

# Women with an Art for Change

By Marielena Zuniga

How their creative  
works are transforming  
the world



The New York Times headline shocked Judith Brodsky that morning in 1990. It read: “One Hundred Million Women are Missing.” A ripple of indignation stirred in the creative and feminist heart of the renowned print-maker and artist from New Jersey. The essay stated that in places in the world where women had unequal status, they simply vanished. In China, because they were female, girls were aborted, murdered or abandoned as infants. In India, they didn’t receive the same health care as males, and died. Simply because they were female, women were missing.

Brodsky, an advocate for women artists, set about documenting the essay in a series of prints and titled it after the newspaper headline. The poetic and persuasive grouping addressed the denigrating treatment of and discrimination against women in traditionally male areas. One of the panels, “Red Fingernails” (1994), portrayed row upon row of red fingernails and told her own daughter’s story.

“When she was in college studying to be a molecular biologist, she went to meet the professor assigned to be her mentor,” says Brodsky, co-director of the Institute for Women and Art (IWA) <<http://iwa.rutgers.edu/>> at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. “But when he saw my daughter wearing red fingernail polish, he told her, ‘I’m not sure I want you as a student. Someone who wears red fingernail polish can’t possibly be a serious student.’ Today, my daughter runs a huge research lab and furthers the careers of women in science.”

In her large-scale prints and drawings, Brodsky tackles such social issues, as is the case in another series of lithographs, “The Meadowlands Strike Back.” For many years she drove the New Jersey Turnpike to Rutgers, where she also heads the Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions. Outraged by the landscape, she spoke in her artist’s statement of oil refineries “sucking out the resources of the earth and replacing them with cancerous residues,” and of “garbage mountains landscaped to look like parks, but rotting, foul and burning underneath.”

Brodsky has not been alone in her art-activism efforts. During the last few decades, more and more women artists from Tokyo to Mexico City to New York City have been stepping forward. Telling stories with their art. Struggling to foment social change.

To the right: *Demeter*, by Hung Liu. Artwork created for the traveling exhibition, *Off the Beaten Path: Violence, Women and Art*, produced by Art Works for Change.



Hung Liu is interested in chronicling the lives of oppressed people who have been otherwise forgotten. In particular, she is interested in the stories of women and children who are often erased from social history. It's something she experienced first-hand. During the Cultural Revolution, Liu's family photographs were confiscated as part of a campaign to encourage less individual identity. Much of the imagery in her painting is based on 19th and 20th century photographs taken by Western visitors to China. In *Demeter*, a young woman is captured under the heft of a huge load, yet Liu has imbued the image with levity, beauty and hope. She has rewritten the woman's history. "The artwork is my way of painting life back into memories," she says.

## Feminist Art Redux

With the birth of the Feminist Movement of the 1960s and 70s in the U.S., feminist artists began creating art in almost every medium on every topic, from their bodies to class, race, consumerism and political power.

Judy Chicago, one of the leaders of the Feminist Art Movement, was aware that “art was a vehicle for intellectual transformation and social change” and rocked the art world with “The Dinner Party” (1974-79). The piece comprises a massive ceremonial banquet, with a table arranged in the shape of an open triangle—a symbol of equality. A total of 39 place settings each commemorate an important woman from history, from Sojourner Truth to Georgia O’Keeffe.

In the last two years, art by women has seen a resurgence, exploding in a variety of venues. At the Pompidou Center in Paris, “elles,” an exhibition of 500 works by more than 200 women artists, went on display in 2009. The international collection will be shown for a year, beginning with early 20th Century paintings by French artist Suzanne Valadon and ending with works by Japan’s Mariko Mori, among others.

While “elles” was in its planning stages, “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution” opened in 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and moved on to New York, Washington and Vancouver. That exhibition spans 1965 to 1980 and includes 120 artists and artists groups from the U.S., Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

“And in 2007, the Brooklyn Museum of Art established the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art,” says Ferris Olin, co-director of the Institute for Women and Art at Rutgers University, New Jersey. “When you see all that happening, you know there’s a sea change.”—M.Z.

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“The Named and the Unnamed” (2002), for example, a sculpture/photograph/video installation by First Nations/Canadian-born Rebecca Belmore, protests and mourns the abduction and murder of more than 50 women, many of them sex workers, in Vancouver. (First Nations denotes the Aboriginal peoples in Canada.)

Playwright Lynn Nottage of Brooklyn, New York, traveled to Africa to research the brutalities Congolese women had suffered in their country’s civil conflict. Her play, “Ruined,” depicting rape of women as a tool of war, won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

For decades, Japanese artist Yoko Ono, wife of the late John Lennon, has used her art for positive social change and action. In 1964 in Tokyo, she took the passive resistance of the Civil Rights movement and made it a medium of art in “Cut Piece.” Sitting onstage in an auditorium, Ono invited audience members to climb up and clip off her clothing with scissors.

A theatrical metaphor for violence against women, Ono’s performance art is today onscreen as part of the traveling exhibit, “Off the Beaten Path: Violence, Women and Art,” curated by Art Works for Change <[www.artworksforchange.org](http://www.artworksforchange.org)> in Oakland, California. When the show opened in Oslo in 2009, Ono told a Norwegian newspaper: “I want to bring sad situations to light. ... I want to express works like ‘Cut Piece’ in order to heal.”

### Violence, women and art

Ono’s art, as with all the works in “Off the Beaten Path,” is a catalyst for the show’s theme. The multi-media exhibit addresses gender violence from a global perspective, and brings together 33 well-respected artists from 26 countries, including Japan, South Korea, Peru, Norway, Israel and Kenya. The show opened earlier this year in Tijuana, Mexico, and will be traveling the world until 2013.

“The invited artists were asked to help us create new representations through their artworks and, in doing so,

help us feel and understand the essence of the problem of violence against women,” says Randy Jayne Rosenberg, executive director and chief curator. Living up to its name, Art Works for Change partners with leading educational and activist groups to produce art exhibits on topics such as social justice, human rights, gender equity, war and peace, and the environment.

While Rosenberg’s hope is that art touches people deeply, the nonprofit also uses art to engage community groups and partners. Their exhibits remain three to four months at a venue, allowing the public at large to discuss the topic, or groups to hold conferences or do their own programming over an extended period of time.

“When we show ‘Off the Beaten Path’ in Mexico City, we have a collective of 18 organizations addressing sex trafficking who want to become involved,” she says. The idea for “Off the Beaten Path” was born after artist Susan Plum, based in Houston but raised in Mexico City, created an installation project, “Luz y Solidaridad” (Light and Solidarity) for another exhibition by Art Works for Change. The art project brings to light the problem of violence against women everywhere, but especially in Juarez, Mexico, where women and girls continue to go missing and turn up murdered, and honors the sorrows of their mothers and families. While creating that piece, Plum says she was aware that it was only one seed being planted for a much greater global problem of violence toward women.

“There is no justice for these women,” Plum explains, “and my intention for ‘Luz y Solidaridad’ was not only as art-activism, but as a moving and shared experience for both mothers [of Juarez] and the audience.”

Now part of the “Off the Beaten Path” exhibit, Plum’s display features 12-foot brooms hanging from a ceiling. Rosenberg explains: “It’s a symbolic work, with the brooms used in a shamanic way, with the broom that sweeps and cleanses, an idea that was healing to the situation of these women.

She accompanied it with a performance video of women tapping the earth and sweeping, the idea of awakening the spirit of the earth for healing.”

Yoko Inoue, originally from Kyoto, Japan, and now living in New York, created a digital print scanned from a Polaroid for the exhibition. The image (below) of a woman holding a frying pan covering her breasts has become the identity for “Off the Beaten Path.” According to Inoue, “In some communities where direct intervention is impossible, women respond to severe domestic violence by assembling outside of the household in question and banging out an alarm on pots and pans. This informs the man that the spirit he attempts to break belongs to many, not one.”

Rosenberg adds, “So art tells us that the community can come together to make change. I’m hoping this exhibition does show people there are options, that they feel empowered, giving them voice, that they can speak out about their situations.”

### Who was that woman artist?

Given the myriad social issues and women artists to portray them, however, begs a basic question: Why women and art? Don’t men use their artistic expressions to make political/social statements as well? And what is the form and nature of feminist-artistic activism?

While those questions continue to be discussed and debated in the art world, some realities exist, agree art experts. Indeed, male artists have impacted society with their art, and have been studied, exhibited and sold throughout history. Women artists, as in most endeavors, haven’t been recognized despite their contributions. “So that means when you’re in an educational setting,

women’s work is not included in the textbooks when doing art history or art appreciation,” says Ferris Olin, Ph.D., co-director with Brodsky of IWA at Rutgers.

Olin cites another key reason women artists are not studied or are written out of history. In addition to and because of discrimination, many women artists are not documented, she says. But the Women Artists Archives National Directory (WAAND) <<http://waand.rutgers.edu/>> at the university, of which Olin is project co-director, is changing that. WAAND is the nation’s first online integrated directory of primary source collections of women visual artists active in the U.S. since 1945. “We’ve been working with artists and organizations to organize their papers, and have a body of work and documentation available to future scholars,” she says.

Working to showcase and support women artists on many levels, Olin is also co-director of The Feminist Art Project (TFAP), <<http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/home/>> under the umbrella of the IWA. TFAP brings together feminist artists, curators and art critics, among others, to refocus public attention on the significant achievements of the Feminist Art Movement, born in the U.S. in the 1960s and ‘70s (See sidebar on page 14).

“TFAP’s mission not only celebrates feminist art,” Olin says, “but also demonstrates the aesthetic, intellectual and political impact of women on the visual arts, art history and art practice—past and present—and is a strategic intervention against the ongoing erasure of women from the cultural record.”

For Brodsky, the feminist art movement continues to be important not only politically and in being an activist, but in her personal work as an artist. “My

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## Taking Action

Art therapy was first used in the 1940s to help soldiers returning from World War II deal with post-traumatic stress. Clubs can apply for Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls and use the funds to start projects that help women going through difficult situations, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and military women returning from war. Clubs can hire professional art therapists and host events where women can express themselves through drawing, painting and other art forms, which may provide these women with a renewed sense of wellbeing.

Celebrate Support Women Artists Now (SWAN) Day, an international day that supports women artists. Held annually on the last Saturday of March (Women’s History Month in the U.S.), SWAN Day seeks to inspire communities around the world to find new ways to recognize and support women artists as a basic element of civic planning. Clubs can celebrate SWAN Day by participating in SWAN Day events and by making donations to their favorite women artists. Visit <[womenarts.org/swan](http://womenarts.org/swan)> for more information and ideas.

Participate in the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Art Contest, which asks children to depict a woman who inspires them. Held annually in March, the contest uses art to recognize the many achievements and accomplishments of women worldwide. Visit <[LiveYourDreamCampaign.org](http://LiveYourDreamCampaign.org)> to view the 2010 winners and for information on how to participate.

Support local women artists by showcasing their artwork at club and community events. Clubs can auction off their artwork, raise awareness about the challenges they face, and make donations to organizations, such as Art Works for Change, which is working to highlight women artists and their impact on the world.



Artist: Yoko Inoue. Artwork created for the traveling exhibition, *Off the Beaten Path: Violence, Women and Art*, produced by Art Works for Change.

## Japanese Women Artists Break Barriers

Women artists have always had a difficult time exhibiting and selling their works because of gender discrimination. In Japan the patriarchal culture has made it even tougher, the reason many moved to the West, according to Dr. Midori Yoshimoto, associate professor of art history at New Jersey City University. In her book, "Into Performance," she writes about five women artists, including Yoko Ono, who were among the first Japanese women to leave their country and explore the artistic possibilities in New York City.

"The reception for Japanese women artists is warmer right now," she says, "and I think younger women finally have some role models."

Tabaimo, for example, is an artist whose art "reflects her concerns as a woman," says the art professor. Born in Hyogo in 1975, Tabaimo created "Japanese Bathhouse-Gents," a video and sound installation that uses the bathhouse, an archaic but once integral part of Japanese life, as a metaphor to explore sexual equality, motherhood and pollution.

Another artist forging a path for women artists, says Yoshimoto, is Kyoto-based photographer and video artist Miwa Yanagi. Born in 1967, she burst onto the Japanese art scene in 1994 with "Elevator Girl" (1994-98).

Her "Grandmother Series," part of the "Off the Beaten Path" exhibit curated by Art Works for Change, explores issues of feminine self-image and aging through interviews and staged photographs of young Japanese women. Asking them to imagine their lives 50 years in the future, she used makeup, costumes and digital manipulation to realize their visions.

"I'm happy with people thinking of my work as feminist art," she told **ARTIST**, "but I don't set out with that intent. If you are making art on the basis of an agenda, it will inevitably lose its power."—M.Z.

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art was already about narration. Now I could pull in whatever elements I needed to tell my story. I had always defined my art with the important social, political and cultural issues of my own times, absorbing everything around me and putting it together, hoping to transmit to future generations something about my period in which I lived and what was important."

### Supporting women in the arts

Even as more women artists come into their own, the lives and stories of women themselves still aren't represented as they could be in the arts, says Martha Richards. "I want to see what we women feel, what we think. And I believe we don't get that as much in the mainstream. We need more characters in movies and the arts who speak from our perspective rather than what a man might think," says the executive director and founder of WomenArts in San Francisco, California <[www.womenarts.org](http://www.womenarts.org)>.

The non-profit helps women find the resources they need to do their creative work by providing free networking, fundraising and advocacy information on their website. "I was disturbed that stereotyped images of women were often accepted without comment in 'works of art,' and I had experienced many situations where women artists were not paid as well as their male counterparts," Richards says. "I decided to create an organization that would address those issues."

The WomenArts Network maintains a directory of more than 1,200 women artists and provides information about funding sources through its e-newsletters and website, as well as organizing activities like Support Women Artists Now (SWAN) Day. The annual event, held the last Saturday of March (Women's History Month in the U.S.) and surrounding weeks, celebrates women's creativity and art in all its forms, with more than 170 events held in 14 countries last year.

"When we announced SWAN Day, one of our goals was to embody our faith in women's creativity," Richards says. "We did this because we have spoken to so many women artists who

doubt their own talents and instincts. They are discouraged because our society constantly tells them that being 'businesslike' is more important than being creative. In recent months, they have seen that when huge businesses fail, they get bailed out because they are too important to go under. No one says this about the countless women artists who are suffering in the current economy."

In April 2009, author Isabel Allende of Chile spoke to women artists at SWAN Day at the San Francisco Women's Film Festival, sharing that when she grew up, there were no women writers she could emulate. "The few women writers were British, spinsters and had committed suicide," she said.

Challenging the double standard in the act of creation, she added: "When a woman creates anything, it's craft. When a man creates anything, it's art ... there's an underestimation of anything a woman creator does. We are breaking those barriers, but it takes a long time."

Esther Waikuru, an artist from Nairobi, Kenya, attended SWAN Day last year, saying, "This was an eye opener for us women to understand that we are the majority and we can make positive change. As mothers, sisters and daughters of the world, we can cherish our [artistic] creation."

### Women making waves in film

While women have been making inroads in the fine arts, their work in film has been bringing increasingly important social and gendered issues to large audiences. "The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo," directed by Lisa F. Jackson, is one of Debra Zimmerman's current favorite examples.

The results of that film were quite extraordinary, says the executive director of Women Make Movies (WMM) <[www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com)>, a Brooklyn-based non-profit media arts organization that facilitates the production, promotion, distribution and exhibition of independent films and videotapes by and about women.

"The wife of the U.S. Ambassador to the UN was in attendance at a screening of the film," Zimmerman explains. "She brought it home and showed it to her

husband. It moved him to sponsor a UN Security Council resolution that recognizes that rape as a tactic of war destabilizes families and threatens a nation's security."

With a deep belief that films create social change, she adds of WMM's mission: "We want to have an impact on how women are seen in the world, the way women have equality in terms of their participation in the world, the way their lives are part of dialogue on all kinds of issues."

At the 2010 Academy Awards, "Which Way Home," by Rebecca Cammisa, was nominated, but didn't win, in the Best Documentary Feature category. The documentary follows three unaccompanied Latin American children as they journey through Mexico to reach the U.S. border so they can reunite with their parents who have left them behind.

"The film was produced through our production assistance program," Zimmerman says, "and has received a number of accolades, and was also nominated for Best Documentary at the 2010 Independent Spirit Awards."

While mainstream films are often described as art, documentaries often aren't. Zimmerman reflects: "When I see a really good documentary, it's the way I feel when I see a really good painting or sculpture. I feel I've seen the world in a different way. 'El General,' which won at The Sundance Film Festival, is a beautifully poetic, visual film made by a woman about her great grandfather in Mexico who was a dictator. It's pure poetry. That's art. I wouldn't say all documentaries is art, but a really good documentary is absolutely art."

In other countries women are also making cinematic inroads, such as at Taiwan's annual Women Make Waves Festival, founded in 1993, the largest of its kind in Asia. The festival features 100 films by international and local female directors, with themes that include women's health and body, animation and experimental films.

"We were very much involved with the first Seoul Women's Film Festival in Korea," Zimmerman adds, "which was founded in 1997 after Women Make Waves ... and both of these festivals represent the incredible young energy around women's filmmaking."

Not part of WMM's services, but showing the power of women artists, "The Hurt Locker," about a bomb-disposal team in Iraq, earned Kathryn Bigelow the Academy Award as best director in 2010. She became the first woman in

Oscar history to win that honor, calling it "the moment of a lifetime." In total, the film garnered six Academy Awards, including best picture.

In 2010, Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to win an Academy Award in the Best Director category. Only three other women have been nominated: Lina Wertmüller for "Seven Beauties," Jane Campion for "The Piano" and Sofia Coppola for "Lost in Translation."

Photo Credit: Gettyimages.com



## Art working for change

But can art really foment social change? Actress Emma Thompson hopes that it does. She is the driving force behind a unique art installation—"Journey"—which emphasizes that sex slavery is closer to home than many think. The art project consists of seven transport containers (the kind used for trafficking people) to illustrate the brutal and harrowing experiences of women sold into the sex trade. Each container is curated by a different artist and captures one aspect of the road a woman has taken, internal and external.

Zimmerman also has seen firsthand how art can create change in attitudes and shares a personal story. She had had a huge fight with her father about the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, arguing to the point of hanging up on him, unusual for her, she says.

"The next week he called me and his perspective had changed completely. He now felt it was wrong to bomb Afghanistan and when I asked him why, he said he had seen 'Beneath the Veil' on CNN and he had not realized that the country had already been bombed and it was mostly women and children who were affected. I have to say, that was an extraordinary moment for me."

The question of art's power to make social change is a question that Art Works for Change has grappled with for some time, Rosenberg admits. "If it came to a 'yes' or 'no' whether art is going to save the world, art is not going to create the kind of change we really need in this society, to get rid of some of the evils or general violence against women," she says.

But art does have its impact, she qualifies. The "Off the Beaten Path" exhibit, not intended to be sensational or tabloid, is hoping to touch the audience at an emotional level, in a different kind of language, Rosenberg says.

"So, we're hoping the art is a catalyst. We've had feedback from people who have seen the art and are saying, 'Honestly, I never realized it [violence against women] was happening to the extent it's happening,'" she says. "We hope that the artworks in this show can push the door open a little wider, and in the process, shed new light on an old problem as we begin to forge a new journey off the beaten path." 🌐

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*In the next issue:* The Economics of Breast Cancer. Please email Editor Jessica Levinson <[jessica@soroptimist.org](mailto:jessica@soroptimist.org)> with relevant information.

# membership



## Feeling Hot! Hot! Hot! Understanding Three Essential Recruitment Buttons

**S**oroptimist's future depends on its recruitment of members today. The importance of Soroptimist to women and girls throughout the world is embodied through our ability to respond to current needs while also keeping our eyes looking forward. Recruiting new members—inviting others to the party—will sustain clubs as well as lead them into the future.

There are a number of reasons why women should join Soroptimist. Not only does membership in Soroptimist offer intangible rewards such as friendship and personal fulfillment, some of the other individual benefits members receive when they join Soroptimist are:

- Subscription to our award-winning *Best for Women* magazine, published quarterly
- Subscription to our email newsletter, the Soroptimist Summary
- Leadership development and networking opportunities at club meetings, region conferences, the biennial convention and other meetings
- Opportunity to provide feedback, offer suggestions and voice opinions through the Soroptimist Snapshot online surveys and other market research activities
- Access to contact information for other members, clubs and leaders through our online directories
- Invitations to take advantage of special offers and discounts through our partnering organizations, including Pink Magazine, Heartland Sweeteners, and Janney Montgomery Scott.

Generally people volunteer and join Soroptimist because they want to help others. However, because of the increasing demands for one's attention and volunteer time, it is useful to understand and accept that a prospective member may be looking for an activity that meets her own reasons and motivations.

In the "Lazy Leader's Guide to Outrageous Membership Results Workbook," leadership strategist and president of People Power Unlimited, LLC, Cynthia D'Amour has identified three key benefits—three HOT buttons—that motivate people to join and to stay involved:

**Personal and professional development.** This includes formal education programs as well as the skills members learn while being active in your club. For example, a prospective member comments she is transitioning into a new career path. You know a current member has a number of years of experience in that field and you immediately offer to make an introduction.

**Contribution to a greater good.** This may be donating to a scholarship or mentoring a young professional. The prospective member indicates she wants to make a difference. You tell her about the

club's projects and how they affect the local area, and the Soroptimist programs that reach beyond the community to improve the lives of women and girls globally.

**Involvement in the community.** People want to feel like they belong to a circle of friends who care about them. If the prospective member says she is looking for an opportunity that can also be fun and social, mention the club's annual holiday parties, monthly potluck meetings, or the summer bus trips to a mega mall.

When recruiting members, listen carefully for one (or more) of these clues. Practice the art of "reading" people. This skill is an important one that can be used for recruiting new members and also in your professional and personal life. Keep in mind that we are most comfortable with people who we perceive to be like ourselves. Once you feel that you have "read" the person, then you can best approach her and hit on her hot buttons—emphasizing what your Soroptimist club can offer.

Members' and potential members' commitments are strengthened when they can understand the benefits of their volunteerism to others and to themselves. By tailoring your approach, you will make the prospective member comfortable with joining your club and working with you to achieve the Soroptimist mission. 🌍

By Nicole Simmons, Membership Director  
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### Frequent hot button mistakes to avoid

**Putting all the emphasis on one key benefit.** Different people are looking for different outcomes. Weave all the benefits into your events and promotional materials.

**Thinking their members should "get" the benefits and not bothering to spell them out in promotional materials or at meetings.** Members need to be reminded regularly why it's worth the investment of their time and money to be active in the club in order to keep their involvement a priority.

**Underestimating how hard it is for the typical person to get involved with people she doesn't know.** Walking into a room of strangers is a very stressful experience for most people. Help new members break through their fears and find their comfort zone in your community.

Source: "Lazy Leader's Guide to Outrageous Membership Results Workbook," by Cynthia D'Amour

Want to hear more from Cynthia D'Amour? Check out Soroptimist Blog Talk Radio <[www.blogtalkradio.com/soroptimist](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/soroptimist)> for an archived interview with this leadership guru.



## Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards: Achieving Success through Application Workshops

Each year, the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards program helps more than 1,000 women get one step closer to living their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. However, there are countless more women who miss the opportunity to receive an award because they feel intimidated or overwhelmed by the application process. Their self-confidence is low; they don't believe they are capable of completing the application, let alone receiving an award.

Some women feel shy, embarrassed or ashamed to write their personal essays. They may be reluctant to disclose their private finances, or might not understand how to complete the financial section. In addition, some women feel nervous asking for references or believe they don't have anyone to ask.

As a result, these women miss an opportunity to reclaim their dreams—not because they are ineligible for the award, but because they find the application process too daunting.

Consequently, they do not apply, resulting in fewer award applications for clubs. This was the case for SI/Desert Tucson, Arizona.

Year after year, despite their enthusiastic attitude and efforts, SI/Desert Tucson consistently received low numbers of award applications. Rather than get discouraged, the club got proactive. Members contacted their local community college and made arrangements to conduct award application workshops on campus.

In partnership with Progress!, a campus program for women, SI/Desert Tucson held a two-hour workshop for eligible women interested in applying for the award. The workshop began with a brief introduction to the Soroptimist organization, followed by an overview of the Women's Opportunity Awards program.

Workshop facilitators then went through the application line-by-line, answering questions and making sure participants understood each section. The club then provided ample time for women to fill out the application.

SI/Desert Tucson member Rita Toland recalls how hesitant women were to write their personal essay. Member and Past SIA President Donna Walker recalls one woman in particular who had experienced such tragedy that she became tearful. Donna believes that without the support and encouragement of Soroptimists, she wouldn't have been able to complete the application on her own—it was just too painful.

As a result, SI/Desert Tucson received 12 applications from women who had attended the workshop! As for workshop participants, both Rita and Donna agree the change in self-confidence was remarkable: women began the class hesitant and unsure and left confident in their ability to complete the application. The workshop enabled friendships to develop. These friendships, Donna notes, are very valuable as they make it easier to keep in touch, especially when a workshop participant becomes an award recipient.

Pam Field of SI/Palm-Desert Sunrise, California, couldn't agree more. Pam's club, along with four other nearby clubs—SI/Palm Springs, SI/Palm Desert, SI/La Quinta/Coachella Valley and SI/Cathedral City/Rancho Mirage—also conducts application workshops. This five-club collective has been hosting workshops at a local community college for the past six years. And the results, says Pam, are "phenomenal."



Aniam Arroyo-Noriega, pictured here with her children Shelia, Ricky and Azriel, attended SI/Desert Tucson's application workshop and subsequently received a club-level award.

For their two-hour workshop, the club brings lunch and makes a conscious effort to build a rapport with the participants. This rapport, Pam says, is essential in making women feel comfortable enough to tell their stories. Time after time, Pam has witnessed women arrive at the workshop shy and tentative—only to leave, not just with a completed application, but with hugs from new friends.

Pam says the key to their success is plenty of one-on-one instruction. After an overview of Soroptimist and the Women's Opportunity Awards program, members provide individual instruction to each participant, helping them fill out the application line-by-line. As a result, the clubs receive more applications, thus providing the opportunity to give more awards.

Of course, not all workshop participants will become award recipients. SI/Desert Tucson makes a point to mention this during the workshop and encourages women to re-apply if not selected. The club also sends a letter to non-recipients thanking them for applying and encouraging them to apply again. Clubs may also consider including a gift card with the letter as further acknowledgment and support.

Clubs having difficulty recruiting eligible applicants should consider partnering with a local community college, or women's organization, to conduct an application workshop. This is a proven way to identify eligible applicants, provide them with the support and encouragement they need to apply and, as a result, increase the number of applications the club receives—all of which leads to more awards for more women. It's also an excellent way to create awareness about Soroptimist and its mission to improve the lives of women and girls.

For more information about conducting an application workshop, please contact <program@soroptimist.org>.

**By Dawn Walsh, Program Manager**  
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# public awareness



## Raising Awareness and Celebrating Success

Throughout the federation, clubs undertake projects that support the Soroptimist mission, while engaging their local communities to raise awareness about issues facing women and girls. Here are three great examples of clubs that successfully created awareness of Soroptimist and its mission.

To raise awareness about sex trafficking, SI/Southwest Washington, SI/Vancouver and SI/Camas-Washougal, Washington (Northwestern Region) teamed together to develop a Human Trafficking Forum to bring the dark issue of trafficking to light.

The forum, called “Looking Beneath the Surface,” invited community leaders, law enforcement agencies, and local organizations to take part in the initiative. It offered breakout sessions, safety demonstrations, survivor stories and keynote speakers.

In addition to pitching the forum through several media outlets, the clubs attracted media in other ways. They invited a local television show host to emcee the event and had other high-profile speakers in attendance. Speakers included William Hillar, whose story can partially be seen in the movie “Taken” about a man whose daughter is kidnapped by sex traffickers; Dallas Jessup, a CNN Hero who teaches girls how to protect themselves from abduction and sexual assault; and Cathy Standiford, SIA president, whose own club (SI/Garden Grove, California) does many trafficking projects.

During the conference, the region awarded the Soroptimist Ruby Award to television news journalist Jane Velez-Mitchell, who later invited President Cathy to be a guest on her CNN Headline News show, “Issues with Jane Velez-Mitchell,” where Cathy joined other panelists to discuss trafficking. To see the video clip visit <[Soroptimist.org/checkitout/checkitout.html#1](http://Soroptimist.org/checkitout/checkitout.html#1)>. The conference generated widespread publicity and drew more than 400 people, including U.S. Senator Ron Wyden.

“The media, event logistics, public awareness component, and all aspects of this conference was a huge success,” said SI/Vancouver member and conference co-chair Michelle Bart. Visit <[www.NWCAT.org](http://www.NWCAT.org)> to view additional news clips, audio, and television interviews.

SI/Illiana, Illinois (Midwestern Region), uses radio airwaves to help make Soroptimist a household name. Club member Lynda Washington has her own weekly radio show, which she uses as a platform to increase awareness of Soroptimist. During the 30-minute broadcast, her club discusses various topics from awards recipients to domestic violence and trafficking.

On a “Live Your Dream” themed segment, the show discussed ways Soroptimist helps women live their dreams through programs like the Women’s Opportunity Awards. During the show, a past awards recipient called in to thank Soroptimist and talk about the positive impact the award had on her life.

In another broadcast about domestic violence, SI/Illiana promoted the Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence. As a result, the club received questions about domestic violence during the show. A show on trafficking shed light on how girls are recruited, signs to look for, and what people should do if they see something suspicious. Rachel Durschlag from the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (a speaker at the Soroptimist Women’s Leadership Institute in Chicago last July), was a guest on the show.

The radio show has 5,000 listeners and streams nationwide at <[wyca1023.com](http://wyca1023.com)>. “It is often possible to purchase airtime for a very reasonable price,” said Beverly Bucur, SI/Illiana club president. “Clubs should explore radio as a public awareness tool. It is a great way to reach thousands of people and make a difference in the lives of women.”

To raise awareness in their local community, SI/Talbot County, Maryland (South Atlantic Region), developed a two-year marketing and branding campaign that led to increased recognition of Soroptimist and its mission. The club formed a public awareness committee that created a targeted list of local print, television and electronic media.

Using SIA publicity materials, the club submitted several news releases to local media and has had more than 20 articles published over the course of the two-year branding campaign. The PR committee dispatched a photographer for all events, and always sends pictures with news releases. Building a rapport with local media has paid off for the club. One of the regional newspapers sends a reporter and photographer to every club event.

The club also gave its recognition banquet a Live Your Dream theme. It incorporated the Live Your Dream logo into their promotional materials and decorations, and gave pins to award winners and speakers.

In addition, SI/Talbot County updated its website at <<http://talbotsoroptimist.org>>, created a web banner to place on several websites and emails, and developed a Facebook page. As a result of this branding campaign, the club has received an increase in Women’s Opportunity, Violet Richardson and Ruby Award applicants. Its most recent news release promoting the Ruby Award generated six applications.

These are just three examples of successful club projects that increased awareness of Soroptimist. It’s important to remember that public awareness is one of the four Renaissance Campaign areas. Increased public awareness leads to more members, more fundraising dollars, and more program participation. SIA thanks all clubs for the work they do to improve the lives of women and girls! 🌟

**By Kamali Brooks**  
**Public Relations Manager**  
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## Reasons to Give Internationally

As we make decisions about where and how to use our charitable dollars to offer a hand up to women who are struggling, the natural tendency is to look to our local communities. There we can see, touch and feel the effects of our volunteer work in our Women's Opportunity Award recipient, a local women's organization with whom we partner, or the women and girls we mentor. The satisfaction in seeing the fruits of our labor is incredibly powerful.

So why is it so important that Soroptimist members and clubs support women beyond their own communities?

Think about it: Of the more than 110 million children not in school worldwide, 60 percent are girls. Of the 550 million working poor, 60 percent are women. Of the world's 880 million illiterates, two-thirds are women.

Soroptimists believe that what affects one woman affects us all. And that when we help one woman, we help all women. We may have diverse cultures throughout our Soroptimist world, but the hopes and dreams of the women we serve are fundamentally the same—the opportunity to live full and productive lives free from poverty, violence and inequality.

We know that Soroptimist clubs provide real solutions to challenges faced by women in their local communities. We must remember, though, that Soroptimist was founded in 1921 on the premise that the organization works internationally. Violet Richardson Ward, president of the first Soroptimist club, refused to become a member until she had assurance that there would be international clubs. The efforts of Soroptimists in those early years were targeted toward improving the economic plight of women, such as educational funds for women training for new careers and purchasing housing for women and children affected by the depression. In 1934 the delegates at the biennial convention in Baltimore, Maryland, adopted "Economic Advancement of Women" as the federation's service objective.

Much has changed in the last 90 years, but the spirit and intent of helping women

worldwide has remained with Soroptimist. The roots of the Soroptimist organization lie in forward-thinking, big picture vision. In 2010, we need to think and act both locally and globally. Soroptimists today have an obligation and responsibility to honor our founders as we continue to work on removing barriers that prevent women from achieving economic and social empowerment.

The Women's Opportunity Awards and our other mission-related programs have economic and social empowerment of women as their goal. These programs are supported, in part, by contributions from clubs to the Annual Club Campaign. Almost three-quarters of the clubs do give; the average gift is a little less than \$500. The 2009 Membership Marketing Survey indicated that contributions from clubs average about 5 percent of the club's fundraising revenue. Imagine how many more women we could help if each club increased its contribution to just 10 percent of what it raises locally. The remaining 90 percent of the fundraising revenue would remain for the club's community-based projects.

Along with club giving, many members are committed to supporting Soroptimist's global programs, either through being enrolled in monthly giving, being a member of the Laurel Society, or arranging a future gift. Research shows that only 10 percent of Soroptimist members contribute beyond their club. Increasing that percentage would greatly expand the outcomes of our programs.

The pride you see in the woman who receives your club's Women's Opportunity Award is multiplied thousands of times in all corners of our federation because of members who believe in and support Soroptimist programs. Members who understand that belonging to an international organization care about women in our local communities and in faraway lands. 🌐

**By Nancy Montvydas, CFRE**  
**Senior Director of Development**  
**Email: [nancym@soroptimist.org](mailto:nancym@soroptimist.org)**

### The Live Your Dream Team

The Live Your Dream Team was launched early in 2010 as a pilot program to increase support for SIA programs, as well as to offer innovative ways to recognize our clubs and regions.

Customized packages were offered at four levels for participating clubs and regions. The levels include: Dream Chasers, Dream Catchers, Dream Weavers, and Dream Achievers. Clubs and regions that have taken a leadership role in the Live Your Dream Team as charter members include:

- Camino Real Region
- Southern Region
- Sierra Pacific Region
- Rocky Mountain Region
- SI/Glendale, California
- SI/Saitama, Japan
- SI/Obihiro, Japan
- SI/Tokyo-Azuma, Japan
- SI/Yamanashi, Japan
- SI/Santa Clarita Valley, California

Because of the positive response to the pilot program, the Live Your Dream Team will be integrated into a brand new design for the Soroptimist Annual Club Campaign. The new design will be finalized in July 2010, in preparation for implementation in September 2010.

As the Soroptimist 90th anniversary approaches, it is amazing to look at all we have accomplished. To continue to do the transformative work of improving the lives of women and girls, it is crucial that we support our programs through club giving. The new design for the Annual Club Campaign will spotlight the work our clubs do, and will demonstrate what it means to truly be an international organization. Together we will continue to empower women to live their dreams, both locally and globally.

# Check it out on the web!

As clubs start planning for the 2010-2011 year, be sure to visit the Soroptimist website for a variety of resources to help you implement and publicize SIA programs, recruit and retain members, and raise funds. Here are just some of the tools available at [Soroptimist.org/members.html](http://Soroptimist.org/members.html).

## Program Resources

<http://www.soroptimist.org/members/program/programhome.html>

- Model program kits
- New Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence section: <http://www.soroptimist.org/workplacecampaign.html>
- Whitepapers addressing various issues such as health, violence against women and girls, work, trafficking, education, disaster recovery, and poverty.
- Writeable applications for the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity and Violet Richardson Award programs

## Membership Resources

<http://www.soroptimist.org/members/membership/membershiphome.html>

- Sample Club Assessment Form
- Engaging Prospective Members
- Soroptimist 101
- Recruitment Manual
- Past membership articles from *Best for Women* magazine
- Membership FAQ

## Public Awareness Resources

<http://www.soroptimist.org/members/publicawareness/publicawarenesshome.html>

- SIA logos and stationery
- Public awareness kits and sample publicity materials for Soroptimist programs
- SIA promotional cards and instruction guide
- Graphic Identity and Style Manual
- Exhibit Guide
- Media Kit 101
- Taking Good Photos Guide
- Past public awareness articles from *Best for Women* magazine

## Fundraising Resources

<http://www.soroptimist.org/members/fundraising/fundraisinghome.html>

- Event Ideas and Successful Fundraisers
- Sample Club Solicitation Letter for Sponsors
- SIA Live Your Dream Team Partnerships for Regions and Clubs
- Club Giving Options
- Club Giving Contribution Form
- Founders Pennies Frequently Asked Questions

Other resources available at [Soroptimist.org](http://Soroptimist.org) include: *Best for Women* magazine submission form, *Best for Women* magazine subscription form, Club and Region Website Guidelines, SIA Use of Registered Marks Policies, Licensing Application/Fee Payment Form, and Club Award Form.

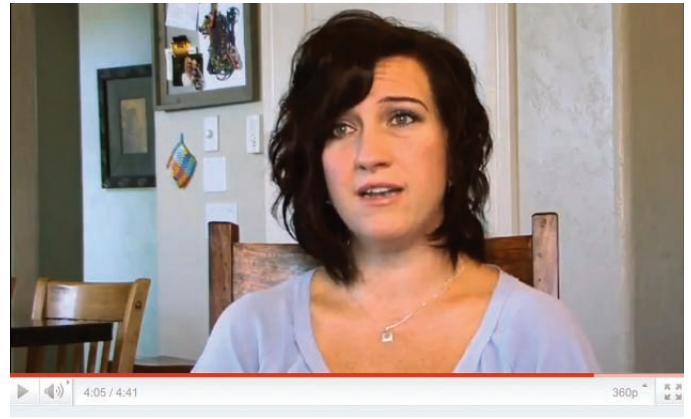
# SIA on YouTube!

Did you know that SIA has its own YouTube channel? Visit [www.youtube.com/siahq](http://www.youtube.com/siahq) and watch videos on a variety of Soroptimist topics. Become a subscriber of the channel and you'll be notified each time a new video is posted! Here are just a few of the videos currently available:



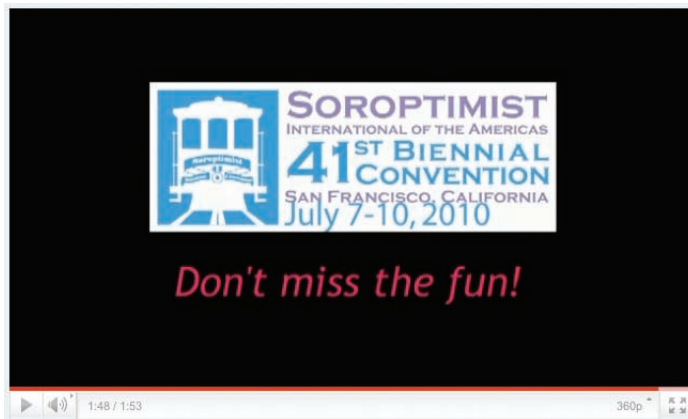
## 2008-2009 Annual Report

During 2009, Soroptimist helped countless women and girls discover the power of their dreams. Watch how Soroptimist clubs and members continue to empower women locally and around the world.



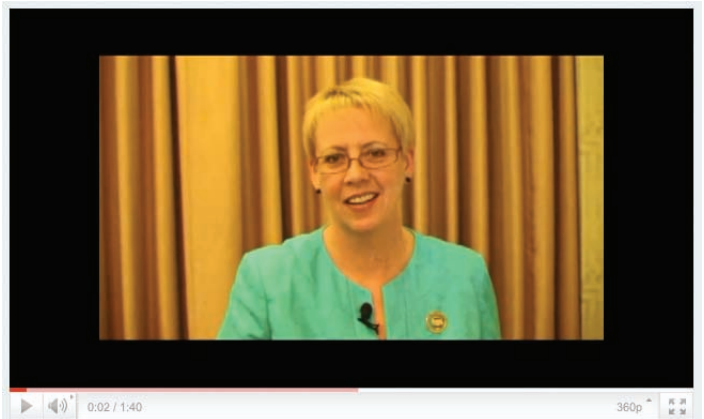
## Soroptimist Award Recipients

SIA uses short videos to share the inspirational stories of its award recipients. For example, listen to Lisa Curless, 2009 Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards finalist, as she talks about her dreams to provide a better life for herself and her family.



## Meetings Updates

SIA keeps members up-to-date with exciting videos that feature information about upcoming meetings and conventions.



## President Messages

Tune in to watch the SIA president deliver important messages on upcoming initiatives, happenings and highlights.

For a complete list of sales items, pricing, and shipping information, or to make a purchase online using a credit card, visit the Soroptimist Store located in the members area of <Soroptimist.org>. If assistance is needed logging in, please contact <siahq@soroptimist.org> or call 215-893-9000.

**NEW! SOROPTIMIST PROMOTIONAL CARDS #250**

Set of six different promotional cards. The full-color 5" x 7" cards feature compelling stories and entice readers to learn more about the organization by visiting the Soroptimist website. A great way for clubs to raise awareness of Soroptimist! **\$20/pack of 120 cards (20 of each card)**



**SOROPTIMIST NOTE CARDS #316**

Send a note in Soroptimist style! These cards are great for a quick handwritten note, and the folded format is perfect for more formal correspondence as well. Cards measure 4.5" x 6" and come with white envelopes. **\$10/pack of 10 cards and envelopes**

**"S" LETTER OPENER #502**

Opening mail is a breeze with this new stainless-steel letter opener. Features "S" logo and includes gift box. **\$12**



**SOROPTIMIST PEN #463**

Sign in style with an embossed pen! This new promotional item features the Soroptimist logo and includes a leather case. **\$10**

**Magazine Matters:** All magazine-related information, including editorial guidelines and submission deadlines, is available on SIA's website. Mailing address changes should be sent to <siahq@soroptimist.org>. Magazine submissions and letters to the editor should be sent to Editor Jessica Levinson at *Best for Women*, 1709 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-6103 or <jessica@soroptimist.org>.

**Subscribe to Best for Women:** A subscription to the magazine is available for \$11 a year (U.S. and Canada; \$15 all other countries). Translated excerpts of the magazine—in Spanish, Portuguese, Korean and Taiwanese—are also available on SIA's website. For more information, or to subscribe, go to: <Soroptimist.org>.

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<b>NEW! "S" Letter Opener</b>	502		\$12	
<b>NEW! Soroptimist Pen</b>	463		\$10	

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**MEMBERS!**

Are you missing out on important emails, alerts, or the magazine? In order to keep SIA's rosters accurate, please review your profile at <Soroptimist.org/members/membership/updateprofile.html> and make any necessary changes.

**CLUBS!**

The best way for headquarters and potential members to contact clubs is through the Soroptimist club email accounts. A designated member should be checking the club email account regularly (at least once per week) to keep up to date with the latest SIA news. For help with setting-up or accessing the account, see the members area on SIA's website <soroptimist.org/members/membership/membershiphome.html> or contact <siahq@soroptimist.org>.

# BEST *for Women*

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Soroptimist is an organization for and by women who use their collective power to help other women transform their lives and the lives of their families—locally and throughout the world.

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