



## Women's service group gives back thorough pregnancy prevention program

For Joey Voto, being retired doesn't mean she gets to relax. As president of the women's service group, Soroptimist International of Billings, Voto is dedicated to improving the lives of women. "I am just a doer. I enjoy the women, the friendships I have developed over the last four years, and I do enjoy working in the community," Voto said.

Talked into joining the organization by her daughters, Voto laughs that it took, "a lot of arm twisting" to get her to join. Initially she did not want to be president, just an active member.

"Like any other organization, it's hard to keep people. It's hard to get new people because peoples' lives are busy." So she stepped up to the challenge. "It's a great group of women and they won't let me fail. They're always there to support me and guide me in this organization," Voto said.

A busy service group dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world, Soroptimist International of Billings has been serving the community for over 63 years.

Invited by a friend six years ago, Growth and Development Chair Sue Anders said, "I felt a need to get involved in something to better the community, better the world. And you can't do that alone."

### **v Community Involvement**

Group members were instrumental in providing infant simulators for "Baby Think It Over," a teen pregnancy prevention program. "They do all sorts of noxious things," Voto said, referring to the baby simulators. Designed to educate students of the reality of being the main caregiver of an infant, the project is instituted throughout Billings School District 2, Yellowstone County high schools, and Big Horn County high schools.

"If we can keep one little girl from getting pregnant, it's been a success," Voto said. "Last year a women donated an auction item because her granddaughter had gone through the program and said, 'I'm never doing that.' It makes them think." As "Baby Think It Over" becomes a maintenance program, the group is looking for their next major project.

### **v Enjoying Growth**

Budding talents are nurtured in the Young Artist's Program, coordinated by the club in conjunction with the Yellowstone Art Museum. Open to high school students, the competition is in its 10th year. Growing from nine participants last year to 27 artists this year, the program has begun to blossom. Entries this year included sculptures, paintings, jewelry boxes, and a mobile, with a monetary award given in recognition of the artist's success. The contest offered a \$200 prize for first place, a \$100 prize for second place, a \$75 prize for third place, a \$50 honorable mention and a \$1,000 scholarship, and the winning pieces are sold at the group's annual fundraiser, "A Night of Wine and Roses."

"It was wonderful, I am so happy," Voto said. "We had more students participating than we ever had before."

### **v Giving Back**

The group provides fellowship awards locally for women who are retuning to school for postgraduate study, a women's opportunity award cash grant for women seeking to improve employment status, and the Violet Richardson, a cash grant for young women helping make community better place through volunteerism. Volunteers have donated their time to institute service programs at the women's prison, including a statewide book drive for the prison library and furnished a reading room for mothers and their children.

**Individuals interested in joining** can contact Voto at (406) 656-3642 or Anders at (406) 248-4316, or write the group for information at P.O. Box 2322, Billings, 59103.