



Soroptimist 101

An overview of Soroptimist International of the Americas

Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) is an international organization for business and professional women who volunteer in their communities. Almost 41,000 Soroptimists in about 19 countries and territories contribute time and financial support to community-based and international projects benefiting women and girls. The name, Soroptimist, means “best for women,” and that’s what the organization strives to achieve. Soroptimists are women at their best working to help other women to be their best.

Soroptimist members belong to local clubs, which determine the volunteer projects conducted in their communities. Club projects range from renovating domestic violence shelters, to providing mammograms to low-income women, to sponsoring self-esteem workshops for teenage girls.



W e l c o m e t o S o r o p t i m i s t



Congratulations on joining an organization of business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and around the world.

We would like to welcome you to SIA and introduce you to some of the terminology frequently used within the federation. In addition, we would like to use this opportunity to help you learn about our unique programs and help you access the many resources available to you through your membership.

Did you know, for instance, that as a Soroptimist member you can participate in professionally developed international projects such as our Women's Opportunity Awards program? Unique to Soroptimist, this program provides cash grants to women who need training or education to improve their employment options. These women are the primary wage earners for their families, and often they are domestic violence survivors. Our members are constantly inspired by the strength and courage of these women, as we watch them move from lives dominated by despair to those filled with hope.

Through your interaction with Soroptimist, you have the ability to be an instrument of change to women throughout the world. As you learn more about Soroptimist, please remember to visit our website for the most up-to-date information and news at <www.soroptimist.org>.

The first Soroptimist club was formed in 1921 in Oakland, California, by a group of women who were interested in volunteer service but who were prohibited from joining all-male service organizations.

The first clubs provided women business owners, managers and professionals in different occupational areas the opportunity to meet and to work together in their communities.

F i n d i n g R e s o u r c e s



The availability of professionally produced resources, many of which are available in the members-only website, is an exclusive member benefit. The members-only website includes information on SIA's Strategic Plan, tools and materials to conduct our programs, contribution forms and information about our giving programs, and information on bylaws and procedures. To access these resources, go to www.soroptimist.org and log onto the members-only portion of the site using your secure member number.

Another major member benefit is our award-winning magazine, *Best for Women*. The magazine, which is mailed to each member's home on a quarterly basis, is full of Soroptimist news and inspirational stories about the women and communities we help through our programs and volunteer service. Members also receive an exclusive monthly electronic newsletter, the "Soroptimist Summary."

One of SIA's key strengths is its ability to provide an international networking forum for business and professional women. To add to this strength, SIA has developed a mentor program for members. This program facilitates an exchange of ideas between new and seasoned members to enable shared learning. To access additional information, including a full program description, applications and participant requirements, log into the website and go to:

Library>Membership>Membership Benefits.



In 1928, the individual Soroptimist clubs in North America banded together to create a federation of Soroptimist clubs, now called Soroptimist International of the Americas.

As Soroptimist clubs spread throughout North America, they attracted outstanding women in the community, such as Bertha Knight Landes, the first woman elected as the mayor of a major American city (Seattle in 1925).

SIA's mission is to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. To accomplish this goal, the organization sponsors several international programs.



2005 Women's Opportunity Award winner with family and members of Soroptimist International of the Americas.



2005 Violet Richardson Award winner displays service project.

Women's Opportunity Awards: as the organization's major project, this program assists women by giving them the resources they need to improve their education, skills and job prospects.

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls: cash grants from Soroptimist International of the Americas for innovative club projects.

Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence: an awareness campaign that targets domestic violence as a workplace concern.

Violet Richardson Award: a program that recognizes girls' volunteer efforts in local communities and around the world.

Making a Difference for Women Award: a recognition program for women who help other women and girls in their local communities and throughout the world.

Soroptimist Disaster Relief Fund for Women and Girls: provides funds for programs that assist women and girls after a man-made or natural disaster.

In the aftermath of World War II, Soroptimist began extending membership into communities in Central and South America. The first SIA club outside of North America was formed in 1947 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Following the expansion of membership to women in Japan, Korea, and the Philippines in the 1960s, Soroptimist began to develop additional programs to assist women.

S h a r i n g t h e D r e a m

To keep Soroptimist strong, every member must share the responsibility of introducing our mission to business and professional women. Even new members can help by inviting friends and associates to club fundraisers, program meetings and/or volunteer projects. Women throughout the world recognize the value of Soroptimist, and the best way to continue our tradition of excellence is by welcoming new members into our organization.



Members from SI/Stoney Creek-Niagara and SI/Hamilton-Burlington, located in Ontario, Canada, walked over 40 miles to raise money and awareness for breast cancer research.

Charter members of SI/Washoe County, Nevada, United States, decided to start a recruitment campaign, with a goal of 50 members for their charter date. Members worked together with clubs in the area, as well as with district and region leaders, and headquarters. Working together, the club chartered with more than 80 members!



Members from SI/Cumberland County, New Jersey, United States, were recently recognized for their efforts to improve the lives of women and girls in their community through a grant from the local government.

In 1972, the Women's Opportunity Awards were established to provide cash grants to increase the job skills for women who are the sole source of financial support for their families.

The celebration of International Women's Year in 1975 and the U.N. Decade for Women 1975-1985 sparked the formation of what is now called the Making a Difference for Women Award program.

The Changing Face of

Soroptimist



The importance of Soroptimist to women and girls throughout the world is embodied through our ability to respond to the needs of today while planning for the future. The diverse nature of our work, from building domestic violence shelters to providing relief funding to women who have fallen victim to natural disasters, is reflective of the 19 countries our membership encompasses. As the status of women and girls shifts and changes in the world, so do our programs — ensuring that we are truly an organization of women at their best helping other women to be their best.



Individual Soroptimist clubs are as diverse as our membership. It is the goal of clubs to carry out our mission while making membership convenient and relevant to today's demanding professional and personal schedules. Clubs are increasingly using advanced technologies to communicate, promote their programs and events, and engage new members. The SIA website enables more members than ever to interact, order sales items, register for convention and learn about the history of our organization. For the latest information, remember to visit <www.soroptimist.org>, and read your monthly "Soroptimist Summary."



During the 1990s, and into the 21st century, SIA focused its programming solely on improving the lives of women and girls.

After more than 80 years providing projects and programming that benefit women in communities all over the world, Soroptimist continues to prove itself as the "best for women."

The A B C's of Soroptimist

Like many organizations, SIA has terms and definitions unique to our programs and members. To help you grow as a member, we have developed a glossary of terms you may use for reference. Listed in alphabetical order are the key terms, forms, and classifications our federation uses to provide outstanding programs to women and girls — in local communities and throughout the world.

A

Annual Club Campaign – Club contributions to the Annual Club Campaign account for about one-third of contributed income necessary to support programs including the Women's Opportunity Awards, the Violet Richardson Award and the Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls. The campaign period runs from September 1 through June 30.

Associate Member - This type of membership may be granted to an eligible prospective member who wishes to join Soroptimist International of the Americas when there is no club in her community. This type of membership also applies to any member whose club has disbanded but who wishes to maintain an association with Soroptimist. Only federation headquarters may grant this type of membership. Members can recommend prospects to headquarters for this membership type.

B

Board of Directors – The Board of Directors has full power to conduct, manage and direct the business and affairs of the federation. The Board of Directors includes one person from each Electoral Area and the Chair of the Fund Development Council. Directors hold office for a term of two years, commencing on September 1st in the year of election. The Directors are elected in rotation, with only one group being elected each year.

C

Call to convention – Official convention announcement from headquarters to clubs, with information about convention agenda, proposed bylaws and resolution changes, location and schedule.

Charter – The formation of a new club requiring a minimum of 18 members. New club sponsor must submit 5008s, dues and Form 210 (Request to Charter) to headquarters at least four weeks prior to the charter date.

Classification Codes – The classification code is the four-digit numerical code assigned to each member that represents the primary principal and recognized activity of the firm, company or institution or an independent business or profession that employs the member. The Classification Guide (available on the members-only section of the website) includes instructions for determining the classification code. Only regular members require classification codes.

Club in good standing – Clubs that maintain 15 or more regular members, have paid federation/region membership dues, mandatory convention fee (in a convention year) and met all other financial obligations.

Convention fee – Mandatory club fee based on convention location, budget, etc.

D

Delegate – Elected by the club, the delegate attends the biennial convention to vote and speak on behalf of the club.

Disband – The amicable or disciplinary (low membership or failure to fulfill financial obligations) forfeiture of a club charter.

E

Embarking members – Those who are embarking on a career in a profession or business or occupation of comparable status or responsibilities to those of a person working in a profession or business.

Endowment Fund – A restricted fund for the purpose of long-term growth or assets for Soroptimist. Interest and dividends from the endowment fund support SIA projects.

F

Fiscal year – September 1 through August 31.

Form 200 – Report of Club President and Treasurer. Also lists the place and time of club meetings.

Form 202 – Disbanding a Soroptimist Club.

Form 204 – Application for change of name of a Soroptimist Club.

Form 205 – Merger of Soroptimist Clubs.

Form 300 – Region Conference and District Meeting Information

Form 302 – Report of Elected Region Officers, Board Members, and District Directors.

Form 303 – Report of Region Chairs.

Form 5008 – New Member Enrollment/Reinstatement.

Form 5010 – Membership Information Change or Termination.

Founders Pennies – A voluntary contribution by members of 4¢ for each year of the life of the Soroptimist organization. These contributions support Soroptimist programs. Regions are recognized annually for Founders Pennies received from June 1 – May 30.

Friendship Link – Program to foster an exchange between clubs in different countries and federations.

G

Governors Round Table – A forum that brings together region governors for training and exchange of ideas.

L

Laurel Legacy – A recognition program honoring members and others who provide for Soroptimist in their estate planning.

Laurel Society – A permanent recognition program for members and others who contribute \$1,000 or more to Soroptimist.

Life members – Those members who have achieved life member status by July 2001 and who requested to retain that status. This required 25 years as an active member or 15 years of service as a retired or sustaining member.

Live Your Dream Campaign – A grass-roots public relations campaign launched on March 8, 2006, aimed at spreading the mission of Soroptimist through distribution of lapel pins.

M

Membership Dues – Annual federation dues are due July 1 each year. Dues for 2007-2008 are \$44.00 along with liability insurance of \$2.00 (for US-based members) and SI dues of \$6.00. New members pay pro-rated dues (**July-September 30**: \$44.00, **October 1-December 31**: \$33.00, **January 1-March 31**: \$22.00 and **April 1-June 30**: \$11.00), as well as a one-time \$7.50 new member fee, \$2.00 liability insurance and \$6.00 SI dues.

P

Program Council – Volunteers from each region who work as program consultants to SIA's program department. Program Council members represent the federation at meetings, provide recommendations on federation programs and advocate for the SIA mission among local members.

Program Focus Report – Submitted to headquarters by clubs upon completion of a project.

R

Renaissance Campaign – A five year (2004-2009) revitalization campaign addressing four areas of the organization: membership, fundraising, program and public awareness.

Regular members – Those working in a profession or business or in an occupation of comparable status or responsibilities.

Roster – Listing of club members, generated by headquarters, based on information provided by club treasurers on Form 5008–New Member Enrollment/Reinstatement.

"S" Club – “S” Clubs are sponsored by individual SIA clubs and give Soroptimists the opportunity to work with girls (high school students) to instill the desire to perform volunteer service and to further the Soroptimist goal of improving the lives of women and girls.

SI Policies, Procedures and Programme (formerly ROD's) – SI book of rules and procedures.

SI/Americas - One of four federations of Soroptimist International. Current member countries are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, United States of America, Venezuela. <www.soroptimist.org>

SI/Europe – One of four federations of Soroptimist International. Current member countries are: Austria, Belgium, Berlin, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, St Marino, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine. <www.soroptimisteurope.org>.

SI/Great Britain and Ireland – One of four federations of Soroptimist International. Current member countries are: Anguilla, Antigua, Bangladesh, Barbados, Cameroon, Gambia, Grenada, Guernsey, Hong Kong, India, Isle of Man, Jamaica, Jersey, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Republic of Ireland, Republic of South Africa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and The Grenadines, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Calicos Islands, Uganda, UK of Great Britain & Ireland, Britain & Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe. <www.soroptimist-gbi.org>.

SI/South West Pacific – One of four federations of Soroptimist International. Current member countries are: Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Western Samoa. <www.siswp.org>.

SI President's December 10th Appeal – In honor of United Nations Human Rights Day, the SI president invites all Soroptimists to join her in making a personal sacrifice and donating the money to an international fund to help those living in extreme poverty. The 2006 December 10th appeal was **Project Punjab: Helping Girls into School**.

SI Quadrennial Project (2007-2011) – “Project Sierra - A Family and a Future” partners SI with UK-based Hope and Homes for Children that assists orphaned and abandoned children in Sierra Leone.

SIA permanent identifying focus – To improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world.

SIA Mission Statement - Soroptimist is an international volunteer service organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world.

SIA Disaster Relief Fund for Women and Girls – Aids women or girls who have been victims of natural disasters or acts of war.

SIA Regions (28) – América Del Sur; Brazil; Camino Real; Desert Coast; Eastern Canada; Founder; Golden West; Japan Chuo, Higashi, Kita, Minami, Nishi; Korea; Mexico/Centroamérica; Midwestern; North Atlantic; North Central; Northeastern; Northwestern; Philippines; Rocky Mountain; Sierra Nevada; Sierra Pacific; South Atlantic; South Central; Southern; Taiwan; Western Canada.

Sigma Societies – Sigma Societies are sponsored by individual SIA clubs and give Soroptimists the opportunity to work with young women (college students) to instill the desire to perform volunteer service in the community and to further the Soroptimist mission of improving the lives of women and girls.

Soroptimist International Board – Consists of SI officers, the president of each federation and two representatives.

SIA Strategic Plan – A document that states Soroptimist International of the Americas' vision, mission and purpose, core values and strategic outcomes, available on the SIA website: <www.soroptimist.org>.

T

Transmittal Form – Completed by the club or region and accompanies Women's Opportunity and Violet Richardson award applications for judging.

V

Venture Clubs – Sponsored by SIA clubs to encourage and promote volunteerism at the community level by young women currently ineligible for membership in Soroptimist, and to provide young women with opportunities for leadership and self-development through mentoring.

Violet Richardson Award – Recognizes and honors young women who make the community and world a better place. Named after the president of the first Soroptimist club (Violet Richardson Ward), the program offers a cash grant to award recipients and the organizations for which they volunteer.

W

Women's Opportunity Awards – Assist women who have primary financial responsibility for themselves and their families. These women are entering or re-entering the workforce to obtain the education and skills training they need to improve their employment status. One recipient in each of the SIA regions receives a \$5,000 award with additional \$3,000 awards granted based on region participation. There are three federation awards of \$10,000 each.