

# Optimist Club of Birmingham

In our 97<sup>th</sup> Year of Service to  
Youth & the Community

The Flagship Club of the  
Alabama-Mississippi District

Meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday  
12:00 Noon

[www.birmingham.amoptimists.org](http://www.birmingham.amoptimists.org)  
[www.facebook.com/BirminghamOptimistClub](https://www.facebook.com/BirminghamOptimistClub)  
[BirminghamOptimistClub@gmail.com](mailto:BirminghamOptimistClub@gmail.com)

December, 2024 - February, 2025

FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>, 12 NOON, MEETING TO BE HELD AT  
ALABAMA POWER COMPANY, ELECTRA ROOM  
600 18<sup>TH</sup> ST. N., BIRMINGHAM, AL 35203

**\*PLEASE ARRIVE IN TIME TO PURCHASE LUNCH FROM THE ATRIUM CAFETERIA (OR BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH) & BE READY TO BEGIN THE MEETING AT NOON.**

## FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup> ESSAY CONTEST

Essay Contest Chair **Desiree Bates** will be introducing the top 3 winners of the Club Contest as they share their essays on the topic of "**How Optimism Has Paved My Road to Success**". Each winner will receive a cash prize, a medallion, and participation certificate. The 1<sup>st</sup> place winner's essay will be submitted for further competition in the AL-MS District Contest for the opportunity to earn a \$2,500 college scholarship to the college of their choice.

## LAST CLUB MEETING – JANUARY 16<sup>TH</sup>

Our guest speaker was **Arkaya King-Pace**, who is employed with Auburn University under the Live Well Alabama program as a **SNAP-Ed** (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education) educator for Jefferson County. She received her degree in Management from the historic Miles College. She is a wife, mother, and most importantly, a follower of Christ! She enjoys educating individuals on the importance of choosing healthier options when preparing meals for your family!

For more information about SNAP-Ed, please visit:  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-ed>

The Club was also honored to have Past President of the former Shelby County Optimist Club, **Linda Jones**, as a guest of **Ron Taylor**, along with Social Work Program Director at Miles College, **Dr. Rotasha Madden**, guest of **Anita Lee**, and **Carol Harris**, guest of **Adrienne Pearson**, at the meeting.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Mar 1 – Club Oratorical Contest, 10 AM, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 980 Huffman Rd., Birmingham 35215**

**Mar 13 - Board Meeting via Zoom, 1 PM**

**Mar 20 – Club Mtg., 12 N - Alabama Power Company**

## CLUB ORATORICAL CONTEST – MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup>, 10 am

Oratorical Contest Chair, **Erma Hinton**, will conduct the contest at **Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 980 Huffman Rd., Birmingham, AL 35215**, in St. Bernadette Hall (formerly named the "Youth Building", where we have met in the past.) The topic of this year's contest is "**How Optimism Has Guided Me Through Trying Times**". A complimentary "continental breakfast" will be provided.

**Contestants, judges, and those providing food and beverages, are asked to arrive by no later than 9:30 a.m. All others are asked to arrive by 9:45 a.m., so that the program can begin at 10 a.m. with no interruptions during the contest.**

## MEMBER NEWS

The Club was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of our long-time Member and Past President, **Linda H. DeMarco**, on Christmas morning. Linda was elected to serve as the first woman President of our Club for the 1995-1996 year, serving again as President in 2008-2009, as well as in many other leadership roles at both the Club and District level. She remained a true Optimist and always stayed on top of what was going on with our Club, even when she could no longer attend meetings due to her illness. She will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her. Please keep Linda's family in your prayers.

The Club also extends our deepest condolences to **Teresa Jones** on the loss of her grandson, **Jaden Rashad Jones**, and to **Ron Taylor** and **Mark Taylor**, on the loss of their son-in-law and brother-in-law, respectively, **Michael Wade**.

**DECEMBER Birthdays:** 5<sup>th</sup> – Anita Lee, 6<sup>th</sup> – Shakira Marshall, 8<sup>th</sup> – Judy Brown, 17<sup>th</sup> – Adrienne Pearson  
**Anniversaries:** 3<sup>rd</sup> – Lynn & Mark Taylor, 15<sup>th</sup> – Jon & Nancy Ryan

**JANUARY Birthdays:** 4<sup>th</sup> – Teresa Jones, 4<sup>th</sup> – Mary E Wright, 8<sup>th</sup> – Leon Evans, Jr., 8<sup>th</sup> – Laneta Fullenwiley, 17<sup>th</sup> – Linda A Carter, 21<sup>st</sup> – Allan Evans, 22<sup>nd</sup> – Kenny Haynes, 27<sup>th</sup> – Dr. Rotasha Madden, 29<sup>th</sup> – Ron Taylor

**Anniversaries:** 28<sup>th</sup> – Sri & Dr. Sudha Gutti,  
**FEBRUARY Birthdays:** 3<sup>rd</sup> – Dr. Sudha Gutti, 4<sup>th</sup> – Nancy Benjamin, 18<sup>th</sup> – Bert Perry, 25<sup>th</sup> – Carolyn McCoy  
**Anniversaries:** 14<sup>th</sup> – Michael & Teresa Jones, 19<sup>th</sup> – Jerry & Angene Coleman

**Hope you each enjoy/enjoyed your special day!**

**Please note:** If your birthday and/or anniversary was not included, please email the dates to Nancy Ryan at [nryan95@charter.net](mailto:nryan95@charter.net), so they can be added to the list.

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Club is delighted to welcome new members, **Carol Harris**, sponsored by **Adrienne Pearson**, and **Dr. Rotasha Madden**, sponsored by **Anita Lee**, to our Optimist family!

## CORRESPONDENCE

*To the Optimist Club: Thank you so much for your prayers & thoughts at the loss of our beloved Warrior Princess Ashlyn. The beautiful pink & white flower bouquet brightened our day at our darkest hour. Your kindness will never be forgotten. Love & prayers, **Bettie Bell & Family***

*Thank You from The Family of Jaden Rashad Jones*  
*There are not enough words to express how thankful we are for your expressions and kindness during this extremely challenging time. The support and comfort you provided will forever be in our hearts. The assurance of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ serves as a cornerstone of our faith, providing comfort and peace regarding life and life thereafter.*



# OPTIMIST CLUB OF BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES

## NOVEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup> - A SALUTE TO OUR VETERANS

The Program featured "A Salute to Our Veterans," honoring our Club Members and/or their spouses who are Veterans. Co-Chairs of the event were **Teresa Jones** and **Nancy Ryan**. The Club was proud to salute each honoree with a certificate recognizing their years of service to our country, along with an American flag lapel pin. There to present the colors and also salute our veterans as they came forward were **Cadet Lt. Colonel Brandon Moss** and **Cadet First Lieutenant Morgan Joshua**, along with **Army Instructor, First Sgt. Hardwick "Rico" Hall**, all affiliated with **Ramsay High School, Junior Reserves Officer Training Corps (JROTC)**. Special guest was former Club member, **Emma Vaiton, Lt. Col (Ret) USAF**, who recently turned 104 and is still driving! She was accompanied by **Connie Demand** with DAVA.

### Our Veteran Honorees included:

**Margie Argo, Lt. Colonel ALARNG**  
**Thomas Casey, Staff Sgt. ALARNG**  
**Jerry Coleman, Airman First Class USAF**  
**Linda DeMarco, Lt. Colonel ALARNG**  
**Allan B. Evans, Yeoman First Class USN**  
**Michael Jones, Staff Sgt. USAR**  
**Larry Miles, Technical Sgt. USAF**  
**Jon P. Ryan, Commander USCGR**  
**Lynn Taylor, Senior Airman USAF**  
**Ronald Taylor, Staff Sgt. ALARNG**  
**Emma Vaiton, Lt. Colonel USAF**  
**Roger Vaughan, Colonel USACE**

President **Sharon Wilson** presented **Past President Carolyn McCoy** with a special plaque of Appreciation for her outstanding service as Club President, leading the Club to achieve Honor Club status for the 2022-2023 Optimist year, and achieving Distinguished Club status for 2023-2024 Optimist year!

Club members also brought new socks to the meeting to be given to the Salvation Army for those in need, especially during the cold months of winter.



Morgan Joshua, Teresa Jones, Sharon Wilson, Jon Ryan, Emma Vaiton, Ron Taylor, Roger Vaughan, Rico Hall, Brandon Moss



JROTC Cadets Morgan Joshua & Brandon Moss with Army Instructor, First Sgt. Hardwick "Rico" Hall



Connie Demand & Emma Vaiton



Emma Vaiton & Linda DeMarco at Veterans event in 2019



President Sharon Wilson presents Appreciation plaque to Past President Carolyn McCoy for her outstanding service and accomplishments over the past two years.





# OPTIMIST CLUB OF BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES

## SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGERS

Christmas is a time for giving to those in need in our community. Thank you to everyone who took part in carrying out the Optimist Club of Birmingham's long-time tradition of "Ringing the Bells" for the Salvation Army, which took place on Tuesday, December 3rd, Wednesday, December 4th, and Thursday, December 5th, 10am-1pm, outside Belk at The Summit.

Volunteers included: Dr. Paul Amamoo, Judy Brown, Herb Forsythe, Clara Greene, Kenny Haynes, Paula Hines, Erma Hinton, Michael & Teresa Jones, along with their grandson, Michael "Deuce" Jones, Ra'Jeeni Marshall, Carolyn McCoy, Adrienne Pearson, Jon & Nancy Ryan, Jamil Smith, Monithia Smith, Ron Taylor and Sharon Wilson.



Michael & Teresa Jones, ringing the bells with their grandson, Michael "Deuce" Jones



Jon Ryan, Erma Hinton, Sharon Wilson & Kenny Haynes



Sharon Wilson, Jon Ryan & Paula Hines



Judy Brown, Dr. Paul Amamoo & Clara Greene



Jamil Smith, Ra'Jeeni Marshall, Monithia Smith & Adrienne Pearson



Jamil Smith, Monithia Smith, Carolyn McCoy & Ra'Jeeni Marshall



Sharon Wilson, Ron Taylor & Herb Forsythe



# OPTIMIST CLUB OF BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES



Clara Greene, Adrienne Pearson & Judy Brown



Adrienne Pearson



Jon & Nancy Ryan



**Thank you to generous contributors from the community for supporting the Salvation Army!!**



# OPTIMIST CLUB OF BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES

## DECEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup> CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Club Members & guests enjoyed "A Musical Christmas" celebration on Thursday, December 19th, at City Club!

Special entertainment was provided by 11 year-old musical sensation, **London Koi Jones**, who shared several songs, including her soulful rendition of "O Holy Night"!

Our annual Christmas gift card presentation also took place. Gift cards were presented by "Kards for Kids" Chair, **Nancy Ryan**, for 40 youth, ages 19-21, who are served through Jefferson County DHR Independent Living Program. Special thanks to **Blue Cross-Blue Shield**, **The Caring Foundation**, for their generosity in helping our Youth Foundation make these gifts possible! An additional 15 youth, ages 17-18, received gift cards presented by **Abbey Abner**, Senior Marketing Campaign Manager with AvidXchange. There to receive all of the gift cards was **Mallory Armstrong**, Social Worker with DHR.

Other guests included: **Connie Demand**, **Tara Fisher** & **Kyle Forstman**, guests of **Sharon Wilson**; **Carol Harris**, guest of **Adrienne Pearson**; **Michael Jones**, guest of **Teresa Jones**; & **Debbie Kirkland**, guest of **Don Kirkland**. All attendees took part in drawings for door prizes!



President Sharon Wilson with London Koi Jones & her proud parents, Renee & Derrick Jones



President Sharon Wilson thanks London Koi Jones for her outstanding performance!



Ra'Jeeni Marshall & Jamil Smith shared their beautiful voices and led the group in singing Christmas carols.



Abbey Abner with AvidXchange (left) & Nancy Ryan present Christmas gift cards to Mallory Armstrong with Jefferson County DHR.



Immediate Past Distinguished President Carolyn McCoy, Bert Perry, Dr. Paul Amamoo & President Sharon Wilson



# OPTIMIST CLUB OF BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES



Danella Johnson with Teresa & Michael Jones



Paula Hines, Kenny Haynes, & Past Optimist International President Roger Vaughan



Always so nice to have Debbie & Don Kirkland in town visiting with us from Wichita, KS!



Renee Green-Jones & Erma Hinton



Sharon Wilson



New Member Carol Harris, Mallory Armstrong, Ron Taylor, guest Connie Demand, & Erma Hinton



Jamil Smith, RaJeeni Marshall, Monithia Smith & Carolyn McCoy



(Santa) Jon & Nancy Ryan



# OPTIMIST CLUB OF BIRMINGHAM MEETINGS & ACTIVITIES

JANUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> MEETING



Vice President Anita Lee thanks guest speaker, Arkaya King-Pace, and presents her with a token of thanks for her excellent presentation.



Director Ron Taylor is pictured with Past President of former Shelby County Optimist Club, Linda Jones.

**JANUARY 30<sup>TH</sup>  
BINGO NIGHT & HOT CHOCOLATE / DESSERT BAR  
AT RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE**

The Club was pleased to sponsor a fun BINGO Night with a Hot Chocolate and Dessert Bar for the families at Ronald McDonald House of Central Alabama on Thursday, January 30th. Prizes were provided for both children and adults to choose from as they enjoyed playing several games of BINGO. No one left empty handed and they all seemed to enjoy the evening!

Thank you to Club Members volunteering at the event: **President Sharon Wilson, Desiree Bates, Adrienne Pearson, Jon and Nancy Ryan**, as well as to those volunteering to shop for & organize BINGO prizes ahead of time, **Carol Harris, Danella Johnson & Nancy Ryan**.



**Sharon Wilson, Desiree Bates, Adrienne Pearson & Jon Ryan**



**Sharon Wilson, Jon Ryan & Adrienne Pearson**



**The Club provided a wide variety of BINGO prizes to choose from for children & adults!**



**Sharon Wilson, Nancy Ryan, Jon Ryan & Adrienne Pearson**