



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women

Improving the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Soroptimist Dream Programs

“Empowerment” is a word we hear often, but what exactly does it mean for women and girls? Simply put, women are empowered when they are free to act in their own best interest.

Soroptimist International of the Americas improves the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. We work for a world where women and girls have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential and live their dreams.

Social and economic empowerment are closely intertwined. Women are economically empowered when they have control over their own finances and well being – when they can have a voice in the financial decisions to shape their lives and the lives of their families. Women are socially empowered when they have a personal sense of autonomy, self-confidence, and the power to control their private and public lives. Women’s social and economic empowerment is necessary for successful and healthy women and girls, as well as families and communities.

The Soroptimist Dream Programs – the Live Your Dream Awards and Dream It, Be It – are dedicated to helping women and girls achieve social and economic empowerment.

Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women

Since 1972, Soroptimists have been empowering women through The Live Your Dream Awards. Live Your Dream Awards assist women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families. The program gives them the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects. Recipients have typically overcome enormous obstacles including poverty, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. They may use their award to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or training, such as books, childcare and transportation.

The Live Your Dream Awards saw many successes during the 2015-2016 club-year:

- The number of clubs participating increased from 1,014 to 1,037 (2%). 81% of all clubs participated.
- 13 regions had 100% participation.
- 1,355 women received the award, an increase of 62 (5%) from last year.
- Funding reached nearly \$1.9 million with an increase of \$131,152 from last year (7%).

We also received extremely positive responses from past Live Your Dream Awards recipients:

- 96 percent of survey respondents reported serving as a role model for their dependents.
- 95 percent of survey respondents reported an increased sense of self-esteem
- 94 percent of survey respondents reported having already earned or continuing to pursue their educational degree/certification.

- 81 percent of survey respondents who reported completing their educational degree/certification secured higher paying employment.

SIA's dedicated members are responsible for these accomplishments. But there are more women who need our assistance! As always, we encourage clubs that do not yet participate in this life-changing program to do so. Participation includes providing a cash award to a woman who meets all eligibility requirements and submitting her application for additional levels of judging. Your Region Program Chair, Live Your Dream Awards Region Chair, and SIAHQ program staff are more than happy to help you get started. We also encourage participating clubs to give more awards and increase the impact of the awards on recipients by providing additional support such as mentoring, job support, education support, childcare support, and including recipients in club activities. Check out the [Beyond A Cash Award to build Collective Impact](#) resource for more ideas and inspiration for how you can go beyond the cash award. Also be sure to check out the new [Live Your Dream Awards Club Participation Toolkit](#), which includes all of the information and materials your club needs to participate in the program in one handy document.

Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls

Dream It, Be It joins the Live Your Dream Awards as Soroptimist International of the Americas' cornerstone programs. This program will help girls grow up to be strong, successful, happy adults. Dream It, Be It targets girls in secondary school who face obstacles to their future success. It provides girls with access to professional role models, career education and the resources to live their dreams. Soroptimist clubs in 20 countries and territories work in partnership with girls in small groups or a conference setting to provide them with the information and resources they want and need to be successful. The topics covered include career opportunities, setting and achieving goals, overcoming obstacles to success and how to move forward after setbacks or failures.

Dream It, Be It saw many successes in its first year of implementation:

- 408 clubs held 443 Dream It, Be It projects.
- 432 clubs (34%) engaged with Dream It, Be It by hosting a project or supporting another club's project.
- 8,634 girls participated in Dream It, Be It.
- 115 new members were reported via club and region transmittal forms joining Soroptimist as a result of Dream It, Be It.

We also received positive responses from Dream It, Be It participants:

- 90% of participants feel more confident about their future success.
- 87% of participants feel more prepared to pursue their career goals.
- 80% of participants say Dream It, Be It has provided them with new tools to overcome obstacles to their success.
- 87% of participants were introduced to professional role models.
- 86% of participants created achievable goals for their future.

There are many resources to support your club in hosting Dream It, Be It, including a [Planning Toolkit](#), a [Club Project Guide](#), [seven scripted curriculum sessions](#), and a [Club Evaluation Guide](#). SIA encourages clubs with existing girl projects or an interest in working more closely with girls to participate in Dream It, Be It. Participating clubs should use the program name and curriculum and then submit evaluation information to SIA. Your Region Program Chair, Dream It, Be It Region Chair, or SIAHQ program staff are always available to answer any questions and provide support.