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that the Optimists have participated in throughout its 75-year history.

While the celebration focuses on giving back to supporters of the club, it's also an opportunity for curious individuals to learn more about prospective membership.

"Our club's really about anyone that's interested in giving back to their own community because I think what's great about our club is everything we do is local, and the clubs, the youth organizations we support are local," Wessels said.

The Optimist Club of Glen Lake currently has about 30 active members who participate in service activities throughout the year to benefit local youth, including funding youth activities and programs. Club members are expected to pay an annual membership fee of \$105, which helps to fund the various community events sponsored by the



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Optimist Club of Glen Lake members Steven Stromsness, left, and Joe Ruekert attend the club's annual golf tournament.

club throughout the year.

One of the club's most notable community events includes the annual Christmas tree lot, which started shortly after the local chapter's inception. The Optimists

partner with local high school sports teams — including the Nordic skiing, rugby and wrestling teams — to set up the holiday event.

In late July, the Optimists hosted its Birdies for Youth Charity Golf Tournament for a fourth year, inspired by a club member's passion for golf. The

tournament also provides local students with volunteer opportunities to build their resumes.

"I think in general, we just want to inspire people's interest and pride in their community and their youth, because it just helps make the community better," Wessels said.

Wessels first joined the

Optimist Club of Glen Lake nearly a decade ago, shortly after he moved to Minnetonka with his family. He credits the club for his strong relationship with local city officials, including the police and fire departments in the Glen Lake, Hopkins and Minnetonka communities.

"For me, it got me way more connected to my community," Wessels said. "For example, I meet all these clubs as their leaders come in to ask for funding. So you get to meet all these great people in the community that are doing great things for kids."

The club has also helped him better understand the struggles people in the West Metro face through partnerships with local food shelves and other community organizations serving families in need.

Stromsness' has been a member of the Glen Lake chapter for 46 years. He first became aware of the club back in his little league days in the 1960s after his dad became the coach of the Glen Lake

Optimists baseball team.

Stromsness himself joined the club shortly after graduating college. He remains heavily involved in the community event planning and praises the club for its commitment to serving local youth.

"I am still a member and I like giving back and supporting youth activities because they're the future of us," Stromsness said.

The Optimists hold monthly meetings at the Gold Nugget Tavern & Grille in Minnetonka from September through May, which includes different guest speakers at each dinner. At the anniversary party, all adults ages 18 and older are encouraged to learn more about club membership and the available community volunteer opportunities.

The 75th Anniversary Summer Party will be located at 5257 Woodhill Road in Minnetonka. To learn more about the event, visit glenlakeoptimists.org/75-party.

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