

**Letter from the President:**

Ever since the week before Thanksgiving, I have had a song stuck in my head. It goes a little something like this... "Christmas City, wonderful city, all dressed up in snow and mistletoe! Christmas city, wonderful city, come this Christmas to the Christmas City I'll go!" Ahhh.... Merv Griffin, what a guy! He produced the song after a visit to the Northland in 1962. After connecting with the people here, he said that it was his Christmas gift to the community. For as long as I can remember, the Christmas City of the North Parade has always been the official start of the holiday season for me.

To me, Christmas has always represented a time of reflection. The holiday season has always offered the opportunity to "press pause" and look back on a year to filter through the positives and the negatives. As a parent, I try really hard to steer the focus away from gifts and more toward tradition, culture, and experience (which has also earned me the title of the boring aunt who always gives "books" instead of presents... lol). One of the traditions that I started when my oldest son was an infant, was writing books for my kids instead of giving store bought Christmas gifts. A couple of years ago, I wrote my kids a book of quotes, that I had collected directly from them over the years. I thought that it would be fun to wrap up 2017 by sharing some of the quotes from that book. I hope they make you smile.

1. My mom took my twins Exxl and Versii to the dollar store and bought them each a bag of shells. Versii came home all excited and said, "Mom, guess what? If I put the shell by my ear I can see the river!"
2. My kids and I were sitting at Pizza Hut on Hammond Avenue. My niece Zoe was with us, so I had 5 kids under the age of 9 patiently waiting for pizza to arrive. We started to sing songs so to stay busy. My daughter Rokkyn, who was about 4 years old at the time, was helping me teach a class the night before. Our song for the class was "Jail House Rock". So, she started singing this song... but her version went a little something like this, "Going to the potty in the county jail..." My niece Zoe chimed in and said, "Rokkyn, it's not 'Going to the potty,' it's, 'Get a little lovin' in the county jail'..."
3. Versii was getting himself dressed in some new pants that he got for his 3rd birthday. The pants were a little bit too long. He came running up to me and said, "Mommy, roll up my toe sleeves!"
4. All of my children attended the Cathedral School Preschool program. Every time we would walk by Father Andy's office, which was next to their preschool room, Exxl and Versii would point at the office door and say, "Mom, that's where Jesus works!" In 2013, Exxl and Versii came running out of school excited to show me their first preschool yearbook. They jumped in the car and said, "Mom, Jesus in in our yearbook!"
5. Direct quote from my son Traxx: "Mom, I wish you weren't a vegetarian so that we could get a dog."

And with that, my fellow Optimists, I wish you a holiday season filled with big smiles and belly laughs.

Carolyn Nelson-Kavajecz

**PROGRAMS FOR December**

**Dec. 6 - Baby Shower for Elizabeth Gilbertson**

**Dec. 13 - Gary Banker**

**Dec. 20 - Optimist Club District Representative**



**Optimist Anniversaries**

**Richard Keskinen  
37 years**

**Mark Hubbard  
35 years**



## REFLECTIONS FLASHBACK FROM 2006 (The Cab Ride) submitted by Dave Minor

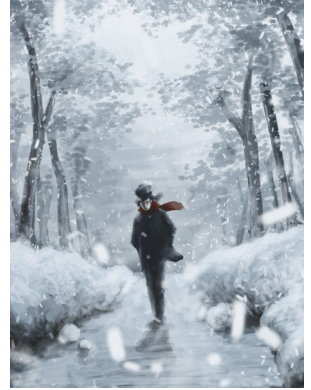
Last month I had the opportunity to be in Las Vegas for a conference and anybody who has ever been in Vegas knows that one of the best ways to get around town is to take a cab. One night on the way back to my hotel I asked the driver he must have some wonderful stories being a cab driver in Las Vegas. He said he could spend his whole shift telling me stories but the best one never happened in Vegas but when he was driving a cab back on the east coast about 20 years ago. After listening to a wonderful story I asked him if I could share his story and he said he would be happy to have it shared.

*"When he arrived at 2:30 am, the building was dark except for a single light in a ground floor window. Under these circumstances he said many drivers would just honk once or twice, wait a minute, and then drive away. But, he had seen too many impoverished people who depended on taxis as their only means of transportation. Unless a situation smelled of danger, he always went to the door. This passenger might be someone who needs his assistance, he reasoned to himself. So he walked to the door and knocked. "Just a minute", answered a frail, elderly voice. He could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 80's stood before him. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940s movie. By her side was a small nylon suitcase. He noticed the apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware. "Would you carry my bag out to the car?" she said. He took the suitcase to the cab, and returned to assist the woman. She took his arm and they walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking him for his kindness. "It's nothing" he told her. "He just tried to treat his passengers the way he would want someone to treat his mother". "Oh, you're such a good boy", she said. When they got in the cab, she gave him an address, and then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?" "It's not the shortest way," he answered quickly. "Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice". He looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. "I don't have any family left," she continued. "The doctor says I don't have very long." He quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" He asked. For the next two hours, they drove through the city. She showed him the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. They drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had him pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask him to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing. As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now." They drove in silence to the address she had given him. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico. Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as they pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. He opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair. "How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse. "Nothing," he said. "You have to make a living," she answered. "There are other passengers," he responded. Almost without thinking, he bent and gave her a hug. She held onto him tightly. "You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said. "Thank you." He squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind him, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life. He didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. He drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of the day he could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift? What if he had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away? On a quick review, he didn't think that he had done anything more important in his life".*

We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware - beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one. People may not remember exactly what you did, or what you said, -but- they will always remember how you made them feel. Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here we might as well enjoy the music and dance. Every day, every minute, every breath truly is a gift from God.

*LISTENING TO CHRISTMAS* by Alan Harris

*Have you ever heard snow? Not the howling wind of a blizzard, not the crackling of snow underfoot, but the actual falling of snow? We heard it one night in Wisconsin quite unexpectedly while walking up a hill toward our cabin in the woods, a soft whisper between footsteps.*



*We stopped, switched off our flashlights, and just listened. All around us in the darkness we heard the gentle fall of snow on snow.*

*No wind, no sound but the snow. Have you ever heard Christmas? Not the traffic noises in the city, not the bells and hymns and carols, beautiful as they are, not even the laughter of your children as they open their presents—but Christmas itself? Have you been by yourself and just sat and listened to the silence within, patiently, without letting the mind race to the next Christmas chore?*



*Perhaps if you have, you felt the pulse of all humanity beating in your own heart. Perhaps you noticed an outflowing of love for all your brothers and sisters on the earth, a soft sense of Oneness with all that lives. In the silence of a snowy night, listen intently, holding your breath, and you may hear snow on snow. Serene, alone, undisturbed by thought, listen to the silence in your heart, and you may hear Christmas.*

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**YOUTH OPTIMISTS - Cassie Goad & Julia Heytens**



The Youth Optimists for November were Cassie Goad and Julia Heytens. Both are Juniors at Superior High School.

Cassie is involved in Interact Club and Rotary Club. She is also involved in Dance Team and Cheer. She is a member of the Youth Leadership Program and dances at Stacey's Studio. She is the daughter of Michelle and Jeremy Goad. She has two sisters, Sophie and Josie. After high school she plans on attending the College of St. Scholastica to major in Elementary Education.

Julia is also involved in Interact Club and Youth Leadership. She is also involved in DECA and FBLA. She is a member of the Honor Society and the Minnesota Ballet. Julia is the daughter of Renee and Pat Heytens. She has an older sister, Gabby. She plans on attending college either at UW Madison or St. Thomas. She is interested in the Medical Field or Business.

Cassie and Julia have a chance to apply for the Youth Optimist Scholarship and Service Award.



Assistant Editor Judy Carlson

In Loving Memory of  
Merrill Thompson & Bill Downs, Jr.

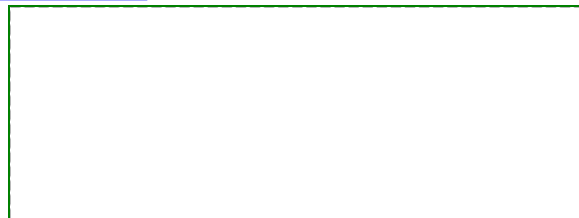
# Optimist Creed

## 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.

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*The Superior Optimist Club fosters positive fellowship and community and support youth.*  
**Mission Statement**  
*awareness to inspire*

**Superior Optimist Club**  
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