

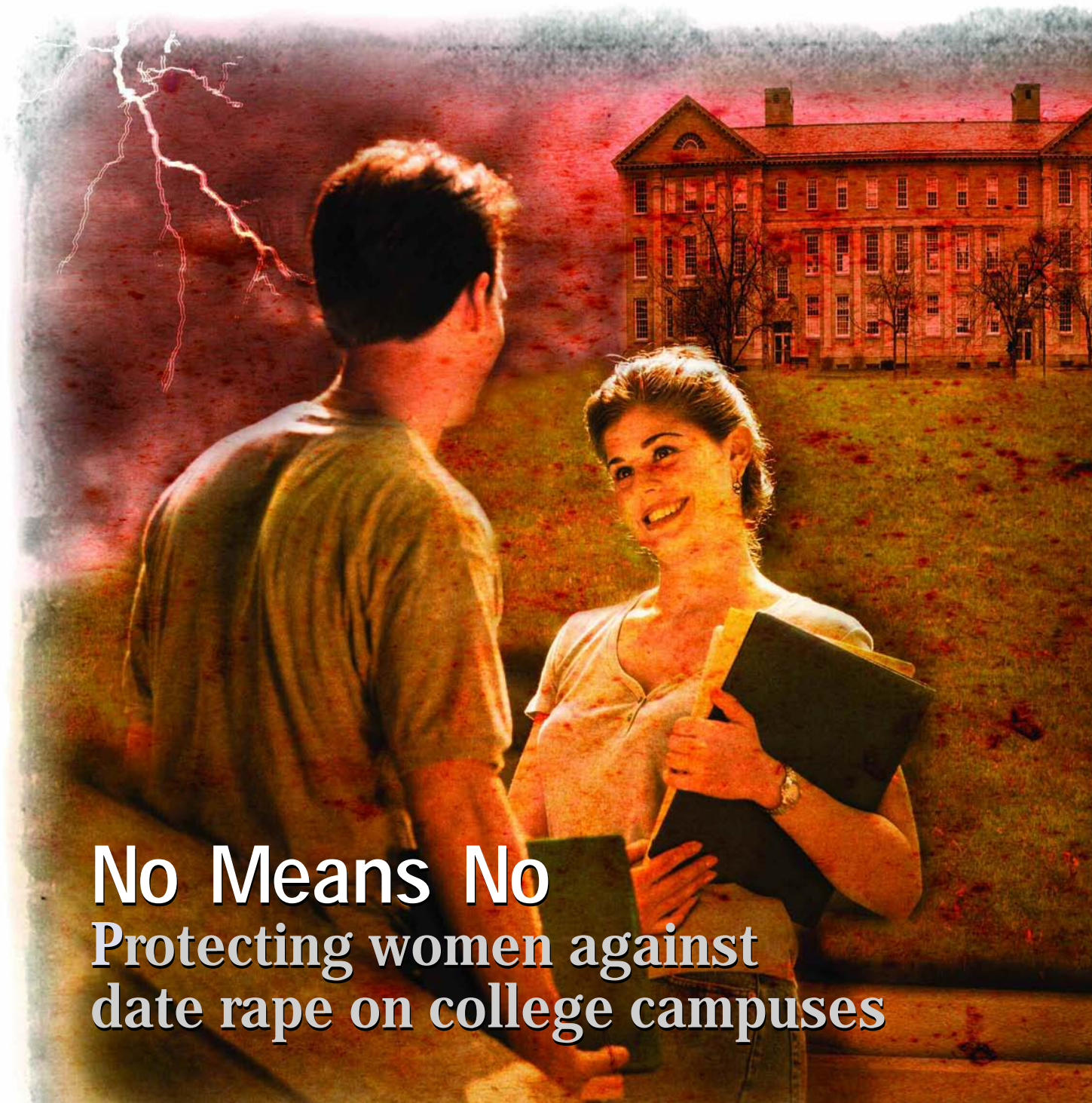
BEST *for Women*

Fundraising Issue

Best Practices
in Fundraising

Reclaiming the Dream:
Delia Garcia

Renaissance Campaign
Progress Report



No Means No
Protecting women against
date rape on college campuses



12

FEATURES

- 1 **President's Message**
- 6 **What's Your Dream?:** Answers to the Live Your Dream Wildest Dreams Contest
- 8 **Reclaiming the Dream:** Delia Garcia
- 18 **Renaissance Campaign Progress Report**
- 19 **Fundraising:** Best Practices
- 20 **Fundraising:** Reaching Renaissance Campaign Goals through Corporate Sponsorship
- 22 **Membership:** Use 'Em or Lose 'Em: Retaining through Engaging
- 24 **Program:** Applying for a Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls
- 26 **PRofile:** Taking Good Photos

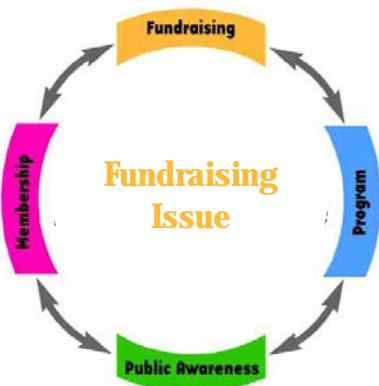
COVER STORY

12 No Means No: Protecting women from date rape on college campuses

On the cover: Often misunderstood, date rape is a serious form of sexual violence that affects women on college campuses worldwide. More and more, victims are speaking out and demanding accountability for their perpetrators' actions.

Photo Illustration by Diane Fenster

18



2



26

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 **Best For Women**
- 7 **Headquarters Highlights**
- 9 **Program Notes**
- 10 **Projects**
- 27 **Soroptimist Source**
- 28 **Sales Items**
- 29 **Officers**



As I wrote my fourth and final message in our *Best for Women* magazine, I was hurriedly preparing my materials for two region conferences in Japan—the Minami and the Nishi regions. Timing is essential when preparing for region conferences. My messages had been translated ages ago. A copy in Japanese was distributed while I presented in English. One of the biggest items in SIA's budget is for translation. We have six languages in our federation. Our policy states that language will not be a barrier for participation in our federation programs, initiatives and events. It is vital that our communication methods be upgraded in order to respect the different cultures, traditions and languages present in SIA. At our last federation board meeting, it was the consensus that we must be creative in sourcing funds required for dissemination in non-English speaking countries.

After Japan, my next destination was Buenos Aires for the América del Sur region conference. It was held in Spanish this time. Fortunately, the language is not unfamiliar to me. My fourth conference was close to home. I had to fly about an hour away from Manila to Zamboanga City, a very Spanish city in the southern tip of Mindanao. The fifth and last region conference was in Taiwan, our host region for the 2008 SIA convention. Alas my Mandarin is non-existent! As you can see, your SIA leadership must be mobile, and able to adjust to different timetables in a jiffy and communicate non-verbally.

We are so fortunate to belong to an organization that takes seriously its responsibility to educate members and the public about important issues affecting women and girls. In this issue of your award-winning magazine, you will read about a widespread form of sexual violence being perpetuated against young women on college campuses around the world. Date rape, as it is sometimes called, is a serious sexual crime affecting thousands of women. SIA fully supports the Beijing Platform for Action, which calls for both governments and NGOs to educate women, men, girls and boys to improve the status of women and girls, and encourage them to work toward mutual respect and equal partnerships. We have many clubs that work on this issue. One club, for instance, sponsored a daylong seminar on date rape targeted to high school boys. Guest speakers addressed the issue of dating violence, reproductive health, unwanted pregnancies and healthy relationships. It is informative and important for boys (and men) to be part of this discussion. Ultimately, it is the girls and young women who benefit when they find security and safety in their environment.

Of course, date and any other kind of rape is a violent crime that's more about power than sex—and it needs to be treated as such. But there are other things we can do to ensure that girls gain the needed skills to resist sexual pressure and to protect themselves as they grow into womanhood. I strongly urge our clubs to give girls an opportunity to develop a

wide range of interpersonal skills, plus the ability to manage change with confidence through practice in different settings and providing the opportunity to lead others.

At an early age, girls must be given space to meet on their own so they are free to discuss issues that might otherwise be embarrassing or uncomfortable in a mixed group. They can feel threatened and overwhelmed, particularly as it applies to sexual pressure. It is important for girls to dream freely; they can be anything they wish to be. Soroptimists must pave the way so that these women of the future can fully develop their self-esteem and confidence now. I have no doubt that our clubs have the resources, the knowledge and the vision to instill those much-needed values that we hold dear to our hearts.

As this is my last message, I want to thank you—the members—for the honor of serving as your federation president. It has been my extreme pleasure to meet many of you and to see our mission in action in communities throughout the world. Your energy and commitment are inspiring!

I'd also like to thank all the SIA leadership (board members, governors, region chairs) and staff for your hard work and unwavering commitment to our organization and the work we do to support the world's women and girls. Until next we meet, keep happy thoughts in your hearts. 🍀

The Best for Women section recognizes club activities that support SIA's mission to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. This can include women/girl-focused projects, membership drives and leadership activities. This section also honors members for special achievements, as these are women at their best contributing to the world in meaningful ways. To learn more about SIA's mission, visit <www.soroptimist.org>.

BRAZIL REGION

With the help of a Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls, **SI/Brasilia Norte, Brazil**, started a project to help disadvantaged women. The club provided the women with sewing machines and other supplies for the purpose of creating new fashions out of recycled materials. Two-hundred women—many of whom faced poverty, prostitution and unemployment—now make clothing and accessories out of aluminum soda can tabs, and are almost entirely self-sustaining. “Those women are generating incomes for their poor families and they are creating a new fashion in Brazil with recycled materials,” said the club's president Maryvan Rossi.



Brazilian women sew purses made from recycled soda can tabs as part of a project sponsored and supervised by SI/Brasilia Norte club members.

CAMINO REAL REGION

SI/Glendale, California, members held its annual “Bras for a Cause” event to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer. One of the contest entries was a bra submitted by **SI/Burnley, England**, members who heard about the event and wanted to participate. Along with the bra, SI/Burnley members enclosed an official letter from the office of former

Prime Minister Tony Blair citing his support of the event.

DESERT COAST REGION

SI/Norwalk, California, is assisting in the creation of a library for members of the Family Foundation, a one-year substance abuse program for pregnant and parenting women inmates and their children. Soroptimist members are currently collecting books and magazines, which will be reviewed by Family Foundation staff before being given to the women and their children. The program's founders believe that within a positive and nurturing environment, these women can break the cycle of drug use and incarceration.

SI/North County Inland, California, awarded its annual “Woman of Distinction” award to Michelle Renee, author of *Held Hostage: The True Story of a Mother and Daughter's Kidnapping* and founder of The Violent Trauma Awareness Project. Michelle re-built her life after suffering through a 14-hour hostage ordeal, during which she was forced to rob the bank she managed while her daughter was bound and gagged. Michelle's organization focuses in part on violent crime victim recovery and youth leadership development through the Girls Against Crime program. “It is like a fire has ignited inside of her and she has found her calling through this awful tragedy,” said member Carolyn Wolf.

FOUNDER REGION

SI/Humboldt Bay, California, recently held an event to honor local women with Making a Difference for Women, Women's Opportunity, and Violet Richardson awards. The club also honored the recipients of its Women's Re-Entry Award, which helps single women working to enter or re-enter the work

force gain education and technical skills that will improve their employment opportunities.



SI/Humboldt Bay, California, members with their award winners.

JAPAN HIGASHI REGION

In support of the Renaissance Campaign's membership goals and in honor of its 35th anniversary, **SI/Tokyo, Azuma, Japan**, recently chartered a new club, **SI/Tokyo-Azabu, Japan**. The new club, which is the 17th club chartered by SI/Tokyo, Azuma, already boasts 24 members. Also in celebration of its anniversary, SI/Tokyo, Azuma, collected contributions and donated them to the United Nations Association of Japan to assist women refugees; the Soroptimist Japan Foundation; SIA; and Japan Higashi Region.

PHILIPPINES REGION

With the help of a Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls, **SI/Lucena City, Quezon Province, Philippines**, developed “A Girl's Dream Life” project. This program assists abused and neglected girls and their mothers living at the Girls Crisis Center in Lucena City. Club members donated money for furniture, clothing, toys, toiletries, a computer, and education and skills training for the girls. The members also hired a social worker to provide emotional and psychological guidance to the residents.



SI/Lucena, Philippines with with house parents and the residents of the Girls Crisis Center in Lucena City.

NORTHWESTERN REGION

Greater Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce recently named **SI/Oak Harbor, Washington**, Service Organization of the Year. The club was chosen from more than 100 community organizations. The club's 90 members are active in "local and global projects helping women and girls in health, education, and economic areas."

SI/Portland, Oregon, convened recently to fill Mother's Day goody bags for mothers in a nearby shelter. The shelter provides a home for domestic violence victims and their children.

SI/Port Angeles Jet Set, Washington, was awarded the Totem Girl Scout Council's Token of Appreciation award. The club was nominated by Port Angeles' Girl Scout leaders for its support of service activities. For the past three years, the club has sponsored more than 25 Girl Scouts and scout leaders on an environmental education retreat. Among other activities, each year the club presents the girls with a discussion panel made up of leading area women employed in environmental stewardship through sciences, administration, law enforcement and the arts.

NORTH ATLANTIC REGION

The Doylestown Hospital Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners unit recently presented **SI/Bucks County, Pennsylvania**, with the "Golden Panty Award." Two years ago, club members began donating new undergarments to women victims in the sexual assault unit. When admitted, victims' underwear is often collected for evidence, and the women are given paper undergarments, which can be uncomfortable and embarrassing. The club plans to continue supplying the unit with undergarments as needed.



SI/Bucks County, Pennsylvania, received the "Golden Panty Award" in recognition of its efforts on behalf of sexual assault victims.

SI/Center City, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, made Mother's Day baskets for mothers living in a local shelter. Club members purchased the gift items, which included soap products, journals, and accessories. Several Philadelphia-area businesses also supported the project by donating various items.

SIERRA NEVADA REGION

SI/Auburn, Washington, member **Sue Singer** was recently elected president of the General Assembly of the Puget Sound Regional Council. Sue has been a member of Soroptimist since 1989 and served as the club's 1993-1994 president. Fellow member **Lynn Norman** said, "This is an incredible honor for Sue and recognizes all that she has done to better our region. We are thrilled to have one of our mem-

bers elected to such a prestigious position." The General Assembly represents the most densely populated region of Washington State.

SI/Chico, California, made a generous donation to the Esplanade House Transitional Shelter for homeless families, which is part of the Community Action Agency of Butte County in Chico. The donation made it possible for the home's adolescent girls to participate in baby-sitting classes, summer camp, and other organized community and school activities.

SIERRA PACIFIC REGION

SI/Atwater, California, set a goal to improve local women's health, through its six-month "Get Fit Atwater" challenge. This project aims to increase awareness of the medical risks associated with obesity, and offers support to women trying to become healthier. Ultimately, President Chris Carroll and club members hope to create a partnership with Castle Family Health Center in Atwater to improve the health of the community.

SI/Carmel Bay, California, recently held a Saturday of Service event, during which it honored 16 women who were victims of domestic violence in Monterey County. Club members carefully cleaned, sanded, and painted 16 red plywood silhouettes, known as the "Silent Witnesses," which symbolized the victims. The project was sponsored by the Silent Witness Initiative, a nationwide program that strives to "...promote peace, healing and responsibility in adult relationships in order to eliminate domestic murders in the United States by the year 2010."

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

SI/Austin, Texas, member **Judy Brown** was named a qualifying participant of the

President's Council on Service and Civic Participation 2006 National Market Winners. The Council was formed in 2003 to recognize the important contributions Americans of all ages are making within their communities through service and civic engagement. For her volunteer efforts, Judy will receive a lapel pin, certificate, and letter from U.S. President Bush.

WESTERN CANADA REGION

SI/TriCities, British Columbia, Canada, recently hosted its 7th Annual Women's Recognition Awards Luncheon. At the event, the club honored its Making a Difference for Women, Violet Richardson, and Women's Opportunity award recipients, and disbursed more than \$18,000 to various community organizations, including the Prostitution Alternatives Counseling and Education Society, the Pacific Post-Partum Support Society, and the Children of the Street Society. The luncheon also featured a keynote speech on human trafficking by past Western Canada Region Governor **Janneke Lewis**.

MEDIA MENTIONS

CAMINO REAL REGION

SI/Manhattan Beach, California, recently hosted the Sixth Annual LUNAFEST film festival. The festival included two screenings of nine short films directed by and featuring women. The LUNA Bar company, the event's major sponsor, designated 15 percent of the event's proceeds to the Breast Cancer Fund, and the rest was given to the Crown Jewel Club, an after-school program for girls. An article about the event and the club appeared in *The Daily Breeze* newspaper.

DESERT COAST REGION

SI/Pomona-C Claremont, California, club members **Ethel Steinberger** and **Myra Lau** have raised thousands of dollars for Rwandan

women displaced by war. The project is part of SI's Project Independence: Women Survivors of War, and enables women to educate their children, buy materials to build new homes, and care for their families. Myra is part of the "Rebel Knitters of Rwanda" and also contributes \$27 every month to help a woman in Bosnia. Myra and Ethel's story was featured in the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, a Pomona, California, newspaper.

SI/Poway, California, member **Karen Dunn** was recently named Woman of the Year by the Poway Chamber of Commerce. The award honors an outstanding woman who has helped to positively shape the Poway community. Karen helped coordinate the annual MotorHeadMadness.com Classic Car Show, which raised nearly \$4,000 to benefit Soroptimist projects. Karen is a past president and former Soroptimist of the Year, and is currently the head of her club's membership committee. A story about Karen was featured in several local newspapers, known collectively as *The Pomerado Newspaper Group*.



SI/Poway, California, member Karen Dunn

FOUNDER REGION

Annie Vogelpohl, the founding president of **SI/Central Solano County, California**, is spreading the word about SafeQuest, a California-based refuge for victims of domestic violence and their children. Fifteen years ago, Annie's daughter, Michelle, was killed by her daughter's estranged husband, despite a restraining

order against him. Their 2-year-old son was a witness to the crime. "Places like [SafeQuest] were not available to Michelle...I want every woman to know that a place like this exists, that they can leave, and someone can help them," Annie said. An article about Annie's story was published in *The Fairfield Daily Republic*, a city newspaper.

In other **SI/Central Solano County** news, an article about the club's Women's Opportunity Award winner, **Crystal Mullins**, also ran in *The Fairfield Daily Republic*. Crystal, a divorced mother of five children, has battled drugs, was molested, and attempted suicide several times before seeking therapy. She is now studying psychology in a local Community College and teaches Sunday school to pre-schoolers. "I learned that if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be here," Crystal said. "And if you're not here, you can't make a difference."

GOLDEN WEST REGION

SI/Phoenix, Arizona, gave a \$12,000 grant to the robotics program at Arizona State University's Women in Applied Science and Engineering (WISE) program. The funding will allow 10 female students to participate in two underwater robotics competitions in June. The women will design, build, program, and test underwater robots. In addition to the grant, the club awarded \$5,000 toward scholarships for women engineering students at the university. An article highlighting WISE and the club's efforts appeared in the *Phoenix Business Journal*.

SIERRA NEVADA REGION

SI/Auburn, Washington, initiated a project to provide Kenyan girls with cotton panties to wear during their menstrual periods. Kenyan girls are often forced to stay home from school for the first few days of their menstrual cycles because of a lack of toiletries and undergar-

ments. Members of the club, as well as other clubs in the Sierra Nevada Region, are working with the Health Education for Africa Resource Team (HEART), and have already collected more than 12,000 pairs of panties. A feature article about the region's successes appeared in an article in the *California Appeal-Democrat* newspaper.

SIA HEADQUARTERS

The April 2004 feature article in SIA's *Best for Women* magazine, written by award-winning freelance writer **Marielena Zuniga**, was recently re-printed in *Women, Images and Realities: A Multicultural Anthology, Fourth Edition*, edited by Amy Kesselman, Lily D. McNair, and Nancy Schniedewind. The article, "The Feminization of AIDS," focuses on women in poor countries whose cultural and economic factors limit the power they have to protect themselves against contracting HIV/AIDS. The book will be used in women's studies courses throughout the United States.

SIA Executive Director Leigh Wintz made her television debut when she appeared in a commercial for Optifast, a medically monitored weight loss program that helps people lose weight, improve their health, and develop the skills needed to successfully manage their weight in the future. Leigh, who successfully lost 60 pounds while maintaining a rigorous work and volunteer schedule, flew to Los Angeles, California, this past March to participate in the taping for the TV ad, which will air on stations throughout North America.

SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION

SI/Howard County, Maryland, club member **Ann Ryder** was featured in a recent issue of *The Baltimore Sun*, a Maryland daily

newspaper. Ann has been a Soroptimist member for 22 years, and was highlighted for her community involvement and volunteer work. She helped form Howard County's Information and Referral Office, where she answers residents' questions about where to pay bills or how to seek help from an abusive spouse. "Life is too short not to be productive," Ann said. "I try to stay busy with things that will make life better for other people."

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

SI/Muskogee, Arizona, recently made a \$1,000 donation to the Laurel Society in honor of **Marie Wadley**, who celebrated her 100th birthday last year. Marie has been a Soroptimist member since the early 1960s. Marie—now a Laurel Society member—and the club's Women's Opportunity and Violet Richardson award recipients were featured in an article in the *Muskogee Phoenix* newspaper.

SI/Muskogee named Marie Wadley (seated) a member of the Laurel Society at its recent awards luncheon. (Back, L-R: Past Presidents Johni Wardwell and Molly Reeves.)



SOROPTIMIST CLUB GRANTS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

SIA funded more than \$175,000 in Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls for the 2006-2007 club year. The grants are for Soroptimist clubs that are initiating or continuing innovative projects benefiting women and girls. A task force of Soroptimist leadership rated the

submitted applications. The 25 grant-winning projects will be highlighted in each issue of the magazine. Information about the Soroptimist Club Grants can be found on the SIA website: <www.soroptimist.org>.

SI/Playas de Tijuana, Mexico, received \$10,000 for its Women Working for Their Future program, which will recondition a day care center and build a multi-purpose room in which mothers can take training courses.

SI/Rios Negro, Brazil, was granted \$10,000 to aid in the construction of a new domestic violence shelter.

SI/Rose-Fukuyama, Japan, received \$10,000 for its "Shelter: Hotto Room Fukuyama" project to assist an emergency domestic violence shelter and provide continuous support to the victims.

SI/Saga, Japan, received \$8,000 for a project that will provide interest-free loans to women victims of domestic violence.

SI/Seo-Seoul, Korea, was granted \$2,000 to provide goods to an interim house for teenage girls who are impoverished and victims of domestic violence.

SI/Silay City, Philippines, received \$7,500 for its project that will inform and educate women and girls about their rights under the Violence Against Women and Children Act, as well as assist victims of violence with their medical, legal, and recovery needs.

SI/Takamatsu, SI/Middle Kagawa, and **SI/Tosan, Japan**, were granted \$10,000 to provide a venue for women to learn about and receive mammograms. ☺

What's Your Wildest Dream?

On March 8, 2007, SIA launched <liveyourdreamcampaign.org>, an interactive online community that celebrates women and the power of their dreams. In honor of the new site, SIA sponsored its first Dream Contest and asked, "What's Your Wildest Dream?"

As a child of a hard working single mother, my dream was to become a dentist, a goal that seemed far out of reach. I have recently achieved this goal with enormous amounts of hard work, determination and study. Now, my wildest dream as a new dentist is to succeed in serving my community well and be an example to young women for what hard work and determination can accomplish. We can make our wildest dreams come true!

Michelle Reynolds,
SI/Friday Harbor, Washington

My dream is to work as an architect with the United Nations Development Program in Latin America, helping women construct their homes and live with dignity and respect.

Ruth Roulet-Mendoza
SI/Montclair/Inland Valley, California

To be my own boss.

Carol Woods
SI/Algona, Iowa

Dinner with Robert Redford!

Janice Lehne
SI/Sonoma Valley, California

My grandmother was born on a tiny island called Symi in Greece, and came to America as a young woman. It's always been my dream to spend a least one month on Symi, exploring places she used to explore grow-

Congratulations Lois Malone!

Lois Malone, an SI/Rogue Valley Sunrise, Medford, Oregon, member is the winner of the **Wildest Dream Contest**. Lois dreams of flying in an F14 fighter jet.



The owner of a custom embroidery business, Lois has always been secretly fascinated by aviation. She plans to research flights in her area and use her \$500 prize to make her dream come true! Lois believes that fulfilling a dream "makes you realize that life is a wonderful thing and that you should take every opportunity to make it the best you can."

ing up. To gain a better sense of who she was and how her environment made her the grandmother I knew and loved is immensely important to me. She was a selfless, beautiful woman, and she came from a beautiful island so full of life and history. I hope someday I can have the opportunity to retrace her story through a visit to Symi.

Alexandra Nicholis
SI/Canton/Stark County, Ohio

I dream of taking singing lessons to become a better singer, and then actually performing in front of an audience.

Kathleen Malloy Harder
SI/Greater Providence, Rhode Island

My wildest dream is to be a personal shopper to Oprah Winfrey. Since Oprah doesn't

really like to shop, I could do all of her shopping for her. She loves to give gifts away and I love to shop, so it would be the perfect job!

Stephanie Brammer
SI/Joplin, Missouri

I love to run. Road races appeal to my competitive nature and I enjoy all distances from the 5K to the marathon. This year marks 30 consecutive years of running for me. My wildest dream is to qualify for the Boston Marathon this year and participate in 2008, at age 55!

Kathy Anderson
SI/Whitefish, Montana

Visit <www.liveyourdreamcampaign.org> today and stay tuned for the next Dream Contest!

Aspire to *live your dream.*
Inspire others to live theirs.



By Leigh Wintz, CAE
Executive Director



Question: What is the biggest challenge facing headquarters these days?

Answer: Meeting the needs of current members while building an infrastructure that will also meet the needs, demands and expectations of future Soroptimists.

Technology has had a profound impact on serving both current members and planning for the future. Most Soroptimists have learned to peacefully co-exist with the Internet by embracing its power, speed and efficiency. Some Soroptimists were early adapters who recognized how this new tool would fundamentally change the way society would conduct business and communicate. Some have grudgingly learned to send and receive email just to keep in communication with family, friends and business associates. And some of us have become obsessed with the ability to remain connected at all times. As an organization, there is no doubt that it has greatly facilitated our ability to communicate globally.

In 1991, when I first came to Soroptimist, there were no personal computers in the office! Fax communication was new. Phone calls to headquarters were relatively few and most contact was via regular postal mail. By contrast, in the first four months of 2007, our membership services team (Donna Tomlinson, Ed Endy, Linda Lewis and Luz Aponte) have answered 2,000 member telephone calls and 500 non-member calls; and answered 8,800 member emails and 1,500 non-member emails. (Please note that these numbers do NOT count the direct contact with other staff that

many of you enjoy.) We have sent out dozens of blast emails in the past several months. If you do not have an email address on file with headquarters, you are missing the opportunity to provide feedback, receive news, and ask questions about implementing programs or club administration. In short, you are not getting full member benefits for the \$44 you will pay in federation dues. You are missing out on the opportunity to fully engage with your volunteer organization.

What does the modern Soroptimist of today AND the Soroptimist of tomorrow expect from their headquarters? From what we can gather, future members will want to build community beyond the geographical confines of club territorial limits and possibly even beyond the confines of what we currently define as being a club or even a member. We need to find ways to engage anyone interested in our mission to improve the lives of women and girls. Traditional involvement like joining a club or making a donation will continue, but others may get involved by helping SIA discover need, by marshalling forces to expand our impact, or staying on top of emerging issues that need our attention.

How do we do that? By using "web 2.0" to its best advantage. This term describes the new types of marketing efforts, interactive websites and social media that have evolved now that the Internet has proven to be an absolutely indispensable tool for the vast majority of the world. Social media networks like MySpace, microsites, wikis, blogs and pod/videocasts are much more than entertainment. They create dialogue and conversation that helps organizations like ours understand their members and

prospective members, and break through all the "noise" of traditional media. At SIA, we have moved beyond just trying to appear modern and "cool." We want to establish a dialogue with our audience (members and the public) so we can create meaningful relationships.

Have you visited our microsite at <www.liveyourdreamcampaign.org>? Have you told anyone about it? Members and non-members alike are welcome to engage with us by reading about women who have overcome enormous challenges in order to make their dreams come true. Visitors can make a personal action plan to make their own dreams come true and get advice from career consultant and certified life coach, Phyllis Mufson. Tamanika Ferguson, a Women's Opportunity Award recipient, is sharing her life through the site's blog, and Lois Malone of SI/Rogue Valley Sunrise, Medford, Oregon, recently won the "Wildest Dream Contest" that we featured on the site. It's a fun online community that's proven to be very attractive to those who feel no physical boundaries to their network.

As an organization, we are managing the changes brought about through the Renaissance Campaign. That is what motivates us to continue working hard to meet the daily demands of helping our current members while stretching ourselves to meet the needs of the future. It's a difficult, but exciting, balancing act. As an organization, Soroptimist has always been a leader, embracing bold strategies that keep us the best for women. That's one tradition to take proudly into the future. 🌐

Reclaiming the Dream:

Delia Garcia

Like so many young women, Women's Opportunity Award recipient Delia Garcia thought her high school boyfriend was her one true love. At 17, Delia became pregnant. At 18, she was married, and by 23, she had had three children. Unfortunately, soon after getting married, her husband developed a drug addiction and Delia found herself trapped in a violent marriage, enduring terrible physical, mental and verbal abuse. She attempted to leave on several occasions, but each time, "he always managed to say the right things," said Delia. "It would always be okay for a little bit, and then get worse."

Domestic violence and abuse, like that suffered by Delia, is a pervasive problem. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, one in every three women in the world has experienced sexual, physical, emotional or other abuse in her lifetime. Additionally, nearly one-third of American women (31 percent) report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives.

Her husband's drug addiction and lack of stability forced Delia to become the family's primary breadwinner. "As his addiction worsened, I was expected to provide the means for his drugs. When I protested, I was reminded of his temper and subjected to his rage," she says. Like so many battered women, Delia felt ashamed. "I spent all of my energy hiding my situation from others. I withdrew from family and fabricated stories for the reason behind my emergency room visits and the stitches in my face."

After years of enduring abuse, Delia reached a breaking point. "Over time, I thought it would stop, but in fact, it got worse." There was a death

"When I graduated from high school I was pregnant and I turned down college. I always wanted to go back, but as [my husband's] abuse got worse, my dreams got further and further away from me."

in her family, but her husband "wouldn't let me see my family. I finally had it." She left in the middle of the night, and thanks to support from her mother-in-law, was able to move into a shelter.

Delia and her three children lived in the shelter, where adjusting to life in a communal space was difficult. "We had lots of rules. We had to ask permission for everything." In order to ensure her safety, Delia was forced to limit contact with friends and family. "There were times when I got discouraged because I felt that I'd lost my liberty through no fault of my own," she says.

Living in the shelter enabled Delia to reconsider long-dormant personal hopes and dreams. She began taking classes at a local community college. Always a strong student, Delia quickly excelled. "When I graduated from high school I was pregnant and I turned down college. I always wanted to go back, but as [my husband's] abuse got worse, my dreams got further and farther away from me."

After spending a year and a half living in the shelter, Delia found housing. She and her children—now ages 3, 5 and 8—have been living independently for the past year.

Delia's case manager at the shelter encouraged her to apply for a Women's Opportunity Award. She found out she received a club-level 2005-2006 Women's Opportunity Award in the amount of \$1,000 from SI/Los Angeles, California, during her first day back at school this year. She later went on to receive an additional \$3,500 from Soroptimist's Camino Real Region. Delia used the funds to purchase household items and furniture for her new home.

Receiving the award was "incredible," says Delia, as was meeting local Soroptimist club members. "I was so amazed by what they were doing for the community. It was amazing to see all those women who have done so much."

Delia is currently finishing her associate's degree, and will be pursuing a bachelor's degree in social work in the fall. "I want to give back and work with victims of domestic violence," she said.

"I want to serve as an example to women afraid of leaving that hope does exist," she said, "and with a little hard work and perseverance, anything is possible." 🌍

By participating in the Women's Opportunity Awards program, clubs can help women like Delia reclaim their dreams. Without generous donations from individuals and clubs, it would be impossible to continue Soroptimist's major project. To make a donation in support of Soroptimist programs or to download program materials, visit <www.soroptimist.org>.

Soroptimist members work to improve the lives of women and girls by accomplishing strategic outcomes as outlined in SIA's Strategic Plan. **Program Notes** provides information pertaining to these objectives. To read SIA's Strategic Plan, visit: <www.soroptimist.org>.

Commission on the Status of Women

The United Nations held its 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) February 26-March 9, 2007. The commission held more than 170 events on the theme of the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl-child. More than 2,000 people attended, including delegations from SIA and SI. Resolutions were made in four areas: women, the girl-child and HIV/AIDS; situation of and assistance to Palestinian women; ending female genital mutilation; and forced marriage of the girl-child. Full reports are available from the CSW site: <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/51sess.htm>>.

Brazil Launches HIV Plan

This past March the Brazilian government, in conjunction with the United Nations, launched a new plan to raise awareness about HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases among women and help educate women about HIV risk. According to the Brazilian government, HIV infection rates among women increased by 44 percent between 1996 and 2005, and women now make up around 40 percent of all registered infected people in Brazil. The new initiative aims to increase the number of women tested for HIV; reduce mother-to-child transmission of the disease; increase use of female condoms; and eliminate syphilis among women. Minister Nilcea Freire of the Brazilian Special Secretariat for Women's Affairs lauded the plan, stating it "incorporates in a definitive and unequivocal manner the factors that make women more vulnerable to HIV and their specific needs into the national response against the epidemic."

UNFPA Releases Studies

A new study from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) found that community-based interventions to halt violence against women can be effective in reducing violent incidences. The study, which is distilled in *Ending Violence Against Women: Programming, Protection and Care*, offers 10 case studies in which targeted community interventions effectively reduced gender-based violence. The study notes that "violations of women's rights are often sanctioned under the cover of local cultural practices and norms," and that "promoting change requires an understanding of the role of violence against women in a particular context—its origins, how it operates, the myths associated with it, and the mechanisms and attitudes that perpetuate it."

Another new report, *Change, Choice and Power: Young Women, Livelihoods and HIV Prevention*, examines the relationship between economic independence and the AIDS epidemic among poor women. One third of all women living with HIV are between the ages of 15 and 24, and in sub-Saharan Africa, 76 percent of young people living with HIV are women. The paper focuses on southern and eastern Africa, and examines the role of microfinance and vocational training in providing women with economic stability and preventing HIV infection.

Both studies can be found at <www.unfpa.org/publications/>.

Women in Politics Network

This past February, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Development Programme, along with several partner organizations, launched the International Knowledge

Network of Women in Politics <www.iKNOWPolitics.org>. Citing the relative dearth of women in politics and the difficulties women face in becoming involved in politics, iKNOW Politics aims to increase the number of women in government and promote gender-sensitive governance. The site houses an online library containing reports and research to help women move forward in politics.

Combating Violence in Mexico

Mexico has introduced a new domestic violence law to combat violence against women. According to Federal Prosecutor Alicia Elena Perez Duarte, four women are murdered each day, and three out of four women murdered in Mexico are killed by their husbands or boyfriends. The new law calls for integrated federal, state and local programs to identify and combat violence against women, and advocates for a national education campaign and the creation of a central data bank for cases of violence against women. In addition, the law mandates gender sensitivity training for police and other officials. Duarte and others believe the law is a watershed moment for anti-domestic violence advocates in Mexico, and marks the first time domestic violence has been considered an issue of national importance.

New SI Project

Soroptimist International recently announced the 2007-2011 quadrennial project. "Project Sierra, A Family and a Future," a partnership with the UK-based Hope and Homes for Children, assists orphaned and abandoned children in Sierra Leone. For more information on the new project, go to: <www.si.org>. Donations for the 2003-2007 quadrennial project,

Program Notes continued on page 10

Project Independence: Women Survivors of War, will be accepted until August 31, 2007. After that, earmarked donations will be returned and unmarked funds will go to the new project.

Relief Project Update

In August 2006, a volcano erupted in Ecuador completely destroying many small towns. The local club, SI/Ibarra, received a \$7,000 Soroptimist Disaster Relief Grant to assist the Red Cross in meeting the needs of women and girls in the disaster area. The clubs created family kits that included sanitary napkins, baby formula, medications for senior women and vitamins for young children. The club estimated that 370 families headed by women were helped by this project.

Tsunami Report

In December 2004, a devastating tsunami destroyed much of South East Asia, killing more than 180,000 people and displacing hundreds of thousands more. Soroptimist responded to the disaster by granting nearly \$100,000 to three programs aimed at helping women and girls rebuild their lives.

The Centre for Women's Development and Research in India received a grant of more than \$39,000 to develop income-generating initiatives for women and girls. More than 2,500 women were taught how to construct thatch roofs, and make palm leaf products and homemade papers. The center also facilitated the development of a micro-credit lending program in the community. In addition, around 300 girls received vocational skills training.

Soroptimist granted \$29,000 to Project Sri Lanka (PSL), which used the funds for the reconstruction of a girl's school to benefit 900 girls. PSL reports that receiving the grant from Soroptimist resulted in increased public

Program Notes continued on page 11

PROJECTS

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS PROJECTS

Women's Opportunity Awards—The Women's Opportunity Awards program is SIA's major project. The program aids women who, as primary wage-earners for their families, must enter or return to the workforce. Many Women's Opportunity Award recipients are domestic abuse survivors and single mothers who use the funds to help rebuild their lives while gaining additional skills, training and education to upgrade their employment status. The program begins on the club level, with club recipients becoming eligible for region-level awards. Currently, the program culminates with three \$10,000 federation-level awards. Each year, more than \$1 million is disbursed through the program. Since the program's inception in 1972, Soroptimist has disbursed approximately \$20 million in Women's Opportunity Awards. The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) and the Center for Association Leadership awarded the program the 2007 Award of Excellence.



Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls—This program awards Soroptimist clubs capital for initiating or continuing innovative community projects that benefit women and girls. Grants are awarded in amounts between \$500 and \$10,000. Sample projects include funding community domestic violence shelters, and holding skills development classes for low-income women. For the 2006-2007 year, SIA funded more than \$175,000 in Soroptimist Club Grants. The program received an Award of Excellence from ASAE's Associations Advance America award program.

Workplace Campaign—Preventing and eliminating domestic violence is an SIA focus. Each year, SIA promotes participation in an international domestic violence awareness event on November 25. Since 1997, the Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence has consisted of club members distributing cards in the workplace that contain domestic violence hotline information. In addition, SIA now provides guidelines on how to establish domestic violence policies in the workplace. The campaign earned an Award of Excellence from ASAE. SIA's efforts have also earned the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's Allies Against Violence Award, and an Associations Make a Better World Public Policy Award.

Violet Richardson Award—The Violet Richardson Award recognizes young women who make the community and world a better place through volunteer efforts. The award is named for the first president of the first Soroptimist club in 1921, whose motto was, "It's what you do that counts." The program begins on the club level, with club recipients becoming eligible for the \$1,000 region-level awards. One winner is chosen from among the region-level recipients to receive a finalist award, which includes a contribution of \$2,500 to the winner's volunteer organization. The program won an ASAE Associations Advance America Award of Excellence.



Disaster Relief Fund for Women and Girls—The Disaster Relief Fund provides financial assistance to regions and areas within the federation affected by natural disasters or acts of war. Because relief efforts targeted to women are often overlooked during a crisis—ignoring the increased vulnerability of women during disasters and their lack of access to resources—the fund supports projects that specifically assist women and girls. The fund is replenished by club donations. Club and community grants may be requested using a grant application available from SIA headquarters.

Making a Difference for Women Award—This program acknowledges women who, through personal and professional activities, work to improve the lives of other women and girls. The program begins on the club level, where the type of recognition varies. Award winners at the club level are eligible for additional awards at other levels of the organization. The finalist receives \$5,000 from Soroptimist to donate to her charity of choice.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

SI Quadrennial Project—The Soroptimist International 2003–2007 Quadrennial Project partners SI with Women for Women International on Project Independence: Women



Survivors of War. Project Independence provides direct aid to women in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Rwanda and helps them meet basic needs for themselves and their families. The program provides women survivors of war and civil strife with tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty into a civil society that promotes and protects peace, stability and self-sufficiency. To date, SIA has disbursed more than \$616,000 to SI for Project Independence. For more information go to: <www.womenforwomen.org/ProjectIndependence/index.htm>.

December 10th SI President's Appeal—December 10th is United Nations Human Rights Day. Each year, in honor of this 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 partners SI with Oxfam GB—a development, relief, and campaigning organization that works to find lasting solutions to poverty and suffering around the world—on Project Punjab: Helping Girls into School. The project seeks to improve educational access and opportunity for more than 1,000 girls at six primary schools in rural, impoverished areas of Punjab Province, Pakistan. In Pakistan, one in four children between the ages of 5 and 9 do not go to school. In rural areas, boys are three times more likely than girls to receive a primary education. As a result, literacy rates for women in some areas are as low as 9 percent. The project will train teachers, rehabilitate classrooms and raise awareness about the importance of equal access to education for boys and girls. With access to education, girls will have greater opportunities to earn a decent living and realize their rights. For more information visit: <www.soroptimistinternational.org> or <www.oxfam.org.uk>.

Send all donations to SIA headquarters in Philadelphia. For more information on Soroptimist projects, log on to: <www.soroptimist.org>. 🌐

awareness about the needs of girls in Sri Lanka, and hopes the increased attention will serve as a catalyst for future girl-centered education initiatives.

INFORM, the Sri Lankan partner of the human rights organization MADRE, received a \$29,000 grant to create a community resource center for use by a variety of women's organizations. The center functions as a meeting place and communications hub. MADRE estimates that several hundred tsunami-affected women and children will benefit from the project.

In all, more than 4,000 women benefited from Soroptimist's disaster relief grants. The grant projects helped to strengthen communities and raise awareness about the needs of women and girls in disaster-stricken regions.



Soroptimist donated an additional \$17,950, which Project Sri Lanka used to implement a scholarship program for girls.

Program Materials on Web

Materials and instructions needed for participating in all federation programs are now conveniently located in the Library section of the members-only website: <www.soroptimist.org>. Download forms and instructions to participate in the Women's Opportunity Awards, Violet Richardson Awards, Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence, Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls, Soroptimist Celebrating Success! and more. 🌐

By Lori Blair
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