



Best for Women

A Publication of Soroptimist International of the Americas

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SOROPTIMIST

Working together to increase our collective impact

MEET THE 2013-2014 SIA PRESIDENT

Get to know Cheri Fleming of Valencia, California

SPOTLIGHT ON SOROPTIMIST CLUBS

Learn about three clubs working to empower women in their local communities.

MEET SOROPTIMIST'S 2013 WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITY AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Real Women.

Real Stories.

Since 1972, Soroptimist has ensured that women have the education and training they need to improve their lives and the lives of their families through its Women's Opportunity Awards program. This grant program provides cash to women looking to achieve career goals through job skill training or continued education, an opportunity often not previously afforded to them due to economic or social barriers, or personal circumstances. Many of the women who have received the grant have overcome enormous obstacles including poverty, sexual and domestic violence, the death of a spouse, and substance abuse. They, in turn, have improved the lives of their families and communities.

Meet three passionate, hard-working, strong women who received this year's \$10,000 federation-level award. (continued inside)



Photo credit: Don Tracy



SOROPTIMIST



Past SIA President Raquel Arreola Ruiz, Immediate Past SI President Alice Wells, SI President Ann Garvie, SIA President Cheri Fleming and SIA Executive Director and CEO Elizabeth M. Lucas (left to right) during the 2013 SIE board meeting in Cambridge, England.

Welcome to the New Club Year!

A message from the 2013-2014 SIA President

Thank all of you for your wonderful support; I am so honored and excited to serve as your 2013-2014 SIA president!

My focus this year is on our mission. How we continue to carry out our mission is what will ensure our legacy. We need to renew our commitment to improving the lives of women and girls through our programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

This means supporting and growing our cornerstone program—the Women’s Opportunity Awards.

We also need to learn from the clubs and regions that are having success in growing our membership. A great way to appeal to younger supporters is through LiveYourDream.org. Sign up and encourage everyone you know to do the same. We hope to interest corporate sponsors and develop a new pool of online donors.

Please read our new 2013-2014 Strategic Plan, which includes our revised

mission and vision statements. Take particular note of our new strategic outcome addressing mission-centered philanthropy.

I hope your club will contribute at least 10 percent of funds raised locally to support our own global programs. And when making personal philanthropic donations, please move Soroptimist to the top of your giving list.

This will be another direction setting year for SIA. Walt Disney once said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” Please join me in making dreams come true! ✨

READ MORE AT: <http://bit.ly/Cheri_message>.



Cheri Fleming

Meet 2013-2014 SIA President Cheri Fleming!

President Cheri joined Soroptimist in 1999 because as a business woman (she owns a very successful car dealership with her husband, Don), she believes it’s her duty to reach out and help other women live their dreams.

Cheri has stayed committed to Soroptimist because of the difference we make through our programs, the lifelong friendships she’s gained, the leadership experience, and the many opportunities to have fun.

Cheri is especially excited about the potential of SIA’s Live Your Dream super strategy. “Increasing our supporters beyond club membership will increase our brand recognition, attract corporate sponsors, and develop a new pool of donors to support SIA’s programs,” she said.

All women-focused issues are important to Cheri, but gender equality is at the top of her list. She believes it’s imperative that women and girls have equal access to education so that they have the opportunity to lead full and productive lives. That is why Cheri supports the growth of our Women’s Opportunity Awards program, and the launch of our new girl program.

Cheri believes our most pressing organizational issue is embracing change. “Our economies have changed, our businesses have changed, and the face of volunteering has changed,” she said. “As an organization we must truly focus our efforts and make Soroptimist our cause of choice—our cause of choice in the programs we support and our cause of choice in the philanthropic donations we make.”

Meet Cheri Fleming, your 2013-2014 president, and go to <<http://bit.ly/MeetCheri-Fleming>> to read her full interview. ✨

Transformation: A View from Spruce Street

A message from the SIA Executive Director & CEO

Are you ready to increase the organization’s collective impact on the women and girls we aim to serve?

In order to keep us focused on the end-goal, last year your board fine-tuned our vision and mission statements, and our core values.

Our new vision and mission statements are:

“Women and girls have the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential and live their dreams.”

“Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.”

Our revised values focus on gender equality, empowerment, education, and diversity and fellowship.

Lastly, the board voted to add one additional strategic outcome or goal in our strategic plan.

This additional strategic outcome joins three others:

Impact, engagement, recognition and now... philanthropy.

You will find the SIA mission and vision statements and full, translated strategic plan document at <Soroptimist.org/members/fedinfo/fed_info.html>.

Let’s make the change we want to see by:

- Increasing the number of people involved with our mission
- Participating in the Women’s Opportunity Awards program
- Designating SIA as your club’s cause of choice.

Here’s to new beginnings ... together. ✨

READ MORE AT: <Soroptimist.org/members/transformation.html>.



Elizabeth M. Lucas

Shaping the Future of Soroptimist

As part of a global organization, you joined Soroptimist to be part of something beyond your local community. That something is working together to increase our collective impact in accomplishing our mission to improve the lives of women and girls.

During the 2013-2014 club year, we are focusing on shaping our future in four ways: clarity, program, resources and a healthy backbone.


“Clarity” is focusing on understanding our vision, mission and core values, which the SIA Board has recently fine-tuned. Visit <http://bit.ly/VisionMission> to read our new vision and mission.

“Program” means growing our Women’s Opportunity Awards program and focusing—at all levels—on providing women and girls with access to education.

“Resources” is about growing our financial resources to reach more women and girls. For clubs that means contributing at least 10 percent of funds raised locally to the federation. Remember, our programs are funded entirely through contributions and not through member dues, and 81 percent of funds raised go right to our programs.

Finally, “healthy backbone” refers to strong clubs, growing supporters and a sound infrastructure. SIA is currently working on strengthening our club model by eliminating barriers to membership. We are also offering new engagement opportunities through LiveYourDream.org, which has grown to almost 25,000 supporters in just one year!

We should all be proud of our leadership for their vision and courage in moving SIA forward and ensuring a bright future for both the organization and the women and girls we serve.

To read the 2012-2013 year-end results visit <http://bit.ly/ShapingtheFuture> 

Meet 2013-2015 Soroptimist International President

Soroptimist International President Ann Garvie is a member of SI/Glasgow City in Scotland. A Soroptimist since 1979, Ann has served as club president, regional president, Soroptimist International chair of finance and SIGBI president. Read a message from SI President Ann at: <http://bit.ly/SIpresident>.



Spotlight on Soroptimist Clubs

Featured Club Projects and News

KOREA REGION

Korea Region clubs SI/Seoul, SI/Hanyang, SI/Namsan, SI/Chungdam, SI/Seocho, SI/Seoseoul, SI/Hannam and SI/Newkangnam, recently gathered to raise awareness about sexual assault. Club members distributed more than 2,000 whistles and carried signs in Seoul. The whistles, which included the Soroptimist logo, are for women and girls if they find themselves in a threatening situation. Kudos to the clubs for their dedicated work on this important issue.



Korea Region members raised awareness about sexual assault in their local community.

PHILIPPINES REGION

SI/Malabon, Philippines

SI/Malabon, Philippines, recently held its Campaign to Stop Trafficking walk. Club members organized the event, which attracted more than 200 women and girls from the community. Members walked the streets carrying signs and a banner that stated, “Soroptimist International of Malabon supports Soroptimist International of the Americas’ Stop Trafficking Project.” Kudos to the club for its work on this important issue. In other SI/Malabon news, the club recently held its ongoing “Learn and Earn—A Fish A Day Will Go A Long Way” project. Members teach women and girls in the community how to debone milkfish, which is then sold in their Soroptimist store. The livelihood skills provide knowledge and employment opportunities for the women and their families. The project has been featured on the local

radio and television. Says member Lilibeth Chua, “It can’t be denied how endearing the idea of women helping women is in the local community.”



SI/Malabon members held a Campaign to Stop Trafficking walk.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

SI/Snake River Valley, USA

SI/Snake River Valley, Idaho, member Kathleen Portello recently received the Community Star Award. Presented by the Intermountain Community Bank, the award is given in recognition of outstanding community service. Kathleen was recognized for administering the club’s Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls, which was used to furnish and equip a local domestic violence shelter. As part of the award, Kathleen received \$1,000, which she donated back to the club.



SI/Snake River Valley members delivered furniture and school supplies to a local domestic violence shelter.

Read more club projects and news at: <http://bit.ly/ClubProjects>. 

Want to see your club’s project featured? Email information and photos to Best for Women Editor Laurie Sutton at laurie@soroptimist.org.

Real Women. Extraordinary Stories.

2013 Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Award Finalists

Continued from cover

Aziza McGill is a survivor of horrific sexual abuse at the hands of her father from age 8 to 23, which resulted in the birth of four children, one of whom tragically died of a genetic disease. Aziza was deprived of any schooling and hidden from the world, enslaved to her father, who was—to the outside world—a renowned director and MTV award-winner who worked with The Fugees on the “Killing Me Softly” video. Aziza summoned the strength to break free after the state intervened when one of her children, affected by a genetic disease, became ill. Aziza now works as a chef, and supports her surviving children while putting herself through school. The Women's Opportunity Awards will help Aziza complete a liberal arts/communications degree. She hopes to start a nonprofit that will work to protect children from sexual abuse, and is in the process of publishing a memoir that chronicles her life experiences.

The other two finalists requested name changes and anonymity for safety reasons.

Hope Kagoyrie is the single mother of five and a Congolese refugee who inspires everyone she meets. She spent years in war-torn Congo before experiencing the murder of her husband and brothers. Because of her husband's political position, Hope was interrogated and now must live under an assumed name to protect herself and her family. She moved to a Ugandan refugee camp and worked as a nurse for five years. While

there she was attacked three times before being transported to the United States, where she experienced yet another attack before moving to her current location and starting a new life. Hope dreams of working in healthcare again so she may help others. The Women's Opportunity Award will fund her education, enabling her to pursue a nursing career in the U.S.



Photo credit: Don Tracy

Hanako Yamada's dream is to become a Haaki-shi, a licensed professional who provides massage, finger pressure and acupuncture to people with physical disorders. But for awhile, that dream seemed out of sight. At 34, Hanako was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disease that leads to blindness. She lived with a husband who verbally and physically abused her. Each day she felt like a slave and considered taking her own life. Instead, she found the courage to divorce her husband, take her two sons and build a better life. Hanako is enrolled at a local prefecture school for the visually impaired to prepare for the Haaki-shi licensing exam. With this Women's Opportunity Award, she will undergo surgery to cure her eye disorder so that she can finish school and provide for her family without the constraints of abuse or health issues.

To learn more about these inspiring women, visit Soroptimist.org/awards/recipients.html.

SIA Leadership 2013-2014

Cheri Fleming
PRESIDENT

Margaret “Poco” Davis
PRESIDENT-ELECT

Jacqueline Bond
SECRETARY/TREASURER

Marianela de Castillero Michiko Tanabe

Mei-Chih Fu Norma Maria do Valle

Karen Haughey Paula Voerding

Reiko Minami Susan “Sam” Buchenau

Ma. Paloma Papa **FUNDRAISING COUNCIL CHAIR**

RoseMary Reid Elizabeth M. Lucas, CAE, MBA

Louise Skinner **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CEO**

Visit Soroptimist.org/best-for-women.html for more information about this year's board of directors and governors.

SIA's 2013-2014 President-Elect

SI/North Las Vegas, Nevada, and SIA board member Margaret “Poco” Davis will serve as SIA's 2013-2014 president-elect. Congratulations Poco!



President's Challenge: 100% Giving 10% through Club Giving

Last year, 77 percent of all clubs contributed to Club Giving from each of our 28 regions. We are so thankful to the clubs and members whose contributions helped support Soroptimist programs. Will your club commit to make Soroptimist its cause of choice this year? If each of our 1,300 plus Soroptimist clubs contributes at least 10 percent of their locally raised funds, we would be able to raise \$1 million to support federation programs. Our programs are the heart of our mission and we need your help to continue and expand our important work. Can we count on your club's support this year? Together we can empower more women and girls to live full and productive lives. The women we

serve depend on you, and our life-changing programs cannot continue without full support of the clubs. When your club makes SIA its cause of choice, you help us extend our reach so that we can serve even more women and girls in ALL of our 19 countries and territories. Women like Aziza, one of this year's finalist Women's Opportunity Awards recipients. Visit <http://bit.ly/1bS0e52> to watch a video or <http://bit.ly/GVomWr> to read an article about this incredible woman. Then discuss with your club its commitment to Club Giving, which makes the Women's Opportunity Awards and our other federation programs possible.



Soroptimist SOURCE

Keeping you up-to-date on important news and information from SIA headquarters.

Program

The Importance of Education

Almost 70 years have passed since the UN declared education to be a fundamental human right, yet it continues to be denied to millions of women and girls around the world. Uneducated women are left without options including opportunities for equitable employment, political participation, financial independence, and informed family planning. As a result, they are far more likely to be trapped in lives defined by poverty and exploitation, and are significantly less likely to raise educated, healthy children. Through the Women's Opportunity Awards, clubs can improve these conditions by increasing access to education—while building the collective impact of SIA, and supporting SIA and SI initiatives. Clubs can also access funding opportunities to support club-level education projects. Visit <http://bit.ly/importanceofeducation> to learn more about the importance of education to women and girls.

Membership

Coming Together

Coming together is an important part of being a Soroptimist because our mission calls on members to work together in

order to improve the lives of women and girls. But often, club meetings can grow stale and result in low attendance and unenthusiastic members. SI/Corona, California, devised a way to re-energize their meetings by instituting its Meeting Mix-Up idea. While the club used to meet at lunchtime four times per month, that was changed to twice a month. The third meeting is hosted at a member's home in the evening. And the fourth is handled via conference call. This change has had an extremely positive effect on the club and its members, and earned the club a Soroptimist Celebrating Success! award to boot. Read the full article at <http://bit.ly/ComingTogether>.

Public Awareness

Live Your Dream Art Contest

Thank you for helping to promote the art contest this year. We received some incredible artwork from children all over the world. Don't forget to LIKE the Live Your Dream Facebook page so you can help pick the winners in February!

SIA's New Inspirational Video

Have you seen SIA's new video? It uses words and graphics to portray our mission in a fun, inspirational and visual way. Post

it on your club websites, share it on Facebook and help make SIA's new video viral!



SoroptimistSummary.org

The Soroptimist Summary newsletter is now in a blog format! It can be translated into all SIA languages via the Google Translate link. The blog features enable members to comment on stories, watch videos directly on the page and view archived issues. Visit and subscribe to this important resource and member benefit at Soroptimist-Summary.org.

Fundraising

What is Your Legacy?

Mary Lou Washatka joined Soroptimist in 1981 and was an active member of Soroptimist International of Mission Bay, California. Unique, generous, and always sensitive to the needs and emotions of others, Mary Lou worked hard throughout her life to improve the lives of women and girls. And because she wanted to ensure the future of Soroptimist programs, she joined the Laurel Legacy.

You can join Mary Lou and create a legacy to be proud of. Arranging a future gift to SIA is an excellent way to guarantee that Soroptimist programs will continue to be there to help women and girls around the world for years to come. Visit Soroptimist.plannedgiving.org today to learn more!



Visit Soroptimist.org/members/meetings/meetings.html to make hotel reservations, plan your trip, and learn more about Vancouver!



Live Your Dream Updates & Info

LiveYourDream.org is our online community, empowering offline action, helping women and girls to live their dreams. After just one year, we've gained nearly 25,000 supporters who have taken more than 6,500 actions to help women. Potential corporate sponsors want to see this community grow.

- Have you signed up yet?
- Have you invited everyone you know to do the same?
- Are you following Live Your Dream on Facebook and Twitter?

LiveYourDream.org is also a place where you can aspire to live your own dream. Connect with others interested in helping women and girls, participate in fun contests, celebrate the unique power of women, and become inspired and energized! You are part of this initiative as we increase our impact and expand our reach! Find out more about what you can do here http://bit.ly/LYD_MemberGuidebook.





SOROPTIMIST

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www.liveyourdream.org

Check out these featured sales items and more at <Soroptimist.org/members/store/storehome.html> and order today!



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DOES SIA HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

Members:

Email is the primary way we communicate with our members. Make sure you are receiving important emails and alerts by reviewing your profile at <Soroptimist.org/

members/membership/updateprofile.html> and making any necessary changes.

Clubs:

The best way for headquarters and potential members to contact clubs is through the Soroptimist club email accounts. A designated member should be checking the club email account regularly (at least once per week) to keep up to date with the latest SIA news.

For help with setting-up or accessing the account, see the members area on SIA's website <Soroptimist.org/members/membership/clubadmin.html> or contact <siahq@soroptimist.org>.



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