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BEST for Women

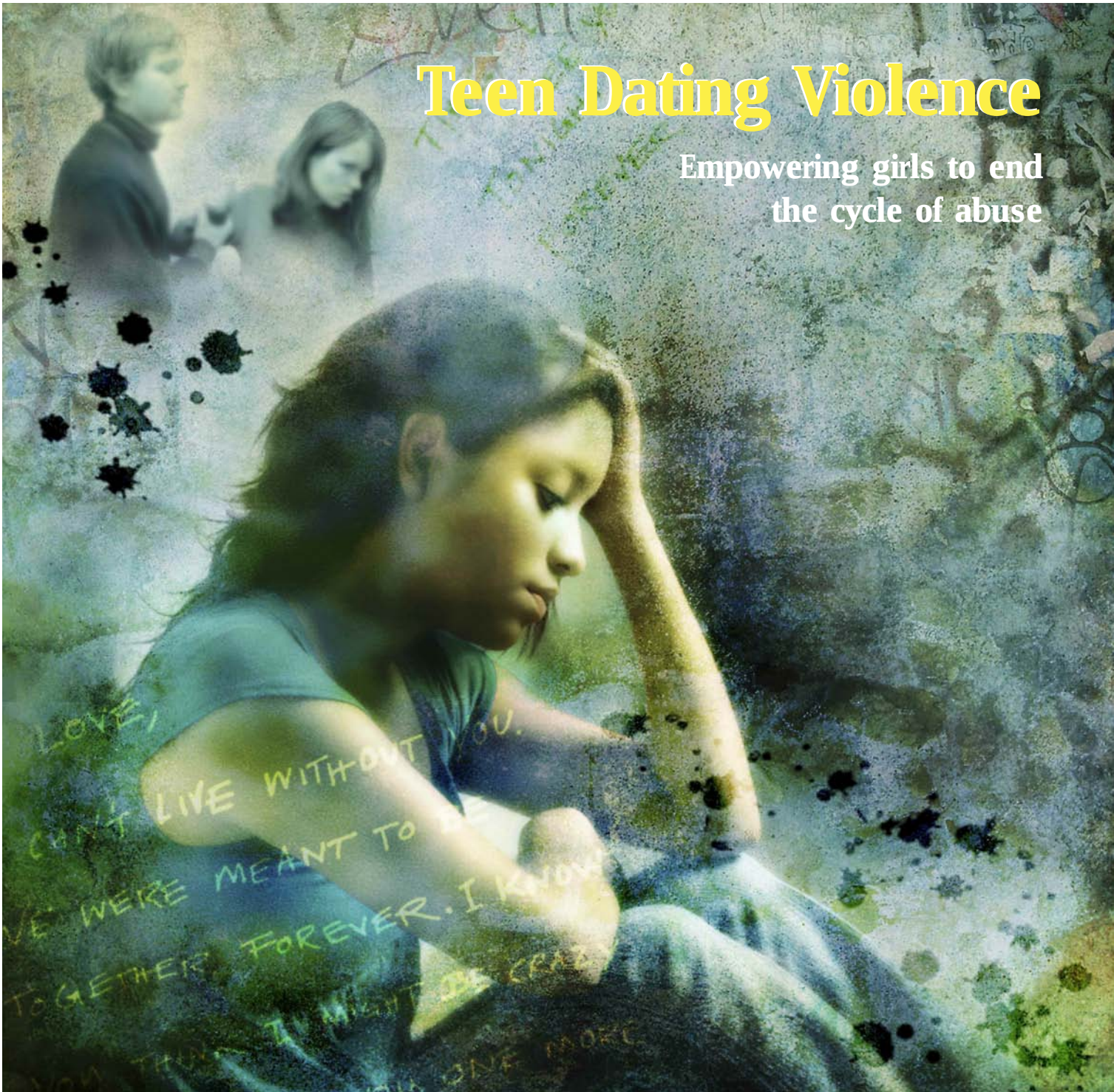
Public Awareness Issue

Best Practices in Public Awareness

Reclaiming the Dream: Hannah Njuguna

Live Your Dream Art Contest Winners

SOROPTIMIST



Teen Dating Violence

Empowering girls to end the cycle of abuse

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Empowering girls to end the cycle of abuse

On the cover: Around the world, millions of teen girls suffer sexual, physical, emotional and verbal abuse at the hands of a dating partner.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Alice Wells
2008–2009 SIA President

This issue's feature article focuses on an extremely complex and important topic: teen dating violence. This article really struck a chord with me because I have two teenage grandchildren, Sabrina (14) and Gaelan (17)—both of whom will be hearing about this article (in addition to their parents!). Think back to when you were in high school (now I know for some of us that is going w-a-a-a-y back, but you can do it!). I would be willing to bet that even then you either knew someone who experienced teen dating violence or perhaps you were a victim of teen dating violence yourself. Abuse doesn't have to be physical to have that label.

Fortunately, I had a mother who had been a social worker as well as a teacher, and she talked very openly about what could happen to young girls in a social environment. However, I had a few friends who were not so fortunate and experienced dating violence, especially verbal abuse.

One friend was violently raped, which she didn't share until almost 30 years later. She was too ashamed to talk about it. We all knew her boyfriend at the time and never suspected that he would ever be violent. How little we sometimes know! The good news is that she was able to move forward, and ended up with a singing career and national fame during the late 1960s and early 70s.

I know so many of your clubs have workshops or seminars for adolescent girls. This would be an excellent topic to add to these events. Have you checked out the SIA website for additional resources? There is an outstanding four-color teen dating violence bookmark that poses some very pointed questions and then states "If you checked one or more of these boxes, you may be in an abusive relationship." It also states that "Love is Respect" and "Love is Not Abuse," and provides a toll free hotline number and a website address. These bookmarks are available as sales items. To order, go to the members area of the website and click on "Visit the Soroptimist Store" in quick links.

Also, be sure to click on the program button and go to the model program section, where you will find a new model program kit on teen dating violence. In addition, you can read a new white paper on this topic, located in the newsroom on the home page of our site.

Another consideration for your club is to design a club mentoring program for girls. Studies show that girls with positive role models and self-esteem are less likely to fall into violent relationships, drugs and eating disorders. SIA has a model program kit for this as well, located in the program section of the website.

On a lighter note, I hope you enjoyed the last issue of the magazine. I particularly liked the article about women and travel. I have said for years that one of the side benefits of being a Soroptimist is having the opportunity to travel—where you not only meet new friends, but you have the opportunity to experience other cultures and learn about local history. I will be doing just that when I begin my official visits, where I look forward to meeting many of you and learning about all the wonderful things being done to improve the lives of women and girls.

Personally, I could relate to that article because every year in mid-October, six close friends and I have a "Girlfriend Getaway Weekend." We were all roommates at one time or another after moving to Phoenix 45 years ago. We pick a different location each year for our reunion. This next year will be in downtown Chicago (five of us are originally from central Illinois). We have been to Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Puerto Penasco, Mexico; Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Galena, Illinois; and Orange Beach, Alabama—just to name a few.

We have found that we just pick up where we left off the previous year—laughing, telling stories, and reminiscing about those days when we were all young and single!

Until next time, please be sure to participate in the membership-marketing survey being conducted on our behalf by Kerr-Downs research. The links for taking the surveys are posted in the members area of Soroptimist.org. The results of these surveys will determine the future direction of our great organization, so your participation is crucial. And please continue to share your stories with me. I love passing them on when I am out visiting with clubs, members, and others who are not familiar with Soroptimist. We are still the best-kept secret in the world and your stories do make a difference!

Contact President Alice at <siahq@soroptimist.org>.

Check it out online

Visit the Soroptimist website and read President Alice's blog!

Follow the path!
Soroptimist.org/members/index.html

BEST FOR WOMEN

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 Soroptimist.org.

CAMINO REAL REGION

SI/Manhattan Beach, California, and **Camino Real Region** recently hosted an open-house event where members could meet Soroptimist International President **Margaret Lobo**. Margaret shared information about international projects including the Quadrennial Project in Sierra Leone, and the December 10th Appeal: Restoring Dignity, Hamlin Fistula Relief. SIA President-elect **Cathy Standiford** and Desert Coast Region Governor **Sam Buchenau**, were also in attendance.

Margaret Lobo (sitting middle) and Cathy Standiford (sitting left) with Camino Real Region members.

SI/Phoenix, Arizona, recently held an event to honor past SI/Phoenix president-elect and former Supreme Court Justice **Sandra Day O'Connor**. In 1981, Justice O'Connor was president-elect of SI/Phoenix when U.S. President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the U.S. Supreme Court. After her confirmation hearings, Justice O'Connor resigned from SI/Phoenix and became the first woman justice of the Supreme Court. Current Club President **Patty Thompson** and past President **Lori Reed** presented Justice O'Connor with an honorary past president's pin and certificate. More than 250 guests attended, including SIA President **Alice Wells**.

EASTERN CANADA REGION

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), one in every 17 women die each year from complications due to childbirth in Haiti. Unsafe delivery procedures have resulted in high rates of infection after birth, for both the mother and child. When a mother passes away as a consequence of improper maternal care, she often leaves the rest of the family without any support. To aid these women and their families, **SI/Stoney-Creek, Niagara, Ontario, Canada**, hosted an event at which members put together "birthing kits" to help provide needed materials for safer deliveries. The kits, which cost only $.25 each to make, include a clean razor blade, string, gauze pads, soap and disposable gloves. The completed kits were sent to hospitals and clinics in Northern Haiti. Members enjoyed the hands-on event and felt great knowing that their work will help make giving birth safer for Haitian women.

MIDWESTERN REGION

SI/Kenton, Ohio, members worked with Girl Scout Troop 20398 to create fleece blankets for the club's Project Care and Comfort. The project, organized by the **Midwestern Region**, provides personal care items as well as gifts of comfort to girls who are victims of human trafficking.

SI/Northeast Suburban Franklin County, Ohio, held its first "Harvest of Hope" fundraiser. The club raised more than $3,800, which was donated to Hope's Boutique, a local non-profit store where women undergoing cancer treatment can buy wigs, prostheses and clothing. Members designed and sold tickets, collected donations, and held committee meetings to plan and execute the event. Donations will assist women who are financially unable to purchase these important items. Club members are planning to make this an annual event.

NORTH ATLANTIC REGION

SI/West Shore, Pennsylvania, donated 40 bags filled with cosmetics and toiletries to the Cumberland County Rape Crisis Center. Club members collected items for the bags over several months and presented them to Anne Ebert, the center's director.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

SI/Algona, Iowa, held two events addressing breast cancer. Club members created 10-inch square pillows used under the shoulder straps of seat belts to relieve pressure after breast cancer surgery. The pillows, along with cards from the club, were donated to the North Iowa Mercy Cancer Center and the Kossuth Family Health Center Clinic. The club hopes to make this an ongoing project. SI/Algona also participated in another successful breast cancer event when club member **Betty Harmon** held a bake sale, which raised more than $600. Proceeds will be donated to a local hospital for women who cannot afford mammograms.

Clinic coordinator Bonnie Hartman (bottom right), clinic nurse JoAnn Briggs (top center), and SI/Algona members display pillows donated to the Kossuth Family Health Center Clinic.

SI/Alliance, Nebraska, recently presented member **Ruth Hatch** with the "Spirit of Soroptimist Award." The club acknowledged Ruth's dedication to the community and various local organizations. A

charter member since 1981, she has served two terms as club president and is the current recording secretary.

SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION

SI/Raleigh, North Carolina, recently partnered with Peace at Work, a local nonprofit dedicated to preventing domestic violence in the workplace. Together, they sold Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence toolkits, which included various materials to help businesses educate employees about domestic violence in the workplace. Using the money raised, Peace at Work and club members presented Azucena Del Rio Diaz with a $1,000 Victim Compensation Funding Award, which will help her pay medical bills incurred after she was attacked by her estranged husband. Azucena is a volunteer translator for local domestic violence shelters and is studying to become a nurse. She says, "Being a role model to all of those women who are going through domestic violence is an honor to me."

In other **SI/Raleigh** news, the club recently served its 1,000th client at its Soroptimist Professional Clothing Closet. Established in 2004, the Clothing Closet provides gently used professional clothing to women in need of appropriate clothing for job interviews or office positions. Traffic continues to increase, and the club has formed relationships with 29 referring partners who send women to the Closet to prepare them for their transition into the workplace.

WESTERN CANADA REGION

SI/Langleys, British Columbia, Canada, was recently presented with a plaque of appreciation from the Langley Memorial Hospital Foundation. The club was recognized for the donation of a Sentinel Node Probe, which the club purchased with proceeds from its 2008 Bras for a Cause™ fundraiser. The machine, valued at nearly $64,000, is used in the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. The plaque will be permanently displayed in the lobby of the surgical unit at Langley Memorial Hospital.

Langley Memorial Hospital presents SI/Langley members with a plaque of appreciation for donating a breast cancer detection machine.

In an effort to aid victims of sex trafficking, **SI/Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada**, assembled more than 120 gift bags that contained an assortment of personal care items. The bags were delivered to the Women's Information Safe Haven (WISH)—a sex trafficking crisis, treatment and prevention center that provides hot meals, clothing and personal care items to trafficked women and girls in Vancouver.

MEDIA MENTIONS

BRAZIL REGION

SI/Curitiba, Batel, SI/Curitiba and SI/Curitiba Glória, Brazil, worked together to raise awareness about domestic violence prevention and support. Together, the clubs distributed various materials, including the Soroptimist SAFE cards, contact numbers for victims who need help, and information about the Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence. The clubs' efforts received coverage on CBN radio, as well as in the local newspapers and blogs.

SI/Curitiba, Batel, SI/Curitiba and SI/Curitiba Glória, Brazil, members donned bright orange shirts and disseminated information about domestic violence in their local communities.

CAMINO REAL REGION

SI/Manhattan Beach, California, recently partnered with the Mira Costa High School "S" Club to raise awareness about the sex trafficking of women and girls. More than 120 "S" Club students wore T-shirts with the "Soroptimists STOP Trafficking" logo and posted signs around their campus with facts about the issue. An article titled "Soroptimists Take on Human Trafficking" appeared in the *Manhattan Beach Sun*.

In honor of the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness, **SI/Oxnard, California,** and members of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement held a press conference to raise awareness of human trafficking. Club members wore red and carried STOP trafficking signs at the Oxnard Transportation Center. A video about the event appeared on the *Ventura County Star* video gallery.

DESERT COAST REGION

SI/Newport Harbor Area, California, recently held its annual Matters of the Heart

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Best for Women continued from page 3

Awards luncheon. The event included an auction, an invocation speech by President-elect **Cathy Standiford**, and moving stories from the Matters of the Heart Award recipients— Sandie Morgan and Laura Miller. Sandie Morgan of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task force spoke about human trafficking around the world and in the local community. Laura Miller of the Orange Coast Interfaith Shelter discussed the increase of homeless women and children in Orange County. The club will donate the funds raised to local groups that aid women and girls. An article about the luncheon appeared in the *Daily Pilot*.

GOLDEN WEST REGION

SI/Chino Valley, California, recently partnered with the Chino Senior Center Knitting and Crocheting Club and the Armenian Gospel Mission to provide Armenian women and their children with adequate clothing for Armenia's harsh winter season. Women in the Senior Center's needlework, knitting and crochet classes crafted handmade scarves, hats, quilts and baby clothing, which the club then distributed to the Mission. This is an ongoing project for the club, which began when the club sent approximately 100 items in 2003. Currently the club sends more than 1,000 items per year. "I am proud that we have continued to provide assistance to an international cause," says member Annamarie Megrdichian. An article about the project appeared in the *Daily Bulletin*.

SI/Tri-Valley, California, and its immediate past president, **Jennifer Luz-Olsen**, were recently featured in a question-and-answer interview in the *My Valley News'* non-profits section. The article profiled Soroptimist and its history. Information included a few of the club's many projects, such as providing rape kits and clothing to local hospitals, and educating pregnant teen mothers on how to finish their high school educations and obtain jobs.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

SI/Ames Heartland, Iowa, recently held its third annual "Warmth from the Ames Heartland" project. The club helped women and their children by donating more than 180 handmade hats, scarves, mittens and quilts to local organizations, including the Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Support, which provides shelter to victims of domestic violence. An article about the project appeared in *The Tribune*.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

SI/Boise, Idaho, donated $2,100 to the Women's and Children's Alliance, which provides shelter, education and hope to victims of domestic and sexual violence. Funds will support the Back-to-School All Year program, which provides uniforms, backpacks and supplies to children living in the shelter. An article about the club's contribution appeared in the *Idaho Statesman*.

An article about **SI/Ogden Canyon, Utah**, recently ran in the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* newspaper. The article featured information about the club's most recent Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards recipient, Nicole Mecham, who is pursuing a degree in information technology at Weber State University, despite physical disabilities. The article also included information about the club's other efforts to improve the lives of women and girls, such as its work with various women's shelters in the community.

SIERRA PACIFIC REGION

In an effort to help elderly women with their transition from the hospital to their homes, **SI/Lodi, California**, initiated the "Reaching Out Project." The project provides women who live alone with household items that will help them meet day-to-day challenges. Club members assembled bags that included flashlights, blankets and a list of frequently used phone numbers. An article about the project appeared in the *Lodi News Sentinel*.

SI/Lodi members assemble care bags for elderly women leaving the hospital.

SIERRA NEVADA REGION

SI/Truckee Meadows, Nevada, recently received the Outstanding Volunteer Group Award. Given annually by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the award recognizes excellence in community service. Since chartering in 1978, the club has awarded more than $725,000 in scholarships to women in the community. Signature projects include a partnership with the Libby Booth School, which offers scholarships and constructs dorm houses for girls attending school in Nepal. Says club president **Marilyn Pearson**, "As Soroptimists, we are a global voice for women, and by working together toward our common goal of a better world for women and girls, we are making a better world for all." An article about the club's accomplishments was featured in the *Reno Gazette Journal*.

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

SI/Winfield, Kansas, sponsored its second annual Day of Unity to remember victims of domestic violence and raise awareness. The club organized a candle-

light ceremony with a speech by Mayor Mike Ledy and SI/Winfield President **Kay Bradberry**. Members hung purple and white banners from street lamps that proclaimed, "Soroptimist: Break the Silence." An article about the banners and what they represented appeared in *The Winfield*.

WESTERN CANADA REGION

The Abbotsford News named **SI/Abbotsford-Mission, British Columbia, Canada**, the top honor recipient of the Second Annual Community Leader Awards. The article noted organizations the club supports, including the Peardonville House Treatment Centre, a program that helps women overcome the negative impact of addictive substances in their lives; and the Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley, a non-profit organization that provides safe refuge and community-based resources for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. The article also included an overview and history of the club and the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity and Violet Richardson awards.

SOROPTIMIST CLUB GRANTS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

SIA funded more than $175,000 in Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls for the 2008-2009 club year. The grants are for Soroptimist clubs initiating or continuing innovative projects benefitting women and girls. A task force of Soroptimist leadership rated the submitted applications. The 25 grant-winning projects are highlighted in each issue of the magazine. Information about the Soroptimist Club Grants can be found on the SIA website: <Soroptimist.org>.

SI/Coronodo, California, received $2,000 for its Live Your Dream: Helping Women Stay in School project. Club members are using the grant to purchase gift cards for low-income women struggling to stay in school. Cards will be used for a variety of needs such as gas, food or textbooks. Clubs members will provide tutoring for the women, many of whom are learning English as a second language.

SI/Crescent City, California, was granted $2,000 for rape crisis kits, which provide comfort to victims of sexual assault. Clubs members assemble the kits and give them to the local rape crisis team for distribution to women who have undergone hospital examinations for sexual assault. Funds purchase clothing, personal care items and back packs.

SI/Garden City, Idaho, was granted $5,000 for its FACES Play Area project, which supports a play area for children while their mothers receive services or attend court hearings at the Family Advocacy Center and Educational Services facility. Funds are used for paint, furniture and toys.

SI/Hofu, Japan, was granted $5,000 for a project that raises awareness of teen dating violence. The initiative will implement a new public awareness campaign and support a domestic violence shelter. Funds are used for operational costs of the shelter, and to create and distribute flyers.

SI/Panama-Pacifico, Panama, was granted $8,000 for its Formando Estrellas project, which provides mentoring for girls ages 9-12. Program activities are designed to enhance academic performance and encourage positive character development. Funds are applied to school uniforms, books and supplies.

SI/Salt Lake City, Utah, received $7,000 for its Possibilities initiative, which supports a teen mentoring and educational program at Horizonte Alternative High School. Club members provide workshops on a variety of topics including personal finance, goal setting and educational and career planning. Funds are used for educational costs, such as books and tuition, nursery items and art supplies.

SI/Valenzuela, Philippines, received $5,000 for its Soroptimist Skills Scholars project, which provides skills training certificate courses to low-income women. Courses include medical transcription, English communication and computer literacy. Funds are used for instructor stipends, operational costs and educational supplies.

SI/Winslow, Arizona, received $5,500 to refurbish rooms in Alice's Place, a domestic violence shelter, where club members clean, paint and replace old furniture. Funds are used for appliances, bath and kitchen items, and paint supplies.

Spotlight on Soroptimists Column

Are you, or a Soroptimist you know, doing something special in your personal, professional or volunteer life? If so, tell us about it in 500 words or less. Your story could be highlighted on the Soroptimist website and in "Spotlight on Soroptimists," a column coming soon to Best for Women magazine.

Send your story to SIA's Communications Assistant Laurie Graf at laurie@soroptimist.org, or to 1709 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

Reclaiming the Dream:

Hannah Njuguna

Many can only imagine the heart-rending struggles of the girl-child in Africa—the gender bias, lack of education, extreme poverty. Hanna Njuguna has lived them.

Born and raised in a rural area of Kenya as one of 10 children, Hannah missed countless educational opportunities simply because she was a girl.

"Formal education was only for the male gender," she said. "My parents and the entire village favored my brothers when any chance arose. This gender bias caused me to lag behind in my education."

When Hannah's father suffered a mental disability and her mother could no longer bear the overwhelming burden of feeding and caring for the family, Hannah had to stop her primary school education and work to bring in money. Any meager funds went first toward her brothers' schooling. "I was constantly out of school for long periods working as a manual laborer in tea and coffee plantations, as well as a house helper," Hannah says. "I assisted my mother with financial support in paying school fees and buying [school] uniforms [for my brothers]."

Like so many children in developing countries, Hannah lost the joy of childhood. "I remember crying so many times as I worked for long hours in hot, cold and wet seasons, most of the time on an empty stomach. I actually suffered pneumonia with chronic coughing for a very long time."

Hannah was determined, however, to overcome all odds and take her education and professional career to greater heights. Her dream was a career in health care, helping the sick and elderly. Moved by compassion, she had always felt called to help others, especially the people of Africa. There, she had witnessed firsthand how poverty and disease resulted in the premature deaths of children and the elderly.

"Yet all this could have been prevented with better health care," she says.

When a local Catholic Church sponsored her high school and college fees, Hannah felt she could finally pursue her dreams. But more challenges were waiting. She had to move away from home and live with a family friend in a hostile environment on the outskirts of Nairobi City. There, she was at risk of rape and other assaults. She also had to walk long distances each day and endure long hours of classes without food.

When she finally graduated from college with a certificate, Hannah spent two years looking for a job without success. She found most employers were gender biased, favoring male employees. "I realized how unfair and harsh the world can be to women and girls," she says.

By this time, Hannah also had small children to support and finally decided to offer clerical services to businessmen at low rates. This allowed her to provide for her children, aging parents and younger siblings.

"This is the time the entire burden of supporting a family fell on me like a heavy load," she says.

As if financial obstacles weren't enough, Hannah also found herself trapped in an abusive marriage. She had married a man from another tribe, and by doing so was subject to his tribal laws. Eventually, the situation became dangerous, and Hannah left the marriage and was forced to move back to her parents' home with her five children.

When Hannah received a "green card" to come to America she saw the opportunity as a chance to make a better life for herself and her family. Though she was sad to leave her children behind, Hannah moved to Novato, California, in 2003, and entered the two-year nursing program at the College of Marin. Shortly thereafter, Hannah learned from a counselor about the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Award. The monies she received—$5,000 from Founder Region and $1,500 from SI/Marin County—have helped alleviate financial pressures, she says.

Hannah expects to graduate with an Associate of Arts degree in nursing this year [2009]. Eventually, she plans to enter San Francisco State University to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing, and later hopes to become a nurse practitioner. In addition to attending school, she works as a certified nursing assistant and home care aide and sends money to her family in Kenya. Currently, Hannah's children live with her mother in Africa, but someday, she hopes to have a job that provides enough money so they can join her.

"Because of the award, I've been able to continue studies into the second year and I'm so grateful," Hannah says. "I was so, so excited when I learned I had won. I couldn't wait for the presentation because I wanted to see the women who gave me this honor. I felt so proud."

Today, Hannah looks back on her life's struggles philosophically. "It weighs down on my heart to remember that girls don't have better chances in life. But if I hadn't gone through all that, I wouldn't be where I am now—working toward my cherished dream of helping the sick and elderly."

By Marielena Zuniga
Staff Writer
Email: marielena@soroptimist.org

By participating in the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards program, clubs can make a profound difference in the lives of women just like Hannah. Without generous donations from clubs and individuals, it would not be possible to continue this remarkable program. To make a donation or download program materials, visit <Soroptimist.org>.

HEADQUARTERS HIGHLIGHTS

By Dorothy Huhtalo
Executive Director for a Day

Editor's note: This issue of Headquarters Highlights was written by SIA's Executive Director for a Day, Dorothy Huhtalo.

I was excited to win the second raffle for a trip to headquarters in Philadelphia to be Executive Director for a Day. It took considerable work and patience on Nancy Montvydas' part to find a time when both Executive Director Leigh Wintz and I had time in our schedules. Four weeks prior to my trip, I had changed jobs and moved north to "live my dream," at my cottage in Coboconk, Ontario, Canada. Finally, the day—November 17—had arrived.

After spending a relaxing evening, which included going to see "Hairspray," Nancy met me the next morning at the hotel and we walked the four short blocks to work at 1709 Spruce Street. I had received the agenda before I left Canada, so I had an idea of what to expect. Leigh gave me a brief introduction to my "job description," as defined in the SIA Board of Directors governance policies. These policies designate the role and limits of the executive director. In short, the executive director is charged with accomplishing the work of the strategic plan.

Next, I met with Lisa Mangiafico, senior director of information services and archivist, who provided me with a personally guided tour of headquarters. From the many awards, pictures and treasures gracing the walls and tables, to the computer servers on the fourth floor, to the mailing room in the basement—the building hums with the energy and purpose of the superb team Leigh has assembled.

Lisa turned me over to Luz Aponte of Membership Services for a brief demonstration of our website, database (iMIS) and accounting system (SAGE). Did you know that if you don't submit the proper documentation to headquarters with your dues and membership information, the membership services associates have the almost impossible task of "guessing" what you intended? Let's help them out by getting our dues with supporting documentation in on a timely basis!

Throughout the day, Kamali Brooks of the communications department joined us and captured my visit on video. Visit Soroptimist.org to watch the short video, which is also posted on YouTube!

I then went to the board room to meet each of "my" department heads, and receive their reports.

• Leontyne Anglin, membership director, and I greeted each other as old friends. Leontyne had been a very effective guest speaker the month before at our fall region meeting. She also provided me with updates on the current membership statistics.

• Jessica Levinson, communications director/editor, provided me with a portfolio containing the "Living their Dreams" brochure, the Women's Opportunity Awards booklet, and the current issue of *Best for Women* magazine. Jessica is also responsible for overseeing the SIA and Live Your Dream websites.

• Lori Blair, senior director of program services, and I had worked together previously since I had been the 2006-2008 awards chair for Eastern Canada Region. We discussed program, which is the vehicle through which we meet our mission of improving the lives of women and girls.

• Nancy Montvydas, CFRE, senior director of development, and I discussed SIA's relationship with PINK magazine. She said that PINK was so pleased with its relationship with SIA and its members that they had offered us additional advertising opportunities at no cost.

• Jean Mervine, senior director of finance and administration, and I spoke about the new accounting software, SAGE. Accounting had just completed the audit for 2008, which is posted on Soroptimist.org and is printed in the annual report.

After the meeting, I joined Leigh in her office where I was greeted with my own "Executive Director for a Day" desk name plate. We worked through some of the hundreds of emails Leigh receives daily. Since the board members were due in, Leigh had decided to have them do a scavenger hunt. Each department had submitted several clues. My job was to assemble the clues into a handout. I do hope the board enjoyed the scavenger hunt; I know I had fun helping to put it together.

Dinner was the final treat when Adrienne Horen, a charter member of SI/Center City, and SIA's investment advisor, joined us.

My visit to Philadelphia as Executive Director for a Day was a tremendous experience. My respect for Leigh is immense. SIA is very lucky to have such a woman who truly epitomizes the "Best for Women." I encourage everyone to visit headquarters to see for themselves what a great team we have working for us. Thank you to everyone at SIA headquarters for making my day so special. It made me proud to call myself a Soroptimist.

By Dorothy Huhtalo, CGA
SI/Humber, Credit Valleys & Brampton
Eastern Canada Region Treasurer

Live Your Dream Art Contest

Soroptimist received more than 4,300 entries to its first-ever Live Your Dream Art Contest, held in honor of International Women's Day, and Women's History Month in the United States. Thank you to everyone who participated in this important initiative that raised awareness of the many contributions of women worldwide. Congratulations to the winners whose artwork is shown here! Each received $100 for themselves and their schools. Visit LiveYourDreamCampaign.org to read the descriptions of these winning entries.

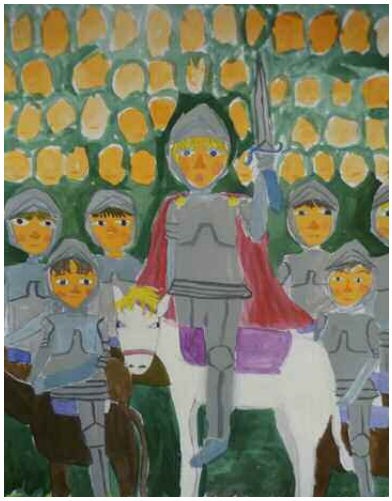
Category 1: Grades K-1
Ski Instructor
Hikari Umeno

Category 2: Grades 2-3
Grandmother
Takashi Ogino

Staff favorites
Volunteer School Mother
Chih-Ying Lin

Category 5: Grades 10-12
Frida Khalo
Rachelle Duazo

Category 4: Grades 7-9
Grandmother
Yukiyo Komatsu



Category 3: Grades 4-6
Joan of Arc
Yurina Kojima

PROGRAM NOTES

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 Soroptimist.org.

U.S. Women Pay More

A recent report by the National Women's Law Center found that women—both young and middle-aged—pay dramatically more in most states for individual health insurance than men. The severity of the problem differs from state to state and from age group to age group. The report lists nine states where a 25-year-old woman would pay 38 to 45 percent more for individual coverage than men of the same age. Also listed are 27 states where a 40-year-old woman might pay from 37 to 48 percent more for coverage. Women are penalized on other health fronts as well. According to the report, it is still legal in nine states and Washington, D.C. for insurers to reject applicants who are survivors of domestic violence. Insurers can also reject women for coverage simply for having previously had a Cesarean section. In general, insurers say they charge women more than men of the same age because claims experience shows that women use more health care services. They are more likely to visit doctors, to get regular checkups, to take prescription medications and to have certain chronic illnesses <www.nwlc.org>.

Gender Gap Report

Last November, the World Economic Forum released the 2008 Global Gender Gap Report, which reviews countries' overall progress in closing the gender gap. Out of 130 countries, Norway ranked number one with the most progress, followed by Finland, Sweden and Iceland. The Philippines ranked sixth, while previously higher ranking countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain slipped down the index but stayed in the top 20. The United States ranked number 27. The report measures the size of the gender gap in four critical areas of inequality between men and women: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; political empowerment; and health and survival. Find out more about country rankings and the report at <weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2008.pdf>.

Economic Crisis Impacts Women

Women could be forced out of the workplace and "back home" by the global financial crisis, said women trade unionists representing 30 million women workers in 43 countries across Europe. A statement on the global financial and economic crisis was adopted by the founding women's conference of the International Trade Union Confederation's pan-European regional council held in Turin, Italy, in October. The statement challenged the assumption that the financial crisis will affect everyone equally, and stressed that women will bear the brunt of the damage to jobs, living standards and social protection. According to the statement: "We challenge the assumption that consequences of the global financial crisis are gender neutral when history shows that the most vulnerable groups are women, migrants, children and elders who are the first victims" <www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-15548-f0.cfm>.

Learn Without Fear Campaign

A report from "The Learn Without Fear" global campaign by Plan, an international development agency, states that girls as young as 10 in some parts of the world are forced to have sex by their teachers to pass exams, and threatened with poor grades if they refuse. According to that report, sexual violence is institutionalized in many schools throughout Africa, but also happens in Latin America and Asia. Plan's head of global advocacy, Nadya Kassam, said that girls who suffer sexual violence may contract HIV/AIDS or become pregnant and die in childbirth because their bodies are not developed enough. Plan's three-year campaign is aimed at ending all forms of violence against children in schools. The World Health Organization has previously estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys have been raped or suffered other forms of sexual violence <www.learnwithoutfear.org>.

Free Maternal-Child Care

Since 2003, Bolivia has stemmed the tide of maternal deaths by guaranteeing free medical services to pregnant women and children under age 5 through the government's Universal Maternal and Infant Insurance Program. More than 1.5 million women and children have taken advantage of free vaccinations, prenatal care and reproductive health services over the past five years. As a result, the maternal death rate dropped from 390 deaths per 100,000 in 1998 to 230 deaths per 100,000 in 2005. For rural women who can't reach hospitals, however, the situation remains dire. In 2006, up to 600 out of every 100,000 women in rural regions were dying during labor. Seventy percent of maternal deaths worldwide are caused by problems such as hemorrhaging, infection and obstructed labor, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

South Korean Woman Astronaut

South Korea announced that a female bioengineering student will become its first astronaut. Yi So Yeon, 29, was scheduled to blast off aboard Russia's Soyuz rocket on

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April 8 on a trip monitored by millions of South Koreans. Women's groups welcomed Yi's selection as a major step toward elevating women's status in South Korea. "This is good news for South Korean women, especially those engaged in science and technology," said Kim Ji Young, a professor who leads the Korean Federation of Women's Science and Technology Association. "She can be a role model and encourage women who want to enter science and technology, where women have faced bigger walls in finding jobs than men."

Venezuela Paying Stay-at-Home Moms

Last year the Venezuelan government began paying stay-at-home wives and mothers, recognizing their work as a valuable economic activity. President Hugo Chavez announced that in the first phase, under Article 88 of the Constitution—which began in February last year—100,000 poor women head of households would receive 80 percent of the legal minimum wage (amounting to approximately $180 per month), with another 100,000 covered in the second phase four months later. For these women, payment for housework could ease some of the contrary pulls of home and earnings from work outside, particularly in families where money is tight. Millions of single mothers are torn between the urge to care for their infants and the need to earn to feed them. For them, payment for housework would be a boon. In addition, Venezuela created a new Ministry of Women's Issues last year. With a commitment to gender equality, the state continues to fund programs to aid low-income women in micro-

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PROJECTS

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS PROJECTS

Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards—The Soroptimist 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/or 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 more than $20 million in Women's Opportunity Awards. ASAE and the Center for Association Leadership awarded the program the Associations Advance America Award. ASAE also awarded the program a 2007 Summit Award, its highest level of recognition.

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, providing mammograms for women without insurance, and holding skills development classes for low-income women. For the 2007-2008 year, SIA funded more than $175,000 in Soroptimist Club Grants. ASAE and the Center for Association Leadership named the program the overall winner of its 2007 Associations Make a Better World Award. Since the program's inception in 1997, SIA has awarded $2,408,300 for 396 projects.

Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence—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.

Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award—This program 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 is the recipient of an ASAE Associations Advance America Award of Excellence.

Soroptimist 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 Disaster Recovery Fund for Women and Girls—The Soroptimist Disaster Recovery 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.

Soroptimists STOP Trafficking—This project raises awareness about the sex trafficking of women and girls. The project provides clubs with cards to distribute in the community and publicity tools to help raise awareness of this horrible practice.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

SI Quadrennial Project—The Soroptimist International 2007-2011 Quadrennial Project partners SI with Hopes and Homes for Children on Project SIerra: A Family and a Future. The project provides support for some of the most deprived women and children in Sierra Leone—a country that has just celebrated its first year of peace in over a decade. Project SIerra has three components: support for young mothers, help for children living alone, and integrated assistance for children and families. For more information go to: ProjectSIerra.org.

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 2008 December 10th Appeal is Restoring Dignity: Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The project, continued from 2007, will assist women with fistula living in a special village where they can receive medical care at rural clinics, as well as training in various skills such as dressmaking, catering, animal husbandry and agriculture to help them to earn an income and become self sufficient. For more information visit: SoroptimistInternational.org or Oxfam.org.uk.

Send all donations to SIA headquarters in Philadelphia. For more information on Soroptimist projects, visit Soroptimist.org.

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lending, daycare and health, among other areas.

New Program Materials:

In addition to the new teen dating violence white paper and model program kit highlighted in this issue, the following new materials are available to clubs on the Soroptimist website:

- Soroptimist Program Impact Report 2007-2008: This informative report provides information about all of the federation programs and helps clubs understand the overall international impact of Soroptimist. It can also be used to promote fundraising and the club within the community.

- New White Papers: Three new white papers are available to inform the public about issues important to Soroptimists. Two focus on women and work: *Balancing Work and Family Life and The Gender Wage Gap*. The second paper, *History, Controversies, and Future of U.S. Anti-trafficking Laws*, focuses on anti-trafficking laws in the United States.

- A new resource, Effective Partnerships for Soroptimist Clubs, is a short document that outlines why (or why not) to partner, and some simple suggestions for ensuring the success of partnerships.

- Soroptimist Disaster Recovery Grants for Women and Girls is the new name for the Soroptimist disaster program. In addition to the new name, the application has been updated to reflect changes in the program.

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