

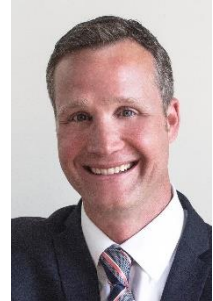
The Optimist Monthly

Friend of Youth
January 31, 2023



January

1/04: Darren Aversa, Financial Advisor with Edward Jones, on Investing in 2023. Thank you, **Frank O'Leary** for inviting him.
(Webpage photo).



1/18: Johnathan Thomas on Arlington's early past and the history of the WGCC,



which was founded in Rosslyn in 1894. Johnathan used his own family – who immigrated to Alexandria County in 1735 – to make the history personal and fascinating. Johnathan also brought several family artifacts and showed us many photos of early WGCC members, including golf pros and the several Presidents who were members or just played the golf course. Thank you, **Frank O'Leary** for inviting him.

1/25: Meet & Greet resumed! Several Optimists re-started the Meet & Greet for 2023 at Texas Jack's. Photo below, taken by Andreas Baltatzis, shows Brian Kellenberger, his guest Janette Reynolds (a serious potential member), Jeff Englander, Sue Gartner and Peter Wehmann. Three Optimists left before the photo was taken: Richard Knight, Sandy Bushue and Eric Turner.



February - April

2/01: Wendy Zenker, Arlington Neighborhood Village. Thank you, Frank O'Leary, for inviting her. WGCC at 12:15.

02/15: Chief Charles Penn of the Arlington Police Department. Thank you, Frank O'Leary, for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

02/22: Meet & Greet at Texas Jack's. 5:30 to 7:00.

03/01: Ted Edwards, Army History Museum. Thank you, Richard Knight, for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

03/15: Kevin Appel, Tales of the Treasurer's Office. Thank you, **Frank O'Leary,** for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

03/22: Meet & Greet at Texas Jack's. 5:30 to 7:00.

04/05: Scott McGeary on Elections in Arlington. Thank you, **Frank O'Leary,** for inviting him. WGCC at 12:15.

President's Message by **Andreas Baltatzis**

Dear Optimists,

The Optimist Club has had a great start to the year with two excellent speakers and our monthly Meet and Greet Happy Hour.

On the new member front, Trisha is working with Andrew Almand (Judge Almand's son) to become a member of the club. I encourage everyone to invite new participants to our events.



Among other news, Mark Whitenton is resigning after five years as Chair of the Scholarship Committee. The Club is very lucky to have a perfect person to take the helm, Erica Burson. Erica's daughter has just graduated from Yorktown and Erica already manages the scholarship program for the Harrow Fund. Thank you, Mark, for your service and thank you, Erica, for stepping up!!

Optimistically yours,
Andreas

Final 2022 Scholarship Report by Mark Whitenton

This is my last scholarship report for the Arlington Optimist club. After five consecutive years, I am retiring in the hopes that someone with lots of energy and is closer (both in location and in age) to the Arlington high schools will take



over. Fortunately for our Club, the perfect person has volunteered for the task – Erica Burson! Not only has Erica just had a daughter graduate from Yorktown High School, but she already is managing the recently-rejuvenated Harrow Fund Scholarship program for those graduates who will be going to trade school at NOVA. Congratulations and thank you, Erica! (Photo at left by Debbie Whitenton).

The five Scholarship winners from last May have all done exceedingly well in their first semesters of college. All earned well over the C+ GPA that is required by us before Gerry Marosek can send their \$5,000 Scholarship award to their college for their second semesters. Gerry has sent all five checks out to their respective schools. I hope we can do five scholarships again next year!

- Mary Ann Montgomery from Bishop O'Connell, earned a GPA of 3.91 during her first semester at Oberlin. She shared a recent photo and her thoughts with us, which were printed in last month's newsletter, is again included as Appendix 1.

- Thomas Mac Gregor Ackleson, from W-L, earned a 3.94 during his first semester at UVA. Thomas sends us his photo and writes us:

My first semester at the University of Virginia has been incredible. I moved in the day after my 18th birthday and began classes shortly after. Engineering courses have been both challenging and greatly rewarding; I truly enjoyed the material covered during my first semester. My favorite classes include calculus and an engineering design ethics course. The highlight from the semester was an engineering project in my introduction to engineering course; three group members and I were tasked with designing a

sustainable, rapidly-deployable, and secure emergency shelter for use in refugee



camp. We researched and developed empathy for those in refugee situations; developed a digital model of our proposed shelter; and created technical documents to pitch the design. I am involved in a variety of organizations outside of the classroom. Before leaving for UVA, I identified its uniquely student-run Honor system as something I'd like to be involved with. After a competitive application and interview process, I was selected to serve in the Honor Committee's officer pool as an Investigator/Counsel. I've spent my first semester in training for this position; starting next semester, I will investigate alleged

Honor offenses and try accused students in front of a jury. I've also grown my online tutoring business while away at UVA - I take great joy in helping students back in Arlington with their learning. These two activities occupy much of my time, but I've also had opportunities to develop great friendships and explore Charlottesville. I plan to declare my major in biomedical engineering at the end of the spring semester. My post-undergraduate plans include attending medical school and working as a physician-engineer to develop, test, and implement medical devices in patients. I sincerely thank the Optimist Club of Arlington for the generous scholarship they have provided towards my spring tuition, and I look forward to another great semester at UVA.

- Rick Escudero, from Yorktown, earned a GPA of 3.793 during his first semester at UVA. Rick provides the following:

My first semester was one full of new experiences as a life of independence was unveiled to me. I quickly learned the UVA lingo and phrases such as "grounds" instead of campus, calling someone a "first-year" instead of a freshman, and the occasional random "wahoowa", which I still don't know the meaning of. I met president Jim Ryan of the University of Virginia in a first-generation student meeting, and I found out that we

share a common background. I found my independence to be a weakness if taken advantage of. There are so many things to do on grounds that it's important to also focus on your schoolwork first. However, it's important to also take a break when you've been doing too much schoolwork. I've met people from both ends of this spectrum and some have unfortunately let stress take over them. I'm thankful to say that I've found a medium in my group of friends. We all come from different backgrounds, but we all understand each other and push one another to succeed.

Academically, I've had no cakewalk in terms of homework. As an undeclared engineering major, the applied sciences and applied math courses take up a good chunk of my time. However, I'm proud of myself for persevering in my studies, my homework, and my exams. I would like to thank my friends and family for all their help along the way. I would also like to thank the Optimist Club of Arlington for all their help and support in regards to my education.

I would like to touch upon the unfortunate incident that took place late in the semester. It's something that you would never expect as an incoming first-year student. It led all students to overcome emotional and mental adversity. I truly do wish healing to all the families and friends affected. I would like to commend the University of Virginia for their actions taken after the incident. They made it easy for students to transition back to school in a comfortable manner.

Currently, I'm preparing for the spring semester by taking a preparatory physics course to help boost me in my actual physics course. I'm also reviewing the curriculum for my next applied maths course. I plan to soon declare as an electrical engineering major. Also, the search for scholarships is never over.

Thank You & Go Hoos! Rick Escudero

[The image was taken at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2022]



- Laila El Machtani Idrissi, from Wakefield, earned a GPA of 3.07 during her first semester at VA Tech. She has sent us a recent photo, right, and the following

thoughts: I've always heard that college was different for everybody, but now I can genuinely account for that. The beginning of my first semester was difficult, I'd never been away from home for so long, and I didn't have any friends. I was trying to work my way around campus and start off on the right foot, but somehow it seemed too shaky to start. Once classes started, I was more optimistic. I began making friends of the same major and found interest in what I was learning! Each day spent, I seemed to develop an attachment to Tech; the drill



field, duck pond, McComas, and even McBryde Hall. Slowly but surely, I've grown to love this school as well as the education I will receive here. I'm very excited to continue my journey and continue growing.

- Mark McNulty, from Wakefield, earned a GPA well in excess of the required C+



for his first semester at Johns Hopkins Peabody Inst. Mark submitted his photo (left) and tells

us: So far, my time at Peabody has been very busy, but rewarding. I've participated in 3 concerts, 2 of which were with world renowned conductor Joseph Young. I was also chosen by faculty to be one of only 2 bassists in a recording with renowned conductor Marin Alsop and the Peabody Symphony Orchestra. My classes include orchestral repertoire class, private lessons with Ira Gold, a very well-known teacher in the bass world, group piano, and ear training. I am now looking forward to music festival auditions for this summer. Thanks!

Optimists in Community Service

Collecting Christmas Wreaths at Arlington Cemetery. Two of our relatively new Optimists joined Brian Kellenberger to be part of the many volunteers who picked up the Christmas wreaths that had been placed before Christmas at the grave markers in Arlington's National Cemetery (Operation Wreath Out). Brian commented that this was a very moving event to be involved with. Photos below provided by Brian.



Gavin Authier & Sydney Kellenberger



Brian Kellenberger & Gavin Authier



Collecting Blood for the American Red Cross. For the 15th year, **Debbie Whitenton** has managed a blood drive with the American Red Cross to honor her eldest son, Joseph, who after a random shooting required 32 pints of blood



before succumbing to his wound. Her most recent blood drive, on January 21, was one of the most successful – yielding 54 pints of blood to the American Red Cross, as well as several partial pints. Each pint of blood donated can potentially save three lives. The

poster to her right is commemorating Joseph, while the one on her left is commemorating her second son, Michael, who died in December 2021.



Photo right is by a friend, John Myers, while **Mark Whitenton** was mingling with donors.



Photos by Mark Whitenton unless otherwise noted.

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Optimist Club of Arlington 16-005;
Mid-Atlantic Region 3;
Capital- Virginia District 16;
Northern Virginia Zone 4;
www.optimistclubofarlingtonva.org

Appendix 1

2022 Scholarship winner Mary Ann Montgomery (Bishop O'Connell) update.

My First Semester at Oberlin College Mary Ann Montgomery I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here at Oberlin as a new first-year student. In the past few months that I have been here, I've found countless opportunities to build community and enrich myself culturally and academically. I had a full courseload this semester, with five classes, varying in subject and difficulty. My most memorable course thus far is Introduction to Comparative American Studies. I believe it's pushed me towards further study in the field, and I'm especially interested in the interconnectedness of American society and politics as told through history and literature. I've found my professors to be unyieldingly compassionate and excited about what they are teaching. I've also joined several student organizations, including the Filipino American Student Association and have written for The Grape, the alternative student newspaper. This past November, I was able to participate in a fantastic banquet hosted by the Filipino American Student Association; a celebration of the organization's 20th anniversary at Oberlin and fundraiser for the protection of indigenous Filipino communities. I also have been completing my federal work study at a nonprofit art organization, the Firelands Association for Visual Arts, where I work as a gallery attendant on the weekends and assist in community events. Overall, I have found a great sense of community and so many opportunities to explore my academic and extracurricular interests. This coming January, I will be completing my Winter Term project in Tempe, Arizona. For the entire month of January, Oberlin students explore interests relating to their academic and personal pursuits through individual or group projects, in lieu of traditional classes. For my project, I'll be training for and running a half marathon. I'll also be conducting interviews with other female runners, in an effort to understand how certain factors such as safety play into their training, and the disproportionate experiences of female runners compared to men. This is a very interesting topic that Oberlin has offered me the opportunity to explore, and it just furthers my appreciation that I am able to attend this school. I truly am grateful to be at Oberlin, and the overall environment is one that encourages both curiosity and academic rigor. I'm looking forward to continuing my studies here, and am working towards a double major in English and (tentatively) Comparative American Studies or sociology. After Oberlin, I am considering law or graduate school.

