understanding. These caped crusaders materialize in our darkest moments and our subsequent admiration is never in question.

The kinds of heroes who exist in Marvel comics are something an everyday person couldn't expect to encounter. Textbook's definition of “hero” as “a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements or noble qualities” walks amongst all of us every day. They're not wearing capes or bulletproof bracelets, but they're just as easily recognized and bring out the positive in all of us—just look for the person standing in front of a classroom, answering to the title of “Teacher.”

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## Club News (continued)

### Charles Nguyen 1st Place Essay (continued)

At the start of “hero” definition, we find “courage”. Teachers are brave because they stand at the front of the room and demand undivided attention. What pressure to have 30 sets of eyes on you at all times! It’s not enough to show up each day, obtain the focus of the students, relay the information in a universally understandable format and evaluate the ability of each student to retain it. Modern-day teachers must also navigate the often treacherous and uncertain waters of bureaucracy and politics. A quick survey of any nightly news program will almost always feature something happening within the local school system. Funding, redistricting, taxes, and various ever-changing social issues are just a few extracurricular items on a teacher’s agenda. It takes an immense amount of courage to walk the delicate lines of meeting the needs of the school, the child, and the parents--particularly if those ideas are at odds with any of the others.

Next in the definition of “hero”, we see “achievement”. Of course, anyone who’s a teacher has most likely attended college and obtained a degree. This in and of itself is a great success; however, this is not the end of accomplishments. For a teacher, this is the beginning. In any given class, there’re thirty unique individuals with their ideas, understandings, opinions, and learning styles. It’s no small feat to maintain the focus of all thirty eyes, but to then be able to reach each student in a way that fosters the ability to learn, understand, and convey information. This alone requires a Herculean effort. Consider each time a teacher expresses disappointment of a non-passing student; part of that feeling is their frustration. True educators find achievement not in their successes, but in those of their students. There’s no greater definition of “outstanding achievement” than that of a teacher reaching and teaching a student.

Lastly, the final component in the definition of “hero” is “noble” qualities. What does noble mean exactly? There’re few definitions, but most fitting is “a person showing fine personal qualities or high moral principles and ideals.” Is there any trait nobler than being selfless? The ability to put others' needs ahead of your own is certainly not exclusive to the teaching profession, but it’s most assuredly a requirement. Early morning meetings to accommodate parents’ schedules, late evening work-at-home to meet grade deadlines, and out-of-pocket expenses to make sure everyone has notebooks, pencils and papers are just few sacrifices made daily by our teachers. Noble, indeed.

Not to be restricted by textbook’s definition of “hero”, it could be argued that there is a bit of Marvel’s X-Men in every teacher as well. Mystique has the ability to shape-shift to take the forms of other people. Teachers do this every day. They can morph into nurses (My stomach hurts!), referees (They took my \_\_\_\_\_ and will not give it back!), coaches (You can do it!) and detectives (What do you mean you do not know what happened to your homework?). Teachers are also counselors (They called me a name!), bakers (Happy Birthday!) and peacekeepers (insert any various conflicts).

Teachers are not just everyday heroes by any definition, but sadly, are often the “unsung” variety as they regularly perform great deeds and get very little recognition. Despite having no ability to fly, teachers show students how to soar. Without the power to lift one thousand pounds, teachers display the strength to move mountains. Lacking x-ray vision, teachers are able to see into the hearts and minds of us all. In a world of teachers like these, one has much to be optimistic about! No, none of us will ever be rescued by Superman, but there is no doubt the everyday hero, the teacher, in our life has saved us in a dozen different ways.



## Club News (continued)

### Vivianne Kim 2nd Place Essay

Who is an Everyday Hero that Brings Out the Optimism in You?

From first responders, to doctors, to non-profit founders and volunteers, everyday heroes are all around us. An everyday hero is someone who makes a difference in an individual's life, making the world a better place. In a society that so values instant gratification, people whose impacts are distinctly seen are often the only heroes recognized. Sometimes, however, the effects of a hero's actions are not directly tangible. Personally, the unsung heroes of my life are a group of people that often go unrecognized: writers. Some are well-known, and others are known only to the individual reader who benefitted from their use of language. In both cases, the reader receives clarity, understanding, and reasons to be optimistic.

Collectively, the countless sentences that writers string together can transform stagnant words into a message that can inspire. From my earliest years, when language began to have meaning, I found comfort in the pages of a book. Through *Echo* and the *I Survived* series I relived historical events. The biographical accounts of Anne Frank, Abraham Lincoln, and Helen Keller inspired me to have radical ideas and determination to overcome challenges. There is heroism in the words of a writer who can articulate common human experiences in a way that provides optimism and hope to navigate a pathway through turbulent times.

Literature has allowed the minds of countless individuals to broaden their perspectives and knowledge. Even today, the most common means of accessing information is through written works, whether through physical interpretations such as books and newspapers, or increasingly conventional virtual mediums via the internet. Though it isn't always visible, the information in these texts is invaluable in many ways. Particularly for children, books have always played key roles in education and creative development. Books provide role models and examples that expand limitations created by "not knowing". A child who is unaware of existing possibilities can never dream of achieving them. This is a vital factor on a larger scale, especially towards movements to spread education to third-world countries and others who are unable to access resources. Many are unable to go far, not because of the lack of intellect or ability, but simply because of a lack of available opportunities. Oftentimes, these physical texts are the only way to spread knowledge, and they can make a life-changing difference in lives. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, a popular book and now film based on the true story of William Kamkwamba, displays how through the few books on science and engineering he was able to access, he completely changed his and his village's life for the better (Mealer & Kamkwamba, 2009). Books written by authors allow ideas and imaginations to grow, helping inspire innovation and change. This example exhibits how the information conveyed by authors can create large-scale, positive impacts on unsuspecting lives.

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## Club News (continued)

### Vivianne Kim 2nd Place Essay

As society becomes increasingly restrictive, deciding whether ideas are or aren't acceptable, it becomes harder for the growing generation to find representation and voices. This is seen in recent movements such as the protest to ban books in U.S. schools. Each year, more and more titles get added to the increasingly long list of banned books in schools. Preventing access to certain literature and text means the loss of full freedom of speech and thought. Books provide insight into experiences or ideas an individual could never face or know on their own, allowing current generations to be conscious of the past. As teens and children become progressively consumed with media, the lack of awareness about the world is astonishingly apparent. The diversity and range of topics that books cover are unparalleled and censoring certain topics, even with good intentions, shape individuals and societies to see in a narrow and oblivious viewpoint. To see authors continue to dedicate their lives to sharing a message or story despite extensive criticism, gives me hope for the development of future generations. By pursuing and continuing to provide new texts for the public, authors provide opportunities for individuals to understand pasts and change futures.

Though unconventional, writers are in fact everyday heroes in that the work that they do affects multitudes of people every day. It takes courage for one to publicly express an opinion, and writers lead generations by example to speak out. Writers, both of fiction and nonfiction, create historical records, documenting the events that shape a person's life, providing perspective on current concerns during a specific time period. It is the persistent writer that assists future generations in understanding the past by providing context, affecting individuals on personal levels, and spreading knowledge to all people. The works of authors continuously shape not only myself, but countless others into the individuals they are, and in that, authors create an everlasting impact and stand as everyday heroes who give me, and others, hope for the future.

#### References

Kamkwamba, W., & Bryan Mealer. (2009). *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope*. HarperLuxe.



## Club News (continued)

### Sophia Harris 3rd Place Essay

#### **TOPIC: “Who is an Everyday Hero that Brings Out the Optimism in You?”**

When I was five, I lived with my mom’s family in Northern Ireland while my dad was deployed to the Middle East. During this challenging year, I looked forward to large family gatherings and running around with my cousins, but there was one adult I especially loved to see – Auntie Valerie. (She’s really my mom’s aunt, but I call her Auntie too.) Auntie Valerie always arrived with a cheerful smile, an encouraging word, and a bag stuffed full of chocolate bars and sweets to distribute among the cousins. No wonder we loved her! At a vulnerable time when I was missing my dad, Auntie Valerie’s thoughtful gesture and generous spirit gave me hope and a feeling that everything was going to be better than okay.

Although today we live on different continents, as a teenager I am even more inspired by the kindness and selflessness of my 80-year-old aunt. I’m not the only one. Auntie Valerie has positively touched the lives of so many young girls that she was honored with 2021’s *Woman and Home Magazine’s* Community Hero for Scotland & Northern Ireland Amazing Woman Award (Clarkson, 2021).

Inspiring optimism and giving hope has been Auntie Valerie life’s work. It started over twenty years ago when she visited Uganda on a mission trip with a couple of friends. Struck by the utter hopelessness of the teenage girls begging in the streets of Kampala, she returned the following year. Some of the girls were pregnant or had a baby or young child. They had no-one to look after them; no-one to love them; no-one to give them hope. Auntie Valerie felt compelled to do something to give these girls a brighter future.

In 2005, together with her Northern Irish and Ugandan friends, she opened the Wamukisa Youth Centre for vulnerable pregnant girls. What started as a home for six girls has now expanded to house sixty girls, some as young as eleven years old. Many of these girls have been abused or raped. Some had even been sold as slaves. They come to Wamukisa feeling desperate and lost.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines optimism as “the quality of being full of hope and emphasizing the good parts of a situation, or a belief that something good will happen.” Auntie Valerie’s Wamukisa Youth Centre instills that hope in every girl by giving them a second chance. The young mothers receive medical care for a safe birth and nursing care until the baby is three months old. While living there, the girls are trained in life skills such as sewing, cooking, and hairdressing so they can provide for themselves and their babies when they leave. On graduation day, the girls are given a start-up kit to help them set up their own business.

Wamukisa has brought out the optimism in hundreds of girls, teaching them not to focus on the mistakes or misfortunes of the past, but to strive for a better future. One of the first girls helped by the centre now runs a successful bridal shop. She “pays it forward” by training other young girls to sew, while encouraging them to work hard and believe in themselves.

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## Club News (continued)

### Sophia Harris 3rd Place Essay

#### TOPIC: “Who is an Everyday Hero that Brings Out the Optimism in You?”

Wamukisa has brought out the optimism in hundreds of girls, teaching them not to focus on the mistakes or misfortunes of the past, but to strive for a better future. One of the first girls helped by the centre now runs a successful bridal shop. She “pays it forward” by training other young girls to sew, while encouraging them to work hard and believe in themselves.

Most of the funding for the Wamukisa Youth Centre comes from the Waakisa Ministries Trust Northern Ireland, a charity run by Auntie Valerie. She works tirelessly to organize fund raising events, manage a charity shop in Belfast, and motivate teams of skilled volunteers to accompany her on trips to Uganda a couple of times a year. Of course, Auntie Valerie always arrives in the village with a cheerful smile, an encouraging word, and suitcases stuffed full of clothes, nappies, and toiletries to distribute among the young girls. They are grateful for her kindness.

I, too, feel grateful to have an everyday hero as an aunt. Auntie Valerie has that special quality that brings out the best in others. She has inspired a few of my relatives to accompany her to Uganda. She has motivated two of my cousins to volunteer weekly in her charity shop, and her dedication to serving others has inspired me to volunteer with food drives and refugee support in my own community. I’ve seen the positive difference one person can make in the lives of many.

This summer, I will visit Northern Ireland to help Auntie Valerie in her charity shop. My future plan is to study architecture, and one day I hope to travel to Uganda to help construct a school. Auntie Valerie has taught me that if I work hard and have faith, I can make it happen. If she can rescue hundreds of girls from despair, giving them confidence in their future, then nothing should stop me from reaching for my dreams.

#### Works Cited

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- Clarkson, Steph. “W&H Amazing Women Awards 2021—Meet the Inspiring, Change-Making Winners.” *Woman and Home Magazine*, Future US, Inc, 23 Sept. 2021, [www.womanandhome.com/life/wandh-amazing-women-awards-2021-meet-the-inspiring-change-making-winners/](https://www.womanandhome.com/life/wandh-amazing-women-awards-2021-meet-the-inspiring-change-making-winners/). Accessed 11 Jan. 2023.



# January & February: 'Tis the Season?

Some are asking "Is winter over now?" The weather has been unseasonable. The words for this month's puzzle are a combination of things associated with January and February, like scholarships and football.

W H C S G V A C O B E R W J G  
 A P E T H G Z P O A W E N F D  
 R N R A S O T I G N B D E S E  
 M D T T R I V L N S T A F U A  
 T G N T M I E E I V Y E L K F  
 H U Z I Z S N T L A I L S L L  
 F J S Y U V E G U H A R D T L  
 A T R U U G J Z C P R E O S A  
 N O I T A C I L P P A E H Y B  
 B B Y A S S E H A R D H E C T  
 T D C T N E R A P Q B C R D O  
 I L Z R X Z B H X B J E O T O  
 K C O M M U N I C A T I O N F  
 S C H O L A R S H I P K E B P  
 Z C F F R K N U Q U Q V U R T

Print this page and circle the words or just go down the list and find them.

Words can go in any direction.  
 Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

APPLICATION  
 CHEERLEADER  
 COMMUNICATION  
 DEAF  
 ESSAY  
 FUN  
 HEARING  
 OPTIMIST  
 SCHOLARSHIP  
 WARMTH

BEST  
 CHIEFS  
 CONTEST  
 EAGLES  
 FOOTBALL  
 HARD  
 HERO  
 PARENT  
 SHOVEL  
 WEBSITE

What words would you like to see in March's puzzle?  
 Send them to:  
[fairfaxoptimists@gmail.com](mailto:fairfaxoptimists@gmail.com)



## And in conclusion!!

### 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.

*Christian D. Larson*

### Mission

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

### Vision

Optimist International will be recognized worldwide as the premier volunteer organization that values all children and helps them develop to their full potential.

### Purposes

1. To develop optimism as a philosophy of life utilizing the tenets of the Optimist Creed;
2. to promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs;
3. to inspire respect for the law;
4. to promote patriotism and work for international accord and friendship among all people;
5. 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.

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your continued  
support!



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Air, Land & Sea Vacations

Contact our own Bob Devery to plan your travel.  
[bdevery@cruiseshipcenters.com](mailto:bdevery@cruiseshipcenters.com) Thanks for  
your support Bob!