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SIA's Guide to Taking Good Photographs

The saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is based on an essential truth. Photographs are not merely decoration to text: They tell a story. This is why newspapers and magazines are filled with them. Studies show that when readers scan the newspaper, they look at photos before they read articles. Good photos not only attract the eye, but they also impart essential information and leave a lasting impression.

SIA always needs photos of club activities for *Best for Women* magazine, the website, or in the latest brochure. After all, it's the photos showing club members working to improve the lives of women and girls that really portray the organization and its unique mission.

In addition to sending photos to SIA, members should also send them to the media with news releases. Always include a caption that tells the *who, what, where* and *when* of the photo.

If sending hard copies of photos, they should be high-quality and glossy, with good contrast and sharp detail. Make a reprint of the photo in case it isn't returned. Neither newspapers nor SIA can use computer printouts or photocopies of original photos. In this day and age, most newspapers probably prefer receiving photos electronically through e-mail.



While sometimes a “grip and grin” (two people shaking hands and smiling), “giant check passing” or “ribbing cutting” photo is necessary, they don't capture the hearts and emotions of the people looking at them. Try to avoid stiff, static poses. Instead, photograph people in action.

What really captures someone's attention is a close-up shot that conveys an emotional truth. For example, a close-up photo of a Women's Opportunity Awards recipient as she expresses her gratitude during her acceptance speech; a group of Soroptimists working together to fix up a domestic violence shelter; or a member teaching another woman to read would be compelling shots.

To get a good close-up shot, try to get as close to the subject as possible. This eliminates distracting, unnecessary backgrounds, and shows the subject clearly. A photo of people from a distance does not have the same visual impact as a close-up shot.

Group shots don't usually make good photos. When used in *Best for Women* magazine or in a local newspaper, they are often decreased in size to fit into the page's layout, making faces

indistinguishable and the entire photo uninteresting. As a general rule, photos should only include up to four people.

A simple background focuses attention on the subject and makes clear, strong pictures. The subject of the photo or the camera may need to move in order to get the best shot.

When planning Soroptimist events, try to create opportunities and backdrops for perfect pictures ahead of time. Hang Soroptimist banners in key locations, display the logo or have members wear shirts bearing the Soroptimist name and logo.

Take pictures in good lighting. The number one flash mistake is taking pictures beyond the flash's range, which for many cameras is about five steps away. Pictures taken beyond the maximum flash range will be too dark. If used correctly, flash can improve pictures outdoors, as well as indoors. Outdoors, it softens shadows and brightens colors.

Send photos to SIA's communications department at 1709 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Digital photos can be e-mailed to Jessica Levinson at jessica@soroptimist.org for the magazine and/or to Kamali Brooks at kamali@soroptimist.org for "The Soroptimist Summary," SIA's online newsletter.

Examples of Good Photographs



The simple, black background provides a great contrast to the white and yellow signs, making these Soroptimists stand out. It also clearly displays a Soroptimist banner, and illustrates a worthwhile mission-focused activity.



Yasu Nakaoka

This close-up photo of a Women's Opportunity Awards recipient eliminates unnecessary background. Close-up shots are always better than full body pictures.

This group photo of breast cancer survivors communicates true emotion. It also contains fewer than four people, with each person's face distinguishable.



Chris Pietsch,
Register Guard



This compelling photo shows two Soroptimists completing a 40-mile walk for breast cancer awareness, an activity that supports Soroptimist's mission.



Photo courtesy of the Global fund for Women

This action photo of three Thai women dyeing cloth creates a more natural and interesting photo.

This photo taken at a Soroptimist club's camp for girls speaks a thousand words and leaves a lasting impression. Not only does it show girls in action, but also it attracts the eye and evokes emotion.



Resources

For more information on how to take good photos, check out the following resources:

Books

- *How to Take Good Pictures, Revised Edition*. Eastman Kodak. Ballantine Books, 1995.
- *Absolute Beginner's Guide to Taking Great Photos*. Jim Miotke. Three Rivers Press, 2002.
- *The Joy of Digital Photography (A Lark Photography Book)*. Jeff Wignall. Lark Books, 2004.
- *Photography for Dummies, Second Edition*. Russell Hart. For Dummies, 2003.

Websites

- Kodak. *Taking Good Pictures*: http://www.kodak.com/eknec/PageQuerier.jhtml?pq-path=2/3/38&pq-locale=en_US.
- Photo Secrets. *Ideas to Improve Your Photography*: <http://www.photosecrets.com/tips.html>
- BetterPhoto.com. *Top 10 Techniques for Better Pictures*: <http://www.betterphoto.com/exploring/tips.asp>