

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS
SUMMARY OF SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Pharmakon, Hillerød, Denmark
August 1-4, 2009

Soroptimist International operates on a quadrennium (4 years). This board meeting marked the half-way point of the quadrennium (2007-2011) and the beginning of a new biennium (2009-2011). The accomplishments of the quadrennium will be celebrated at the SI Convention in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, hosted by SIA July 10-14, 2011.

PARTICIPANTS FROM SIA:

Voting delegates: President Alice Wells, President-elect Cathy Standiford, 2009-2010 President-elect, Sharon Fisher; Consultant: 2009-2011 Board member, Pat Donohue; Executive Director, Leigh Wintz; SIA members of SI Programme Team: Sr. Director of Program Services, Lori Blair; SI Treasurer, Janet Donahue; SI Programme Director, Dawn Marie Lemonds; SI Constitution and Resolutions Chair, Victoria Hobbs; SI 2011 Convention Chair, Yvonne Machuk; SI Past President, Joan Cromer; Silent Observers, SIA member of the SI Constitution and Resolutions Committee, Linette Zimmerman, and Desert Coast Region Governor, Sam Buchenau (see attached supplemental report).

SI STRATEGIC PLAN:

Consultant, Glenn Tecker, worked with the board for a full day on August 4 to review the progress on the SI Strategic Plan adopted one year ago. He emphasized the need to focus on outcomes (goals) rather than process and helped the board to understand why progress on implementation had been rather slow and ineffective in producing the results we anticipated. The board reviewed the first two goals of the strategic plan and will continue the review and revision of the plan as necessary through on-line discussion and work in the upcoming months.

PROGRAM UPDATES:

- **Project SIerra: A Family and a Future**

The 2007-2011 SI Quadrennial Project starts its third year with more than US \$500,000 raised to support the project thus far. SIA clubs and members have donated more than US \$250,000 to date. New materials have been produced to help clubs promote and support the project. A [new brochure](#) and [DVD](#) have been produced to include information from the first two years of the project, including footage of the Project SIerra study tour. Check the [Project SIerra website](#) regularly for updates and information. Donations should be sent to SIA HQ, earmarked "Project SIerra."

- **SI President's Appeal 2009**

2009-2011 SI President Hanne Jensbo has chosen human trafficking as the topic of the December 10, 2009 President's Appeal. *Hopes and Dreams for Everyone* is a partnership with the International Organization for Migration and The Child Rights Information Center in Moldova to protect vulnerable Moldovan girls with life-skills education and sustainable living conditions. The project focuses on girls ages 13 to 18, living or preparing to leave four boarding schools in the northern part of the country. The project is the continuation of a project of the SI Union of Norway and the SI clubs in Moldova which began in 2005. Donations can be sent to SIA HQ earmarked for the 2009 President's Appeal. When brochures are available, it will be announced in the Soroptimist Summary. Check the [Soroptimist International](#) web site for additional information.

Long Term Project

- Deciding on the specific topic of the Long Term Project will be the next major priority. It was determined that the process for implementation will be dependent on what the chosen topic will be, within the rather broad mission of transforming the lives of women and girls. There is consensus that the Long Term Project needs to be Soroptimist "owned and managed". While SI will include partners to maximize efforts, the project should fill a unique niche and engage clubs and members in more than fundraising to support another organization's mission or work. It is anticipated that the Long Term Project will be launched in 2011 and will replace both the Quadrennial Project and the annual December 10th President's Appeal. Part of the surplus from the Glasgow convention was earmarked for a fund to support the Long Term Project. A task force will be formed to investigate the establishment of a fund or foundation with charitable status that would allow the receipt of funds from other sources to carry out SI programmes and projects.
- The process for advocacy by Soroptimists was updated by amending Programme, Policy & Procedures (PP&P) 1.600 and 1.700.
- The PP&P was also amended to update the process for selecting trainee Soroptimist representatives to the United Nations (PP&P 6.2100).

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE CHANGES

- Eligibility for the office of SI President Elect was expanded to include SI Programme Directors, Assistant Programme Directors and volunteer federation programme directors along with federation past presidents. All must have served within the past 10 years to be eligible. Rotation among the federations for the office of President was maintained.
- It was agreed that rotation of the office of SI Treasurer would cease and that each federation would submit nominees for Treasurer to ensure the best pool of candidates with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience for the position. The Constitution and Resolutions (C&R) Committee will work over the next year to propose the appropriate amendments to the Constitution and any necessary changes to the PP&P to effect this change.
- SIE and SIA proposals to eliminate the Extension Committee and to cease rotation of the standing committee chairs were not approved.
- There is a special task force working to advise the C&R Committee to propose a change to the SI Constitution in order to provide for a more equitable allocation of Programme Voting Delegates to each federation.
- SI will strive to provide a more proactive and forward looking agenda for board meetings that will support the strategic decision-making necessary for a board that meets face to face only once a year.
- The federation presidents and executive officers, along with the SI Programme Director will meet with the officers at their annual mid-year meeting.
- Future reports on board postal ballots will contain the comments submitted by the voting delegates in order to better understand the rationale for a given vote.
- The deadlines for submitting proposals for consideration by the SI Board were shortened from 180 days to 90 days, except in a convention year when such proposals need to be submitted by January 1 of that year.
- Each federation is to provide a strategy and plan for extension and recruitment within their countries to SI.
- The extension grant process is to be reviewed and made more efficient.

- The process for the selection of the SI Programme Director and SI Assistant Programme Director is to be reviewed prior to the next advertisement and the interview panel is to consist of the President, Immediate Past President, President-elect and the Federation Presidents of the day.
- There will be an additional annual meeting of the SI Programme Director, SI Assistant Programme Director, Federation Programme Directors and SI Programme Manager with the SI President and/or President Elect

FINANCIAL MATTERS

- The 2011 Convention budget was approved
- The SI budget for July 2009-December 2010 was approved as amended. (The organization is changing to an annual fiscal year budget which is the calendar year).
- Extension grants of £9,000 for SI Great Britain & Ireland and £3,000 for SI Southwest Pacific were included in the budget.
- A proposal by the officers to increase SI per capita dues was defeated.
- A convention refund policy is to be developed by the SI Convention Committee for approval by the SI Board at least 3 months before registrations are accepted.
- The board approved a Travel & Expenses policy to replace Supplement G in the PP&P.
- SI will continue to use the office space near the United Nations in New York City at a cost of US \$1200 annually (a donation to the Church center). The office is used to store material and provide working space when necessary for the NY reps.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

- SI is to select a company to develop a new corporate identity, branding and logo (to be funded by reserves in an amount not to exceed £50,000).
- The functionality of the Soroptimist International website will be improved as soon as possible, using the expertise of the firm selected to submit proposals for a new corporate identity. This was part of the remit of the companies that tendered proposals.
- The International Soroptimist (TIS) will cease to exist as a printed publication after December 2009 and will instead be published quarterly in an electronic format and placed on the on the SI website (www.soroptimistinternational.org).

STAFFING AND SI HEADQUARTERS IN CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

- Refurbishment of the headquarters office at Glisson Road will be undertaken at a cost of not more than £65,000 (to be taken from reserves).
- A new staff position of programme manager was approved.
- A new, part-time finance director will also be added to staff.

2009-2011 SI LEADERSHIP

- Officers: President Hanne Jensbo (SIE); Immediate Past President Margare Lobo (SISWP); Treasurer, Carolyn Hudson (SISWP); President Elect, to be determined (SIA).
- C&R Chair, Victoria Hobbs (SIA); Finance Chair, Janet Donahue (SIA); Extension, Ann Dawson (SIGBI); Procedural Consultant, Marlies Hampel (SIE); PR Liaison, Colleen Newnham (SISWP); Quadrennial Project Chair, Allison Sutherland (SIGBI); Programme Director Dawn Marie Lemonds (SIA); Assistant Programme Director Margaret Cook (SIGBI).

SILENT OBSERVATIONS

by

Susan “Sam” Buchenau – Silent Observer, 2009 SI Board Meeting

Asking a Soroptimist to be a silent observer is a bit like expecting a four-year old to sit still in church – it can be done, but you know from the outset that it’s not going to be easy. Why, then, would any Soroptimist member repeatedly ask to attend the Soroptimist International Board Meeting, knowing that she is attending at her own expense, using her valuable and limited vacation time, and will be attending as a silent observer? In my case it is because as a committed and involved Soroptimist, the experience of forming friendships with fellow Soroptimists from every corner of the earth, and participating, even silently, in the process of education, decision making, and occasional change, is just too delectable to miss. And, in truth, while a silent observer does remain silent during the actual business meeting, there are many opportunities for input and even occasionally to influence the outcome over the several days of the meeting.

Attending the SI Board Meeting is unlike attending any other Soroptimist meeting I have ever attended. As a member of Soroptimist International of the Americas, if you didn’t know you were at a Soroptimist meeting, you wouldn’t know you are at a Soroptimist meeting. The room arrangement is different, the decision making process is different, even the faces are different – this is a whole new cast of characters. The SI President, her procedural consultant, the SI Treasurer, and the SI Executive Officer all sit at a sort of head table – on a raised platform. Three (3) voting members from each of the four (4) Federations sit at tables arranged in a horseshoe around the head table. Behind each of the four Federation voting delegates (usually the federation president, president-elect and immediate past president) is a table with that Federation’s executive officer (executive director) and one or two consultants – usually their vice presidents or other up and coming leaders on the federation board. Behind them sit the various SI committee members and liaisons whose reports and recommendations form a large part of the business to be discussed.

The proceedings are all held in English (the official language of SI), which can pose a challenge for SIA as well as SI Europe since English is not the first language of any of their countries. Nonetheless, their command of English and its subtleties is beyond admirable. In fact, the ability of all of the voting delegations to express and comprehend complex and highly nuanced ideas is vital to the process.

Prior to the meeting, participants (including silent observers) were provided with Board papers including the agenda, extensive reports and recommendations, presentations from vendors and service providers, and a host of supporting documentation, which when printed two-sided filled a 2 inch notebook. The papers must be read in order to follow the meeting. The voting delegations have not only read the materials, they have discussed them among themselves, their Federation Boards, and sometimes with other delegations. The discussions are by turns lightning fast and excruciatingly slow – large decisions can be made quickly if there is general consensus, other times the placement of a comma can bog down the entire proceedings. Even though the officers (SI President, Immediate Past President, President Elect and Treasurer) are part of the official board of directors, they do not vote. Only the 12 voting delegates (3 from each federation) have the power to vote. It takes a 2/3 majority (eight votes) to pass any motion. Motions regarding extension funding, per capita dues or amendments to the SI Constitution require the affirmative vote of 2 members of each federation. This means the power of persuasion can be imperative!

The meetings are long, and the stakes are high. From time to time tempers flare. Sometimes consensus is impossible and compromise cannot be found, and everyone has to walk away from the table disappointed. And then we break for coffee, or for lunch or dinner and sit with other Soroptimists, and talk about the projects in our home clubs, in our Regions or Unions, and in our Federation. We talk about the things that unite us. We share ideas and we build friendships. Away from the meeting room is when the silent observer stops being silent. During pre-Board delegation meetings, SIA's silent observers participate in discussion of the issues. Silent observers also take part with others in any small-group exercises or discussion groups.

Although there is lots of work, there is also opportunity to play together. Early morning walks are a great opportunity to get your blood and your ideas flowing. There are also impromptu gatherings after dinner for a glass of wine and good discussion. In addition, this year our Danish host Soroptimists arranged for us to have a home hospitality evening which allowed meeting participants to enjoy dinner in the home of nearby Soroptimists, which is an extraordinary opportunity to meet other meeting participants from around the world, and to see how our fellow Soroptimists live. I was lucky enough to go to the home of a member who lived less than 10 minutes away from our conference center in Hillerød. Her co-hosts were 3 fellow club members, and the other meeting participants included another Danish member, a member from Vienna, Austria, and one from Guernsey, in the United Kingdom. In the leisurely atmosphere of Vibeca's home we shared stories about ourselves and our home clubs, and quickly forged friendships that will last far beyond the few hours that we shared together.

The Change of Insignia is another memorable event observed in odd-numbered years. The setting of the Frederiksborg Castle in Hillerød made this transfer of SI Presidency from Margaret Lobo to Hanne Jensbro particularly impressive.

I freely admit that I am a bit of a procedural wonk, and a Soroptimist junkie. Being a silent observer at an International Board meetings might not be for everyone. But for me, the cumulative knowledge that I have gained and the friendships I have made are what make the experience so memorable and one that I hope I am able to repeat again and again.