

# Paying it Forward



## FOR THE KIDS

Mark Miller, the 2013-2014 Wisconsin North-Upper Michigan District Governor, set the theme of "Paying it Forward." He told Members that Optimism is about giving back or paying it forward, not for themselves or awards, but for children and their communities. Mark challenged every Member of the 62 Clubs to go out and make a difference.

At the first quarter conference in November, Mark announced an initiative called the "WINUM District –Peyton's Promise Initiative." Peyton's Promise is an organization started in Wisconsin in 2006, when eight-year-old Peyton Medick found out that children just like her go to bed hungry every night. Her goal was to "make the world a better place, one can at a time" by keeping local food pantries stocked. The organization has grown to include over 50 youth advocates working in their own schools to raise awareness and with their help, Peyton's Promise has collected over 100 tons of food and thousands of dollars in grants, donations and scholarships for pantries in central Wisconsin and across the United States.

The District initiative was to pay it forward in each of the Clubs' communities by working with youth to put additional food on the shelves of local food pantries, spread the Peyton's Promise objective of raising awareness of the problem of hunger and have fun while making the world a better place.

A contest was announced at the second quarter District conference. Each Club was asked to purchase or solicit food items and build a food sculpture. Clubs were to submit a photo to the District, so the best sculpture could be voted on at the third quarter conference. Clubs were encouraged to do this as a social activity, possibly with a JOOI Club and have fun while working to benefit local food pantries, where the food would be donated.

While only five Clubs submitted photos of sculptures, all were creative. At the third quarter conference, voting for the best sculpture raised \$35, which was donated to Peyton's Promise. During the conference, Peyton's Promise Advocates were invited to join Optimists in building food sculptures. About 20 of the advocates built a four foot wide Optimist International logo and the Optimists built an American flag sculpture about four foot tall. The close to 300 pounds of food used was donated to the Wausau Area Food Bank on behalf of the District.

At the end of the initiative, 18 Clubs and 2 Zones reported donating 18,275 items to food pantries with the assistance of 525 youth. The District lived up to the theme of "Paying it Forward," not for themselves or awards, but for children and their communities.

*Thanks to Charlie Pufahl, WINUM District Newsletter Editor for sharing information about the District initiative.*