



Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award Frequently Asked Questions

Information and materials for clubs to participate in the [Violet Richardson Award](#) program are available in the program section of the members' area of the Soroptimist website. In the Club Instructions, clubs will find step-by-step instructions to administer the program, including tips for finding applicants, the judging sheet and a club transmittal form. Also available are sample public relations materials such as a fact sheet, pitch letter and news releases to members of the media. Questions about the program can be sent to program@soroptimist.org.

Is the Violet Richardson Award a scholarship?

The Violet Richardson Award is not a scholarship. Rather it is a leadership program that recognizes young women for their work as volunteer leaders in their community. The girls honored by the Violet Richardson Award need not be the smartest girls in school or outstanding athletes or active in other school activities. Instead, they should be girls who have demonstrated leadership and initiative in identifying a problem in their communities or the world and have worked hard to address the problem. Because this is not a scholarship, schools are not always the best places to look for candidates. Clubs should consider expanding their search for applicants to local non-profit organizations or other places where girls might volunteer.

What are the age limits for this program?

The girl must be between the ages of 14 and 17 on the deadline for the award. In other words, the deadline for the club award is December 1. The recipient must be between the ages of 14 and 17 on December 1 of the year that she applies.

Why is the age limit 14 to 17?

Some clubs in the United States voice concern that 18 year old girls are not eligible for the Violet Richardson Award. This program was designed to focus on the girl-child and an 18 year old (possibly 19 when receiving a region or federation award) is no longer a girl-child. Furthermore, it is important that the Violet Richardson Award not be confused with a scholarship and that applicants come from a pool of girls who are committed leaders and volunteers. Eighteen year old girls are often looking for scholarship money for college. Advertising in schools increases the chances that the program is mistaken for a scholarship. Finally, school ages and grades are different in each country and clubs are urged to look for applicants through non-profit agencies where girls volunteer rather than to advertise only in schools.

Are clubs required to give money to the recipient and the charitable organization of her choice?

The club is not obligated to give award money to the recipient or her charitable organization. Focus groups that were conducted when designing the award found that teenage girls were very motivated by public recognition for their work. Clubs are encouraged to put an extra effort into public recognition of their honoree. An honoree may receive certificates or recognition in the local newspaper. This award was not designed as a scholarship, but rather a leadership and volunteer recognition program. The recipient may appreciate a cash award given in her honor to the organization, agency or charitable organization where she is most active.

Why is it important to provide recipients with leadership opportunities?

What young women need most to increase their self-confidence as a leader are supportive environments where they can express themselves, develop their voice and gain leadership experience. Our goal is to help young women build confidence in themselves and to encourage their leadership aspirations. Young women are a vital source of creativity and innovation in realizing long-term social change. Yet girls continue to suffer from low self-esteem – only 17 percent of surveyed girls see themselves as confident. Unfortunately, the fact that most strongly influences girls' desire to pursue leadership is confidence in skills and competencies.

Clubs can help bridge this disconnect by supporting and encouraging young women to fully actualize themselves as leaders – now and in the future. Clubs can provide award recipients with leadership opportunities to develop their skills and sense of self-confidence, both equally important in ensuring they continue their work as community leaders. In short, promoting leadership in girls is a matter of fostering their self-confidence and providing supportive environments in which to acquire leadership experiences.

What are some examples of leadership opportunities clubs could provide?

The following is a list of simple things clubs can do to foster self-confidence amongst award recipients while providing them with leadership opportunities. The list is by no means exhaustive. If your clubs has any other ideas or experiences in providing recipients with leadership opportunities, please share them with SIA by emailing program@soroptimist.org.

- Have the recipients serve as an advisor to the club when conducting a girl-focused project.
- Engage recipients in the planning of club projects focused on issues that are of interest to them.
- Ask past award recipients to serve as judges for the award in subsequent years.
- Invite recipients to give a presentation of their work at meetings, conferences or events other than the award ceremony thereby providing interactive opportunities for recipients to speak knowledgeably about their work in front of others.

Why is the eligibility limited to only girls?

The mission of Soroptimist International of the Americas is to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. SIA does not discriminate against boys or men, but rather chooses to focus on the special concerns of women and girls.

Is the Violet Richardson Award application available on the web site?

The Violet Richardson Award application is not available on the Soroptimist website for at-large applicants. This program is only available to girls in areas where there are participating Soroptimist clubs. For this reason, Soroptimist headquarters does not distribute or accept applications. The materials are professionally designed and printed, and originals should be distributed in local communities. Downloading the materials or copying them denigrates the professionalism of the program and the materials.

However, the Violet Richardson Award application is available in all federation languages as an easy-to-use writeable PDF form. Soroptimist clubs can email the application to partner organizations or directly to individual applicants. Applicants will then be able to complete the application online and email the completed form directly to clubs. The [writeable application](#) can be found in the program section of the members' area of the SIA website.

How do I get applications for the Violet Richardson Award?

We highly encourage clubs to use the writeable application form, especially because we have a limited number of paper applications available for order. However, if you do need to order paper applications, please use the [writeable order form](#) found in the program section of the members' area of the SIA

website. Simply type in your order information, save the document and then email it to siahq@soroptimist.org.

Are “S” Club members eligible for the award?

“S” Club members are eligible for the Violet Richardson Award. However, in order to avoid any sign of impropriety, if clubs have members of their “S” club competing for the Violet Richardson Award, they should use judges who are not Soroptimists. The honoree should also be encouraged to give her donation (should she receive one) to a different charitable organization, rather than donating back to her “S” Club.

How can clubs gain publicity for the Violet Richardson Award?

Sample [publicity materials](#) are available in the program section of the members’ area of the Soroptimist website. Materials include a sample fact sheet, news release and pitch letter that clubs can customize with local contact information to help spread the word about the Violet Richardson Award program in their local communities. Also included is a calendar outlining when clubs should participate in various publicity activities.

To maximize potential media exposure, clubs should hold a ceremony to honor their award recipient that coincides with International Women’s Day, March 8 (March is also Women’s History Month in the U.S.). Make it a more prestigious event by also recognizing the club's Women's Opportunity Award and Ruby Award recipients at the same time. Invite local dignitaries to participate in the awards gala.