

live
YOUR
dream 
education & training awards for women[®]



Club Participation Toolkit



Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards Club Participation Toolkit

A SOROPTIMIST RESOURCE FOR CLUBS & MEMBERS

Welcome to the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards!

Pachara, a young Thai national, moved to Japan more than a decade ago to marry a Japanese man. Although she was in unfamiliar surroundings in a culture very different from her own, Pachara experienced a brief period of happiness before her life took an unexpected turn – her husband began to abuse her. Nine years later Pachara found the courage to take her three children and leave even though she was not fluent in the Japanese language.

Born in Mexico, Maria was married at age 14 and immigrated to the U.S. By age 19, Maria had given birth to two children. After a third child, divorce, and 17 years of working as a laborer, Maria decided to change her now single-parented family's life by returning to school.

Shizuka is an inspiration to women everywhere. After a painful bout with post-partum depression that led to marital difficulties and divorce, Shizuka, a native of Japan, was left to raise her two sons alone. In a country where divorced women face additional hardships, Shizuka opened a no or low-cost childcare center for low-income women.

These three women had dreams of being able to live on their own without fear of abuse or worries about where their children's next meal might come from. The Live Your Dream Awards gave them the chance to make a better life for themselves and their families through increased access to education and better career opportunities—a chance they have not previously had, or may never otherwise have. Live Your Dream Awards applicants have faced economic and social barriers, and personal hardships that have prevented them from pursuing and achieving their educational and professional goals—until now.

Your club's participation in the Live Your Dream Awards is a terrific way to make a BIG difference in the lives of women—and their families. Although the awards address economic need and make a difference in a practical way, we know that they also affect women in a personal way. Women who have won the award report an increase in self-esteem, and pride at being recognized for having the courage to change their lives. This program is the cornerstone of our efforts to increase public awareness and international name recognition for Soroptimist. Increasing name recognition of Soroptimist by linking it to a project as meaningful and valuable as the Live Your Dream Awards will help us achieve our mission and recruit and retain members. This is critical for our organization's growth and development.

This toolkit contains all of the information you need to make your club program a success. The next page contains a table of contents to help you easily access the information you need!

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IMPORTANT DEADLINES AND CHECKLIST

Important Deadlines

NOVEMBER 15	Application deadline for club-level awards
FEBRUARY 1	District-level judging deadline
FEBRUARY 15	Region-level judging deadline
MARCH 15	Federation-level judging deadline

Checklist of Program Activities

April-May

Appoint a Club Chair and Recruit Club Volunteers

June

Update your club roster with the new Club Chair contact information

July-October

Personalize applications for distribution

Distribute writeable/emailable applications

Download other Live Your Dream Awards materials from the SIA website

Distribute applications and recruit applicants

November-December

Gather Applications by the **November 15 Deadline** and check for eligibility

Schedule the judging and send out invitations

December-January

Hold the judging and select a recipient

Contact ALL applicants

February

If applicable, submit club finalist for district-level judging by the **February 1 deadline**

Submit club or district finalist to the region chair by the **February 15 deadline**

March

Honor your club recipient by holding and publicizing an awards event on International Women's Day (March 8th)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can my club get applications?

The Live Your Dream Awards application (including reference form) is [available online](#) as an easy-to-use writeable PDF form in all federation languages.

If you need to order paper applications, please use the [writeable application order form](#). Applications can be ordered in packs of 20 and clubs can order up to 40 applications.

What are online applications and why should our club include them in our judging?

For all questions regarding online applications please see the [Live Your Dream Awards Online Application FAQ](#).

What can we do to make sure we receive completed applications?

A wide variety of tips to help clubs with this are available in the [Recruiting Applicants](#) section.

What should we do if we do not receive any qualified applications?

If this happens, contact your region chair as well as SIAHQ at program@soroptimist.org, as there are several applications submitted to SIAHQ that are available to share with your club. A second option is to contact other clubs in your area to see if they have applications they can share.

When and where do we submit our recipient for the next level of judging?

For clubs with district judging, the deadline for submission to the district is February 1. For those clubs in regions without districts, the deadline is February 15. For information about where to send your applications, please check the [region chair directory](#).

What are the eligibility requirements for the Live Your Dream Awards?

For a full list of the Live Your Dream Awards eligibility requirements please refer to the [Eligibility Checklist](#).

Is a woman still eligible to receive an award if she receives financial assistance or lives in someone else's home?

The Live Your Dream Awards provide resources so disadvantaged women with dependents can increase their standard of living and achieve economic empowerment. While working towards their goals, women may receive government support, child support or live in subsidized housing or in someone else's home. These things do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program.

What constitutes club participation in the Live Your Dream Awards program?

For a club to be counted as participating in the Live Your Dream Awards program, the club must give a cash award to a minimum of one eligible woman and then forward her application for district or region-level judging.

Why do we need our Live Your Dream Awards recipient to sign a media consent form?

Many clubs and regions create a news release to further honor their recipient, or use their recipient's story on their website to advertise the award to future potential applicants. In order to use your recipient's name and story, you will need her to sign a [media consent form](#) first. Some recipients may not be comfortable with having their personal story shared and will choose to not sign the form. In these cases, clubs must honor the recipient's confidentiality.

ONLINE APPLICATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an online Live Your Dream Awards application?

Online Live Your Dream Awards applications are those applications that are accessed and submitted online through the [Soroptimist website](#). Applicants are able to upload their completed application and send it electronically to the club nearest to where they live. These applications are sent directly to the club Live Your Dream Awards chair, or the club president and treasurer if a chair has not been identified. To identify your club Live Your Dream Awards chair, please [update your club roster](#).

Why does SIAHQ accept applications online?

SIAHQ’s online submission process makes the program more accessible and provides applicants with another method of submitting applications to clubs. Women throughout the federation are in need of the Live Your Dream Awards. The Live Your Dream Awards application is available online to ensure that all eligible women have the opportunity to apply for an award, regardless of their proximity to a club. This process also benefits clubs because it provides another way for clubs that wish to participate to receive applications.

Will this affect the way in which our club distributes or accepts applications?

Absolutely not. The online application process is primarily for those eligible women who are not reached by the traditional club distribution process. Clubs should continue to distribute applications in their communities in whichever manner works best for them, and women reached through the traditional club distribution process should continue to send their completed applications to the clubs directly.

What if our club has not received any eligible applications from women in our community?

Please contact your [Live Your Dream Awards Region Chair](#) and the Program Department at program@soroptimist.org to request several complete applications from eligible women.

Our club received an online application from SIA. Now what?

We strongly encourage all clubs to include online applications in their club’s judging. However, if for whatever reason your club is unable or unwilling to include the application, you **must** notify SIA headquarters so the application can be forwarded to a different local club or included in judging at headquarters.

Our club received eligible applications from women in our community. Why should we include an online application in our club judging?

Clubs are strongly encouraged to include applications they receive from SIAHQ in their club level judging. The Live Your Dream Awards program is about assisting women in need. Therefore, an applicant’s geographical location or the manner in which she applied should not be a factor. All applicants deserve the same opportunity to be considered for an award. It’s all about *helping women who need our help* – not where they are from.

ONLINE SUBMISSION PROCESS



TROUBLESHOOTING		
PROBLEM	REASON	SOLUTION
Application materials are incomplete/missing	Applicant did not properly upload all materials	Contact applicant directly
Application materials appear blank, even when I click on the text fields	Applicant did not properly save all materials	Contact applicant directly
Application materials appear blank, unless I click on the text fields	Materials were saved using different software	Contact SIAHQ lydawards@soroptimist.org
Applicant lives far from our club	Of clubs within 75 miles of her zip code, the applicant specifically choose yours	Include her in your judging or email LYDA Region Chair to see if another club needs applications

HOW TO: RECRUIT APPLICANTS

Raise awareness of the award and recruit applicants!

The key to successful applicant recruitment is to get applications to eligible women and to make the community as a whole aware of your participation in the Live Your Dream Awards.

First things first, determine an award amount

Clubs should determine how much to give their Live Your Dream Award recipient according to their fundraising efforts, the number of awards they are giving, as well as the costs of education and living in their particular community. In previous years, participating clubs have given an average of US \$1,000 per recipient. A large cash award may make it easier to attract applicants.

Remember the eligibility requirements

Eligible women:

- Provide the primary financial support* for themselves and their dependents. Dependents can include children, spouse, partner, siblings and/or parents.
- Have financial need.
- Are enrolled in or have been accepted to a vocational/skills training program or an undergraduate degree program.
- Are motivated to achieve their education and career goals.
- Reside in one of Soroptimist International of the Americas' member countries/territories (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, United States of America, Venezuela)
- Have not previously been the recipient of a Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Award or Live Your Dream Award
- Do not have a graduate degree.
- Are not a Soroptimist member, an employee of Soroptimist International of the Americas, or immediate family of either. Immediate family is defined to include spouse/partner, parents, siblings, children or grandchildren by adoption, blood or marriage.

Note: Receiving government support, child support, living in subsidized housing or in someone else's home do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program.

Make use of the writeable/emailable application

Using the [writeable/emailable application form and references](#) will greatly facilitate this process as clubs can email applications to partner organizations or directly to individual applicants.

Publicize the award

Have applications and information available during club projects where appropriate, such as health screenings, computer centers or during mentoring activities.

Contact the following organizations about distributing applications, hanging posters and assisting your club in reaching women who need assistance.

- vocational or training schools
- community colleges or universities
- places of worship
- community/recreation centers
- charitable organizations, especially those working with women and low-income persons
- homeless shelters and transitional housing programs
- domestic violence shelters
- food banks
- government public assistance offices
- women's health centers
- childcare or daycare facilities

- welfare-to-work programs
- clinics that provide free medical services to low-income persons
- employment agencies
- local job/career fairs
- addiction recovery and rehab centers

APPLICATION ORDER FORM

The Live Your Dream Awards application is available 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 or at the following link:

<http://www.soroptimist.org/members/program/programdocs/lyd-awards/english/lyd-emailable-instructions.html>

We highly encourage clubs to use the writeable application form. However, if you do need to order paper applications, please use this writeable form. Simply type in your order information, save the document and then email it to siahq@soroptimist.org.

Date: _____

Number of applications: **20** **or** **40**

Club Name: _____ Club Number: _____

Shipping Name and Address (post office boxes are not accepted):

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Email To: siahq@soroptimist.org

Or

Mail or Fax To: SIA Headquarters
 1709 Spruce Street
 Philadelphia, PA 19103-6103
 USA
 Fax: 215-893-5200

RECRUITING TIPS

Work with Local Schools

Many community colleges, universities, and vocational and trade schools offer financial aid workshops that include information about local scholarships and awards. Contact the financial aid offices of nearby institutions to ask if the Live Your Dream Awards can be included. Also, many colleges and universities have women's centers to assist women throughout their education. Contact these centers for assistance in finding eligible women. Offer to email the application and ask that they forward it to eligible women.

Make a Personal Contact

Clubs have reported they have the most success receiving completed applications when they have a personal contact at the organizations where they are recruiting. Do not just email, mail or drop off applications and expect to receive a response. Talk to someone within the organizations and explain the benefits of the program. To assist with these efforts, please refer to the [sample recruiting letter](#) of introduction to a local community organization.

Assist Women with their Applications

The women targeted by this award are usually going to school, raising children and working. They may be very busy and may need reminders about deadlines. Furthermore, they may find the application intimidating. This could be the first time they are applying for an award.

Consider holding a workshop to discuss the application process and have club members available to offer one-on-one assistance. Conducting a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards application workshop is an excellent way for your club to identify eligible women in your community and provide them with the support they need to complete the application process. To assist clubs in conducting an application workshop, check out [Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards: Achieving Success Through Application Workshops](#).

Expand the Search to Surrounding Areas

If you live in a particularly small area and are having difficulty finding applicants, expand your search to surrounding communities that do not have Soroptimist clubs. Contacting organizations, distributing applications and receiving completed applications can all be handled by email, mail or telephone.

Applications from SIAHQ

If your club has not received any eligible applications, contact SIAHQ to ask for complete and eligible applications that can be forwarded to your club.

Working with other, local Soroptimist Clubs

Some Soroptimist clubs share their completed applications as a way to honor as many eligible women as possible. Each club gives an award to a different woman. Your region chair can help facilitate this.

Work with Previous Award Recipients

Previous Live Your Dream Awards recipients have expressed a desire to promote the award by speaking to other local organizations, at schools, community centers, and health centers. Additionally, they were interested in connecting with the media about their experience and holding workshops for applicants. Utilizing enthusiastic women who have received the award to promote the Live Your Dream Awards can bolster recruitment.

SAMPLE RECRUITING LETTER

Clubs may use the sample recruiting letter when emailing applications and reference forms to partner organizations.

NOTE: before emailing these materials, type your club's contact information into the writeable application form so that applicants will be able to complete the application online and email the completed forms directly to your club.

September X, 20XX

Anna Smith, Executive Director
Women's Alternative Center
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear **Ms. Smith**,

Michelle, 32, is a single-mother of two children. Michelle got pregnant during her senior year of high school and never fulfilled her plans to attend college. Two years ago, she lost her job at a local bank when the branch was forced to close. Because she had no formal training, certifications or degrees, getting a new job wasn't easy. Michelle had to work two low-paying jobs just to have enough money for the essentials. She knew that there was only one thing she could do to change her life—go to college.

Luckily, Michelle was one of nearly 1,500 women who received a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award last year. The *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards* are cash awards given to motivated women who are the primary financial supporters of their families. The recipients of the awards seek to improve their lives by gaining additional skills, training or education, but do not have the resources to do so. These cash awards are meant to offset any costs associated with the recipient's efforts to attain higher education, including tuition, books, supplies, child care or transportation costs.

The *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards* is the signature project of Soroptimist International of the Americas. Soroptimist International of **Anytown** is one of nearly 1,300 clubs that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas, a volunteer organization for women committed to improving the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

The most challenging aspect of this program is getting applications into the hands of eligible women. Please find attached an emailable Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards application and two emailable reference forms. Please forward these materials to any women you know who strive to attain higher education in the hopes of better supporting themselves and their families. We have included our club's contact information in the materials so that applicants may submit the applications directly to us. We hope that you can take a moment out of your busy day to help a deserving woman in your community by forwarding her this information.

Thank you for your time and support. I will call you next week to discuss the program and how we can work together to find potential applicants.

Sincerely,

Joan Alvarez
Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards Chair
Soroptimist International of **Anytown**

APPLICATION WORKSHOPS

Introduction

Each year, the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards helps more than 1,400 women live 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. They don't believe they are capable of completing the application, let alone receiving an award.

Conducting a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards application workshop is an excellent way for your club to identify eligible women in your community and provide them with the support they need to complete the application. As a result, not only will your club help increase the confidence and self-esteem of the women applying, you will end up with more award applications from eligible applicants. Conducting an award application workshop will serve as an especially helpful tool for clubs struggling to find eligible women to apply for the award.

If your club is in the vicinity of other Soroptimist clubs, consider creating a multi-club collective to co-host a workshop. This provides more members to help plan and implement the workshop, and allows for pooling and sharing of applications to ensure that all clubs in your area receive eligible applications. If you co-host a workshop, divide the applications among all clubs so that each club has different applications to judge. Also, when distributing applications to women who will not be attending the workshop, make sure to let them know you are available to assist with the application process should they have any questions. This will help ensure that all applicants have equal access to assistance.

Guidelines for Conducting an Application Workshop

Identify and Meet with Partner Organization(s)

The first step in conducting an application workshop is to identify your partner organization(s). Partnering with a local college, university, vocational/skills training program and/or women's organization—such as a domestic violence shelter or women's homeless shelter—is a great way to identify eligible women and potential applicants.

Once you have identified your partner organization(s), set up an informational meeting with the point person for the organization. Use the meeting to introduce Soroptimist and the Live Your Dream Awards program. The goal of the meeting is to secure an agreement between your club and the partner organization(s) to conduct a Live Your Dream Awards application workshop on-site—either on the campus of your partner school or at the site of a women's organization—and to enlist your point person(s) in helping you to advertise the workshop and identify eligible applicants.

Try to secure a room with computers. This will allow participants to use the [writeable/emailable application form](#). If this is not possible, conduct the workshop using paper applications. Also, try to include space for child-care. For some women, this will be necessary in order for them to attend the workshop.

Advertise the Workshop

When advertising the workshop, it is important to consider an ideal number of participants. You don't want to advertise it so widely that you get more applicants than you can assist. Likewise, it is important to state the award eligibility requirements clearly. Be strategic and work with your partner organization to advertise to and recruit only women known to be eligible for the award.

To help advertise the award, distribute the [Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards Poster](#) at strategic places at your partner organization(s) and/or email it directly to potential workshop participants. When women contact the club for more information, you can pre-screen for eligibility.

Recruit Workshop Volunteers

Once you have an idea of how many women will attend the workshop, begin recruiting club members to serve as workshop volunteers. Ideally, there should be no more than three applicants per Soroptimist volunteer – for the

more one-on-one and personalized attention that can be given to workshop participants the more successful and rewarding the workshop will be. Also recruit members who are interested in providing child-care services during the workshop.

To ensure workshop volunteers are sufficiently knowledgeable, consider holding a training session to walk club members through the application process – explaining each section of the application and providing sufficient time for questions. Give volunteers a heads-up that when applicants work on their personal essay some of them may become emotional and/or tearful.

Conduct the Workshop

Allow two hours for the workshop. This will give participants plenty of time to receive one-on-one attention and to complete their portion of the application. Make sure to bring extra applications in case a participant needs to start over. To keep energy levels up, schedule in a short break if needed. Also, provide a sign-in sheet for participants for post-workshop follow-up.

Introductions and Ice Breaker

Begin the workshop with a brief introduction to Soroptimist. The [Who We Are](#) page of the SIA website provides a concise summary of Soroptimist including the mission, vision and core values of the organization. Then allow time for both workshop volunteers and participants to introduce themselves. Use an ice breaker to help participants relax, such as asking everyone to share what they are studying and why. Next, provide a summary of the program, including a brief explanation of the various award levels. Disclose how many club awards will be given, the cash amount and when award recipients should expect to be notified.

Overview of Application

After the introductions, provide an overview of the application section-by-section and line-by-line— allowing participants to ask questions during each section. Let participants know there will be time to work on the application following the overview. Some things to note in each section:

Part I: Personal Data

- Confirm all workshop participants have dependents that rely on their financial support.

Part II: Career Goals

- Instruct applicants to clearly describe the connections between their educational pursuits and their career goals.

Part III: Personal Statement

- Encourage applicants to be as honest as possible and provide as much detail as possible.
- Assure applicants that their personal statement will remain confidential—only local Soroptimist club members and award judges will have access to their application. Should they receive an award, their information will be shared only if consent is granted.

Part IV: Financial Need

- Emphasize the need to be as accurate as possible—eligible applicants must demonstrate financial need.
- Note that the figures need to reflect *annual* income and expenses—not monthly.
- Provide calculators for participants to use.

Part V: References

- Be prepared to help applicants brainstorm potential references.
- Role-play a scenario of an applicant asking someone to provide a reference.
- Provide a sample email for applicants to send to their references.

Fill Out and Collect Applications

Following the application overview, allow ample time for participants to fill out an application. The majority of the workshop should be allocated for actually working on the application. Make sure each participant receives one-on-one attention and instruction. This is arguably the most important part of the workshop and key to assuring your club receives completed applications.

At the end of the workshop, collect the completed applications. Make sure to give participants the application deadline and club contact information so they know where to submit their references or application if they were unable to complete it during the workshop. Also, be sure to let them know when the award judging will take place and when they should expect to be notified. If participants used computers to fill out the writeable form but did not finish, make sure to help them save the document so that they may work on it later.

Remember to thank participants for their attendance. As a symbol of support, consider ordering Soroptimist merchandise from the [Soroptimist Store](#), such as *Live Your Dreams* pins or journals, for distribution to workshop participants. *Make sure participants understand that attending the workshop does not ensure they will become award recipients: not all workshop participants will become award recipients.* However, you can encourage participants to reapply the following year if they are not selected.

Post-Workshop Follow-Up

Check-in with participants as the application deadline approaches to remind them to submit their application and/or references. Once your club has selected the club-level award recipient(s), send a letter to all participants who were not selected (see these [sample letter templates](#)). Thank them again for their participation in the workshop and encourage them to reapply next year.

Conclusion

Conducting an application workshop is a proven way to identify eligible applicants and provide them with the support and encouragement they need to apply. As a result, not only will this increase the number of applications your club receives, but you will have helped to increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of workshop participants. Participants will leave the workshop having made new friends and will know that they are not alone. They will leave knowing that Soroptimists believe in them—and that, regardless of whether they receive an award, they are capable of achieving their dreams of a better life for themselves and their family.

ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Soroptimist International of _____
 Live Your Dream Awards contact: _____
 Contact information: _____

The Live Your Dream Awards was established in 1972 to assist women with primary financial responsibility for their families to obtain the skills-training and education necessary to improve their employment status and standard of living for themselves and their family. Each year, over \$2 million is awarded to more than 1,400 women in Soroptimist's 20 member countries and territories. The women receiving these financial awards may use them for any costs associated with their educational efforts, including tuition, books, child care, and transportation.

If you are interested in applying for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards, we strongly encourage you to complete this brief checklist in order to determine whether you are eligible for the award.

Please check all that apply:

- I have a U.S. Social Security Number or Tax I.D. Number (this requirement applies to U.S. applicants only).
- I provide the primary financial support for myself *and* my dependent(s), including at least one of the following:
 - child
 - spouse
 - parent
 - sibling
 - other dependent
- I am enrolled in a vocational/skills training program or an undergraduate degree program.
- I do not have a graduate degree.
- I reside in one of Soroptimist International of the Americas' member countries/territories (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, United States of America, Venezuela)
- I have not previously been the recipient of a Live Your Dream Award (previously the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Award).
- I am willing to describe my educational and career goals (300 words max).
- I am willing to describe why I deserve to win the award (750 words max).
- I am in financial need and am prepared to list my family's annual living expenses.
- I am prepared to list my annual educational expenses.
- I am able to provide two written references.

If you checked ALL of the above boxes, you are eligible to apply for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award.

In order to apply, you must [submit an official application and two completed reference forms](#) by the application deadline, November 15.

Please note that Soroptimists, employees of Soroptimist, members of Soroptimist sponsored groups and immediate family members of Soroptimists are ineligible for the award. Previous winners are also ineligible. Immediate family is defined to include spouse/partner, parents, siblings, grandchildren, or children by adoption, blood, or marriage.

Additionally, please note that the Live Your Dream Awards provide resources so disadvantaged women with dependents can increase their standard of living and achieve economic empowerment. While working towards their goals, women may receive government support, child support or live in subsidized housing or in someone else's home. These things do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. To learn more about Soroptimist and the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards online, please visit www.soroptimist.org.

HOW TO: SELECT RECIPIENTS

It's time to select your club's Live Your Dream Award recipient!

Review applications

As you receive applications, review each one, checking to make sure it is complete and that the applicant is eligible. **Anyone who has submitted an application that does not meet each of the eligibility requirements should not be included in the judging.**

If you receive an incomplete application, contact the applicant about receiving the remaining information. Check the following:

- Each question is answered.
- The application is signed.
- The applicant is a female with **primary** financial responsibility* for herself and her dependents.
- The applicant demonstrates financial need.
- The applicant has been accepted or is enrolled and will still be attending an undergraduate degree or a vocational skills training program.
- The applicant does not hold a graduate degree.

Please note: The Live Your Dream Awards provide resources so disadvantaged women with dependents can increase their standard of living and achieve economic empowerment. While working towards their goals, women may receive government support, child support or live in subsidized housing or in someone else's home. These things do not negate a woman's primary financial responsibility for her dependents or disqualify a woman from being eligible for the program.

NOTE: more than one club member must be involved in the selection of the club award recipient.

Select judges

Judges should be selected from outside the Soroptimist membership. This will provide an opportunity for judges to become community advocates for the program. Contact the women's groups, charitable organizations, and educational institutions that helped you to recruit applicants to ask them to serve as judges. Customize and use the sample judges letter to help recruit judges. Appoint three to five judges to evaluate all qualifying applications.

Conduct the judging

You may choose to hold your club awards judging in person or online:

In person: Should you wish to conduct the judging in person, choose a location, date, and time that is convenient for potential judges. Disperse the applications among the judges and provide the judges with the [judging sheet](#) to assist them in selecting a recipient who meets the program's guidelines. Compare the judges' scores and notes to determine your club award recipient.

Online: If you are concerned about or are unable to recruit judges due to scheduling difficulties, you may wish to conduct the judging online. Simply divide the applications among the judges, email the judges copies of the applications and [judging sheet](#), and ask that they return the completed judging sheets to you by a specified deadline. Compare the judges' scores and notes to select your club award recipient.

NOTE: to help ensure the confidentiality of the applicants, ask the judges to delete the emails including the attachments after the judging is completed.

Check recipient's references and call her school

Before notifying your recipient that she has been selected for an award, be sure to call her references and school to verify her eligibility.

Contact ALL Applicants

Once you have selected a recipient, it is important to alert not only her, but all **other applicants as well**. It is important to applicants to be notified of the outcome of the judging. Furthermore, it is important to the reputation

of the club and the organization that all applicants are contacted. Check out the [sample recipient letter](#) and the [sample non-recipient letter](#) for assistance! You may also wish to call your recipient – hearing the excitement in her voice is an extremely gratifying experience for club members!

SAMPLE JUDGING INVITATION

This letter can be customized and used to help your club recruit Live Your Dream Awards judges.

November X, 20XX
Mary Miller,
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear **Mary**,

We would like to invite you to join our panel of distinguished judges as we select **# club finalist(s)** for the *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards*. The *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards* are cash awards designed to help women from around the world reclaim their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families.

The cash awards give women the resources they need to improve their educational status and employment prospects. Since the *Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards* program began in 1972, more than \$30 million has been disbursed to help tens of thousands of women offset the costs associated with their educational efforts.

The program begins at the local level where Soroptimist clubs and regions provide cash awards to local women in need. Twenty-eight region recipients are then forwarded to Soroptimist headquarters in Philadelphia where three women are chosen as international finalists and awarded \$10,000 each.

We would be honored to have you help us select our club recipients. **Judging will take place on X Day, December X from x:xx a.m. to x:xx a.m. at local club meeting hall.**

Soroptimist is a global women's organization whose members volunteer to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. More than 80,000 Soroptimists in about 120 countries and territories support community-based and global projects benefiting women and girls. The organization is particularly concerned with providing women and girls access to education, as this is the most effective path to self-determination.

We hope you will be able to join us for what promises to be an inspiring and rewarding morning.

Sincerely,

Elise Castillo, Live Your Dream Awards Chair

Soroptimist International of **Anytown**

JUDGES' EVALUATION SHEET

Applicant Name: _____

PART I: Basic Requirements

Any "no" response disqualifies the applicant.

A. The applicant has primary financial responsibility for herself and her dependents.

yes no

B. The applicant is entering or attending a vocational, technical training or undergraduate degree program.

yes no

C. The application is complete, including all references, and is signed.

yes no

PART II: Scoring

Please rate the applicant on items A through F based on your reading of the applicant's responses on her application and her references. A total of 100 points is a perfect score.

A. (20 points)

The applicant is motivated to achieve her educational and career goals. Score _____

B. (20 points)

The applicant demonstrates financial need. Score _____

C. (20 points)

The applicant has faced economic and personal hardships. Score _____

D. (20 points)

The applicant has clearly stated goals. Score _____

E. (10 points)

The references are supportive of the applicant. Score _____

F. (10 points)

The applicant serves as an inspiration and role model for her dependents. Score _____

TOTAL _____

PART III: Use the remainder and back of this sheet to make notes on any qualities or special circumstances that you feel favor this applicant. These can be used during the discussion phase of the judging.

SAMPLE RECIPIENT LETTER

This letter can be customized and used to help your club notify Live Your Dream Awards recipients.

January X, 20XX
Anna Smith,
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear Anna:

Congratulations! You have been selected to receive a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award from Soroptimist International of **Anytown**. It is our sincere hope that this cash award of **\$1,000** will help you to achieve your educational goals and, later, your career goals as well.

In addition to this award, your application will be submitted for further judging at our region level. The first place award at the region level is \$5,000 and runners-up are awarded \$3,000.

The members of our club would like the opportunity to meet and honor you by **presenting this award in person at a special luncheon on March 8, International Women's Day, at the Anytown Inn**. We hope that you will be able to join us.

We would like your permission to share your story with the local media to further honor you and your efforts. If you are comfortable with this, please sign the included media release form and return it to us. We understand if you would prefer not to sign.

I will contact you with more information about attending **our luncheon**. Again, congratulations!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith, President

Soroptimist International of **Anytown**

SAMPLE NON-RECIPIENT LETTER

This letter can be customized and used to help your club notify applicants who were not selected to receive a Live Your Dream Award.

January X, 20XX
Anna Smith,
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555

Dear Anna,

Thank you for submitting an application for Soroptimist International of **Anytown's** Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards. We commend you for your ambitious goals and wish you much success in achieving them. We received a number of compelling applicants this year. Unfortunately, we have selected another candidate to receive this year's Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. You are welcome to apply again next year if you are still eligible.

We wish you all the best in your endeavors. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith, President

Soroptimist International of **Anytown**

RECIPIENT IRS REGULATIONS (U.S. RECIPIENTS ONLY)

Certain U.S. tax legislation affects the taxability of awards, which includes the Live Your Dream Awards. These awards are not designed as scholarships, therefore recipients must report their monetary awards as income. As taxable income, clubs and regions must provide Form 1099MISC by January 31 (of the following year) to all individuals receiving \$600 or more in one year. Copies must also be provided to the IRS by February 28. Recipients should consult IRS Publication 970, "Scholarships and Fellowships," Tax Topic 421, "Scholarship and Fellowship Grants," and IRS Publication 525, "Taxable and Nontaxable Income," or their tax planner for further information.

In order to comply with U.S. tax regulations, it is imperative that the Social Security number and complete name and address of each recipient be obtained. Clubs may obtain the necessary forms for filing this information, from the IRS. Forms (and instructions) may be downloaded from the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov>.

Below is a sample letter for your club to give to your Live Your Dream Award recipient(s), to inform them of the taxability of their award. This letter should be given to all Live Your Dream Award recipients who receive a single award of \$600 or more.

NOTE: Some social service agencies and school financial aid offices may also interpret the Live Your Dream Awards as income. Awards recipients who receive any kind of public assistance may or may not have their assistance eligibility affected. Laws vary from state to state, and recipients should consult the appropriate agencies.

Sample Letter to Club Winner Regarding Taxable Status (U.S.A. clubs only)

January X, 20XX

**Anna Smith,
55 Main Street
Anytown, Anystate 10555**

Dear **Anna**:

Congratulations on being selected as a recipient of a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. This award comes to you with our best wishes for continued success in your educational pursuits and in your future career. Please be aware this award is not designated as a scholarship. Cash awards of \$600 or more need to be reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as taxable income. Please consult IRS Publication 970, "Scholarships and Fellowships," Tax Topic 421, "Scholarship and Fellowship Grants," and IRS Publication 525, "Taxable and Nontaxable Income," or your tax planner for further information.

Some social service agencies and school financial aid offices may also interpret your Live Your Dream Award as income. Laws vary from state to state, and you should consult the appropriate agencies to determine whether your assistance eligibility may or may not be affected.

We are delighted to welcome you as a part of the select company of Live Your Dream Awards recipients. Again, congratulations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith, President Soroptimist International of **Anytown**

HOW TO: HONOR YOUR RECIPIENT

You've selected a recipient, now it's time to celebrate her!

Honoring your recipient is one of the most fun and rewarding aspects of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards! One of the most consistently reported outcomes from past recipients is an increase in their self confidence and their impact as a role model for their dependents. Honoring your recipient helps her feel respected and valued as a woman in your community. It is also important for her family to see her recognized for her hard work.

Host a recognition event

Many clubs choose to honor their recipient at an awards banquet or dinner reception. Consider hosting a recognition event and inviting your recipient's family to join as well. Recipients consistently remark that feeling encouraged and recognized by women within their community is equally as rewarding as receiving the cash award. Furthermore, seeing their mother, wife, aunt, or sister receive an award is equally impactful on the recipient's family.

Publicize your recipient

Many clubs create a news release to further honor their recipient, or use their recipient's story on their website to advertise the award to future potential applicants. These are great ideas, but in order to use your recipient's name and story, you will need her to sign a [media consent form](#) first. Some recipients may not be comfortable with having their personal story shared and will choose to not sign the form. In these cases, clubs must honor the recipient's confidentiality.

Go beyond a Cash Award

In addition to cash awards, many clubs offer non-monetary awards. One of SIA's strategic program objectives is to increase the ability of women to achieve economic empowerment. Therefore, consider what else applicants will need to help them achieve their goals, such as books, computers, groceries, and childcare. Club members can also volunteer their time and experience to assist recipients through mentoring, job training, and financial advice. These activities help to strengthen the quality of the impact that the award has on its winners. Check out the [Beyond A Cash Award](#) document for more tips and suggestions!

BEYOND A CASH AWARD

Going Beyond a Cash Award to Build Collective Impact

Introduction

Soroptimist International of the Americas recognizes the power and potential of the Live Your Dream Award and continues to seek ways in which to strengthen its impact on women's lives. In fact, SIA's new strategic direction, referred to as "Shaping the Future," sums up this concept as part of its single, overarching organizational goal: **increasing collective impact**. This goal seeks to increase SIA's social change by strengthening the cohesion of its collective efforts and focusing on the quality of change in a woman's life.

As a measure of success for this goal, SIA seeks to have **85 percent of Live Your Dream Award recipients report an increased standard of living** within three years of receiving the award. Based on an outstanding history of creativity and commitment to this program by SIA clubs, we are confident that if clubs implement some of the below strategies, we can meet this challenge!

Increasing the Impact of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award in the Lives of Award Recipients

A 2016 survey of the 2012-2013 Live Your Dream Awards region award recipients asked which resources or assistance, in addition to a cash award, would have been most helpful for these women as they completed their education. Their responses spanned a wide range of support options:

- 71%: An opportunity for additional funding to support further education or training
- 32%: Mentoring by a local Soroptimist member
- 30%: An opportunity for funding to start a business
- 27%: An on-line, private support group of women who have received a Live Your Dream Award
- 24%: Tax or financial advice
- 20%: On-line mentoring
- 15%: Other (Networking/internship/volunteer opportunities, help navigating financial aid and loan systems, job searching, mentoring post-graduation)

The below strategies were devised both in response to this feedback from former award recipients and also based on existing ideas from clubs already working in their communities to creatively increase the impact of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award.

Mentoring

Seek to create a long-lasting relationship with your award recipient wherein you provide ongoing mentorship and support to help her reach her educational and professional goals.

- Contact your award recipient throughout the year and ask how she is doing.
 - What frustrations is she experiencing?
 - Do you share similar obstacles?
 - How have you worked to overcome those obstacles in your own life?
 - Are there things you can do to support her while she seeks to overcome similar obstacles?
- Offer to take your award recipient out to lunch every couple of months to check in and develop a deeper relationship.
 - Provide recipients with online mentorship through regular emails or chats.

Job Support

Many recipients note that one of the biggest changes in their lives stemmed from knowing that a strong community of successful women believed in them. As Soroptimists, you are respected female leaders and professionals in your local community.

- Assist recipients with completing job or school applications, provide letters of recommendation or serve as a reference for a job application.

- Ask your recipient if she would like you to review her resume or offer to conduct a mock interview. Provide advice about interview etiquette and attire or how to best structure a response to questions.
- Offer to take her shopping and buy her an interview outfit.
- Provide strategies to enhance networking capabilities and tips to facilitate a successful job search.
 - Do you have networking strategies that have worked well in your professional life?
 - Are there contacts that you have that might be helpful to the recipient?

Financial Support

Encourage club members to think about ways to provide ongoing financial assistance throughout the year to supplement your club's generous cash award with other types of assistance to help meet the multi-faceted needs of female heads-of-household.

- Donate student or family support items, such as laptops, professional clothing, children's clothing or household goods.
- Provide gift certificates for day-to-day needs, such as gas, automotive care, public transportation, haircuts, self-care items, prescriptions or groceries.
- Clubs can also donate services that are of financial value, such as volunteering to prepare your recipient's income taxes.
- Purchase and wrap holiday gifts for recipients and their families.

Working with Children

The majority of award recipients have noted that the positive impact of the award extended beyond the recipients themselves to their children. There are many ways clubs can engage in enriching opportunities with or provide support to award recipients' children.

- Create programming, such as a "Mommy and Me" fun day for recipients and their children.
- Sponsor a summer camp opportunity.
- Help defray back-to-school costs by providing backpacks filled with school or art supplies.
- Donate musical instruments to allow an award recipient's children to participate in a school band or orchestra.
- Arrange carpools to increase access to after-school programming and activities for recipients' children.
- Assist with childcare.
- Offer to take your award recipient's children out to dinner or a movie so that she can have an evening of free, uninterrupted study time.
- Host birthday parties for her children or help purchase birthday gifts for them.

Program Support

Ask former recipients to engage with members in supporting the Live Your Dream Awards. Ask them to lend their talents and creativity to ensure the success of this program. This will further demonstrate that your club values and respects your recipient as a member of your community and as a strong, capable woman.

- Find other applicants: Recipients can informally spread the word about opportunities available through the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award with classmates or friends who might be eligible to apply. Encourage recipients to get creative and generate ideas about new groups or agencies at which to provide application information.
- Serve as judges: Asking a former award recipient to serve as a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award judge further demonstrates your club's respect and admiration for award recipients and deepens your working relationship with each other.
- Marketing materials: Former award recipients can speak to what appealed to or inspired them to apply for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. They may have some additional insight on how to best promote it to others.
- Newspaper articles: Interviewing recipients about how their life has been changed through the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award is another meaningful way in which recipients could contribute to supporting the program while simultaneously being celebrated as a role model within their local community.

Connect Past Club Recipients as a Support Group

Clubs can help create networks of peer support for recipients by providing the contact information and resources necessary to form support groups of current and former award recipients from both their own club and other nearby clubs.

- Offer to secure a space, such as a room at a community center, for recipients to come together and meet or help facilitate an online support network.
- Invite former award recipients to attend club banquets or award ceremonies together to build community.

Connect with Other Community Resources, Including Opportunities for Additional Funding, Financial Advice, etc.

Clubs can serve as a bridge from the recipient to a wealth of other community resources.

- Invite recipients to LiveYourDream.org to connect them with a community of change makers who support them. LiveYourDream.org has a blog that is especially geared towards women seeking support to live their dreams.
- Connect recipients to community center programs or other free instruction that might bolster practical skills, such as computer skills.
- Keep a record of community resources so clubs can connect recipients to appropriate services, such as free counseling for survivors of domestic abuse, free financial planning services or community agencies that provide assistance with utilities or heating costs.
- Direct to resources or provide assistance to help a recipient launch her own small business.
- Invite recipients to sign up as a LiveYourDream.org supporter.
- Investigate opportunities for other grant awards or scholarships to complement the financial assistance provided by the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards.
- Do other programs provide assistance with paying back student loans?
- Are there opportunities to reduce insurance or other costs based on degree completion?

Include in Club Activities or Membership

Because of the life-changing nature of this award and how proud many recipients are to receive it, recipients often express an interest in remaining in contact with the club.

- Invite your recipient to join your club in participating in a rewarding service project.
- If a former recipient is now in the financial position to do so, invite her to join your club.

Gift a former recipient her first year's membership with Soroptimist as a graduation gift.

Conclusion

Through the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards, SIA reaches tens of thousands of women across its 20 countries and territories. But there is still more that can be done to further increase the quality of change in the lives of award recipients and improve the standard of living for these women and their families. Beyond a one-time cash award, Soroptimists can provide ongoing support and encouragement to women in ways that deepen this impact and go even further to fulfill our mission.

HOW TO: REPORTING

Share your success and enter your recipient for further awards!

In order for your club's participation in the Live Your Dream Awards to be recognized and for your club recipient to be eligible for further awards, your club must report its participation to your region.

Your club recipient could be eligible for additional awards totaling US \$15,000! Regions give anywhere from one \$5,000 award to ten awards totaling \$32,000 (one \$5,000 award and nine \$3,000 awards). The number and amount of awards given by the region is dependent upon the number of clubs that participate in the Live Your Dream Awards program each year. This is an added incentive for clubs to participate. It not only increases the chance that their club recipient will be awarded at the region-level, but more importantly, the Live Your Dream Awards will impact more women. The federation gives three USD\$10,000 finalist awards each year.

Although it would be wonderful for your club's finalist to go on for additional awards, please realize that this is not a competition between clubs or regions. The entire organization should be proud of the women who are selected each year as the region and federation finalists.

Be sure to adhere to deadlines!

For clubs with district competition*, club winners must be forwarded to the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards chair **BEFORE FEBRUARY 1**.

Clubs with region-only competition* must forward their club winner to the region Live Your Dream Awards chair **BEFORE FEBRUARY 15**.

*Unsure of whether or not your region has districts? [Contact your region chair](#).

Submit your entry

For your applicant to be included in district or region judging, your submission **must** include a completed [Club Transmittal Form](#). Your applicant's full name, contact information, and original application must be included.

A list of region Live Your Dream Awards chairs can be found in the [Leadership Directory](#), which can be accessed from the SIA website at any time. If you are uncertain where to send your club transmittal form, contact your region chair.

Notification of additional awards

District- and region-level Live Your Dream Awards chairs will notify clubs if their winners have been selected to receive additional awards at that level. Clubs can expect to receive notification between March and April. Most regions present region-level Live Your Dream Awards recipients with their award checks during the region conference. Please check with your region chair for details.

Federation-level judging takes place in May of each year, and the federation finalists will be notified between May and June by the federation president.

Club Recipient Information

Submitting Club: _____

FIRST PLACE

Award Amount (\$USD): _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

Additional Recipient

Award Amount (\$USD): _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

Additional Recipient

Award Amount (\$USD): _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

Additional Recipient

Award Amount (\$USD): _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

Additional Recipient

Award Amount (\$USD): _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ **E-MAIL:** _____

How did your club go above and beyond funding one Live Your Dream Award (if applicable)?

HOW TO: PUBLICIZE THE AWARD

Make your community aware of the Live Your Dream Awards!

Publicizing the Live Your Dream Awards is not only a great way to help recruit applicants, but also to raise awareness of Soroptimist and your club's presence in your community.

While public awareness is integral when recruiting applicants, your club can publicize the award all year long, even after the award cycle has passed!

Distribute materials at all club events

One of the simplest ways to raise awareness of the Live Your Dream Awards is by providing informational material at all of your club events. The eligibility checklist and poster both provide basic information, and can be customized with your club's contact information so potential applicants can easily contact your club for an application.

Make community contacts

Identify organizations within your community that work with potential Live Your Dream applicants, and contact them using the [Sample Applicant Recruiting email/letter](#). Provide these organizations with applications that they can distribute to the women with whom they work, and ask that they hang a Live Your Dream Awards poster in a visible area.

This is a great way to not only publicize the Live Your Dream Awards, but also make connections and potential partnerships for other club projects.

Post the Live Your Dream Awards poster in highly trafficked community areas

Distribute the [Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards Poster](#) to raise community awareness about the program. The poster needs to be personalized before it is posted. Place copies of the poster in all possible locations, such as on bulletin boards at food markets, community centers and shopping centers.

MEDIA CONSENT FORM

Soroptimist Media Consent Form

As a Live Your Dream Awards recipient, your story is truly inspiring. When we promote the Live Your Dream Awards, we often use stories of past award recipients. The main reason we share these stories is so that we can 1) encourage more women to apply for the Live Your Dream Award, 2) attract donors so that we can provide even more deserving women with cash grants through this program, and 3) further honoring recipients by telling their inspiring stories of perseverance and achievement.

Please read and sign this copy of our media consent form. If you choose to sign this form, you give Soroptimist permission to use your name, photo, likeness and/or voice for publicity purposes in any media format. Media formats include, but are not limited to, newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, video, photographs, websites, and social media.

Please note that if you feel uncomfortable having your name, photo and/or video out in the public, we do not have to use it. We understand and respect your choice. We would never use your name without your permission.

Please let us know if you:

___ Give Soroptimist permission to use your full name (first and last) for all publicity purposes.

___ Give Soroptimist permission to use your photos and/or videos for all publicity purposes.

___ Give Soroptimist permission to use your first name, but only the first letter of your last name for all publicity purposes.

___ Give Soroptimist permission to use only your first name, but not your last name for all publicity purposes.

___ Ask that Soroptimist change your name entirely for all publicity purposes.

Please let us know if there is a specific name you would like to use: _____

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Witness Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FACT SHEET

Award Summary

The Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. Recipients can use the award for tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense. Each year, over \$2 million is provided in cash grants to women in need. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$30 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families—leading to stronger communities, nations and the world.

Award Amount

The Live Your Dream Award starts at the club level where award amounts vary. Soroptimist International of Anytown will provide a [INSERT AWARD AMOUNT] award. Club-level recipients then become eligible for region-level awards granted in each of Soroptimist's 28 regions. The first-place region recipients then become candidates for one of three \$10,000 finalist awards.

Applications

Applications are available [LIST LOCATIONS], or by contacting [INSERT CLUB CHAIR NAME].

Deadline

November 15

Soroptimist International of Anytown

Founded in 1987, the Anytown club is part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. Anytown members join with almost 80,000 Soroptimists in about 120 countries and territories to contribute time and financial support to community-based projects benefiting women and girls. Soroptimist, a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on charitable donations to support its programs, also powers LiveYourDream.org—an online community offering offline volunteer opportunities in support of women and girls. For more information about how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, visit www.soroptimist.org.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE SEEKING APPLICANTS**NEWS RELEASE: Anytown Soroptimists to Offer Cash Grant to Women Seeking Financial Assistance For Educational or Training Expenses****Date****Contact Name, Phone Number and Email**

CITY, State— Women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families and seek financial assistance to continue their education or receive training can now apply for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. Applications are available at the [INSERT LOCATIONS HERE], or by contacting [INSERT CLUB AWARD CHAIR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]. The application deadline is November 15.

The Anytown club will provide a \$1,000 cash grant to its award recipient, who will then advance to the Soroptimist [INSERT REGION NAME] Region level, where recipients could receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

Recipients can use the Live Your Dream Award to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. This includes tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense.

The Live Your Dream Award provides over \$2 million in cash grants to head-of-household women in need each year. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$30 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. A study conducted by The Fels Institute of Government, a research and consulting organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed the efficacy and impact of this program. It improves the recipients' quality of life; builds their confidence; strengthens their self-determination and makes them want to, in turn, help others. Helping women in this way has the demonstrated effect of leading to stronger communities, nations and the world.

Founded in 1987, the Anytown club is part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. Anytown members join with almost 80,000 Soroptimists in about 120 countries and territories to contribute time and financial support to community-based projects benefiting women and girls. Soroptimist, a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on charitable donations to support its programs, also powers LiveYourDream.org—an online community offering offline volunteer opportunities in support of women and girls. For more information about how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, visit www.soroptimist.org.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE HONORING AWARD RECIPIENTS

NEWS RELEASE: Anytown Soroptimists honor Live Your Dream Award recipient

Present local woman with \$1,000 cash grant for educational expenses

Date

Contact: Insert Name, Phone Number and Email

CITY, State—Soroptimist International of Anytown, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment, will present a \$1,000 Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women to help a local woman improve her economic situation. The awards ceremony will be held [INSERT EVENT DETAILS HERE: at 6:30 p.m. on March 8 at the Anytown Ramada Inn. The Anytown Soroptimists hold its awards ceremony each year on International Women’s Day—the day that celebrates women’s contributions to society.]

Recipient Regina Harrison, 34, will use the cash award to complete her bachelor’s degree at Anytown College, where she is majoring in social work. Once she completes her studies, Harrison, a domestic abuse survivor, plans to counsel other women who have also left abusive situations.

“I had run out of money and wasn’t going to be able to complete my degree,” Harrison said. “The Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award came through just in time. I’m looking forward to finishing my degree so I can go on to help other women as I’ve been helped.”

The Live Your Dream Award provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. The award can be used for tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense.

The Anytown Soroptimists chose Harrison because of her optimistic attitude, her 3.8 grade-point-average in college and the excellent recommendations she received. Harrison has been raising three children on the money she earns working as a waitress.

Harrison will now advance to the Soroptimist [INSERT REGION NAME] level, where recipients can receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Date

Klara Fries, Editor
Anytown Press
453 Maple Avenue
Anytown, Anystate 15235

Dear Ms. Fries:

You won't have to look further than Anytown to find an inspirational woman who has endured difficult circumstances, but carries on with courage and determination. She is a hero to the many local organizations, such as the Laurel House Women's Center, for which she volunteers. She is a hero to Anytown College, where she attends classes and participates in several campus outreach programs. And most important, she is a hero to her three children, who gave their mother reason to leave an abusive relationship and seek a better life.

I would like to share with you and your readers the story of Regina Harrison. Regina, 34, has inspired us with her profound story of struggle and triumph. For that, we recently granted her a Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Award for Women. Regina will use the \$1,000 Live Your Dream Award to finish her bachelor's degree in social work and find a job that will secure her economic independence.

The Live Your Dream Award is Soroptimist International of the Americas' major program. Soroptimist International of Anytown is one of nearly 1,300 clubs that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. The award provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. The award can be used for tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense.

The Live Your Dream Award provides over \$2 million in cash grants to head-of-household women in need each year. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$30 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. A study conducted by The Fels Institute of Government, a research and consulting organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed the efficacy and impact of this program. It improves the recipients' quality of life; builds their confidence; strengthens their self-determination and makes them want to, in turn, help others. Helping women in this way has the demonstrated effect of leading to stronger communities, nations and the world.

Regina was chosen as the award recipient from among 50 area applicants. She will now advance to the Soroptimist Any Region award level, where recipients can receive up to an additional \$5,000. Should she receive that award, Regina would then be eligible for an additional \$10,000.

Regina Harrison joins a long list of women who have reclaimed their dreams since 1972 with the help of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. I believe your readers would be as inspired by her story as we were. I'll follow up with you shortly to determine your interest in this story. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
[INSERT CLUB CONTACT]

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARD SPEECH INSTRUCTIONS

The Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women speech provides a way for clubs to create awareness about the program and the Soroptimist organization. It was designed as a template and can easily be customized. The speech can be given whenever a club member is invited to speak—be it a community college, a meeting of another civic organization, a chamber of commerce meeting, etc. Here are some tips for effective public speaking. Contact the communications department at SIA headquarters with any questions about this speech or other public awareness activities.

10 TIPS FOR GIVING A GREAT SPEECH

1) Practice makes perfect.

The more you practice, the easier it will be to give your speech. It's fine to use notes or index cards—but the less you have to rely on them, the better your speech will flow.

2) Make eye contact.

Be sure to look around the room while you deliver your speech. Take care to connect with individual people in your audience.

3) Mistakes happen.

If you make one, just keep going. Everyone will be interested in the substance of your speech. They won't remember a few mistakes.

4) Speak slowly, clearly and loudly.

You want everyone to hear what you have to say. Even if there's a microphone, some people may have difficulty hearing.

5) Smile.

You have been invited to share about the wonderful contributions that Soroptimist makes to your community and the world. Display your feelings through positive body language, and remember to stand up straight.

6) Take a break.

If you find yourself “hemming and hawing” because you've lost your train of thought, just pause for a second or two. This will help you to get your bearings and it might also provide a dramatic effect.

7) Mix it up.

To avoid a monotonous delivery, try to vary your intonation.

8) Breathe.

Taking a deep breath before you begin speaking will have a calming effect. Also remember to take deep, regular breaths while delivering your speech.

9) Hang on.

Lightly gripping the podium or lectern will give you a feeling of stability and help to ease your jitters.

10) Enjoy yourself.

Although public speaking can be stressful, remember you are speaking to a friendly audience. Enjoy communicating a positive message about Soroptimist and the opportunity to flex your public speaking skills.

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARDS SPEECH

Thank you for inviting me to be with you today (tonight). My name is _____ and I am a member of Soroptimist International of _____. Today (tonight), I want to tell you the story of a remarkable young woman named Kathy.

Kathy was born and raised in the USA's Midwest. She was a nice girl and excellent student who dreamed of one day working in the medical profession. When she was 16, she met a man more than 10 years her senior. Kathy, a self-described "ugly duckling" was extremely flattered by Joe's attention. Soon she found herself pregnant, and against her parents' wishes, dropped out of high school to marry Joe. Kathy's childhood ended that year, and her dreams for the future were put on hold indefinitely.

Almost from the beginning, there were problems. Joe, who worked as a roofer, rarely finished a job. The family would move so he could find work, but he would inevitably lose his job. Meanwhile, Kathy struggled to feed and clothe their growing family, living mostly on public assistance.

Joe began drinking heavily and acting erratically. He would tell Kathy that he was going out to get gas, and then not come home all night. He became abusive. He wanted to know where Kathy was at all times, and wouldn't let her work—despite the family's need for additional income. He was controlling and full of rage—a far cry from the sweet-talking man who had promised to love and support her.

Kathy stayed with her husband for more than a decade. She felt sorry for him and thought it was her duty to take care of him, just as her mother had taken care of her father. Kathy also believed it was best for her kids to be with their dad—regardless of how flawed he might be. Most of all, Kathy was terrified of trying to make it on her own. She was a mother to five children, without even a high school education or any realistic way to provide for her family.

One night, Kathy reached her breaking point. The kids were in the living room working on a school project, laughing and having fun. Kathy's husband came in, drunk, and asked her to drive him to a bar. When she refused, he stormed from the house and proceeded to wreck their car.

That day, Kathy, who was 28 at the time, vowed that by the time she was 30, she would be living in different circumstances. A couple of weeks later, when her kids came home from school, Kathy told Joe they were leaving. She stuffed their belongings into bags, while her husband begged her to stay. Looking at her children, Kathy realized that she'd been doing them more harm than good by staying with Joe. Kathy and all five children moved into her sister's two-bedroom house and Kathy got a job at a pizza parlor making minimum wage—certainly not enough to make her dream of getting off public assistance a possibility.

Some time later, Kathy was at a dental appointment. She was nervous after having not been to the dentist for many years, but the hygienist was nice and calmed her fears. Sitting in that chair, Kathy remembered her childhood ambition to enter into the medical profession, and thought to herself, "Maybe it's not too late."

Kathy spent the next several months researching the field of dental hygiene. She applied for government loans and grants, but they would only be enough to cover tuition. If she attended school full time, she wouldn't be able to work to supplement the public assistance. Uniforms, car repairs and upkeep, books, plus her family's regular expenses would stretch them to the breaking point. In addition, Kathy would have a two-hour commute—each way—to and from dental school.

But Kathy's dream would not be denied. She started school and worked as many hours as she could. One day, during her first year of school, one of Kathy's professors pointed out a notice with information about the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. Kathy read the requirements and thought to herself, "That's me!" She filled out the application, beginning her personal essay with "The last 12 years of my life have been filled with many trials. ..."

Kathy's compelling story resulted in her receiving a cash award from the local Soroptimist club and later a \$5,000 award from the region level of our organization. Several months later she received a call from Soroptimist's president, who asked if she was sitting down. She told Kathy that she had been chosen to receive the \$10,000 finalist Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. "I was completely stunned," recalled Kathy. "I turned to my kids and told them the amazing news. Did we ever have a party that night ... screaming and jumping up and down!"

In a letter that Kathy wrote to us, she said: "This award helped me so much, not only financially, but emotionally. It helped me to believe that I really could make it. I don't know how we would have made it without Soroptimist's help. At last, my life, and the lives of my children had hope and direction."

Kathy went on to realize her dream of a career as a dental hygienist where she said she earned more working four days a week than she did in a whole month on public assistance. She met her current husband on one of her many trips to the hardware store. She and her husband, who live with their blended family in a country home on eight acres of land, later bought a hardware store. Kathy says that her story, including how she received the Live Your Dream Award, convinced the bank to finance the loan for the store.

"I've always heard that hard times build character," said Kathy. "If that's true, I must be quite a character by now," states Kathy. "But I know that I'm a better person for it. I'm stronger and I've learned a lot, like how to believe in myself. I have grown so much. I have a deeper sense of self worth and a lot more confidence in myself. I feel a great deal of inner peace."

Isn't Kathy's story amazing? When I think about all the little things that get most of us down, it's hard to imagine overcoming the obstacles that Kathy did. She's not alone, though. She joins tens of thousands of women who, since 1972, have reclaimed their dreams with the help of a Live Your Dream Award. We are so proud of this program, and of the women who have the courage to transform their lives. They have hope and an undeniable belief in their dreams. They are an inspiration to women everywhere who are desperate to change their lives. Kathy has shared her experiences with many of her patients who were looking for hope and direction. "I impress upon them the importance of reaching for their dreams," she says.

The Live Your Dream Awards are granted to women like Kathy who have already decided to change their lives but lack the financial resources to do so. Award amounts vary at different levels of our organization, with three top finalist awards of \$10,000. Each year, over 1,400 women receive over \$2 million in cash awards through this Soroptimist program. The award is not a scholarship and recipients may use the cash for any expense related to their efforts at gaining additional training or education. Kathy used hers to keep her car running while she made that long commute back and forth from the dental school. While the cash award is incredibly helpful, Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award recipients say that confidence and support they receive is equally meaningful.

As a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment, Soroptimist believes in helping women to live their dreams by providing them with the resources they need to change their lives. We also believe that when you help a woman, you also help her family, the community, and the world. Despite the enormous progress that women have made, they still suffer disproportionately from poverty, illiteracy, violence and discrimination. As women, we feel uniquely qualified to reach out to women the world over.

Maybe you know a woman who might be deserving of a Live Your Dream Award. Or maybe you work for an agency or a college whose constituents would be interested in this program. I urge you to contact us or to send these women our way.

I'd like to leave you with one last thought. Eleanor Roosevelt once said that the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. Kathy's dream was to get an education, earn a good living and provide a good role model for her five children. Soroptimist's dream is to make sure that women like Kathy get the assistance and support they need. What's your dream?