



SOROPTIMIST

Best for Women

ACTION LINE

Governor's Message

Women and girls in our local and worldwide communities face unimaginable challenges each and every day. Domestic violence, financial uncertainty, inadequate education, single motherhood, substandard housing and poor nutrition are a few of the challenges they face. What has happened, or more poignantly, what has not happened that has determined the outcome for these women?

In every community providing education for girls and women can improve their lives. "Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities but also because the educational achievement of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. Girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families. Educated women can recognize the importance of health care and know how to seek it for themselves and their children. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and gain confidence to them." (www.unfpa.org)

"Education is an essential element of the empowerment of girls and women. The empowerment of women is crucial to change some of the societal attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against girls and women. The empowerment of women is therefore linked to the empowerment of girls and the full enjoyment of their rights." (www.unesco.org/education)

The 76th Western Canada Region Conference focus is empowerment. The keynote speaker will provide information and the tools for Soroptimist to use in future projects to enhance the skills and knowledge of girls and women. Through these projects more girls and women will become empowered and, hopefully, the ripple effect will spread deeper into each community. Also, there are many opportunities to enhance your own skills and knowledge, and to share your experiences with other Soroptimist, as you learn to become a stronger leader in your community.

This will truly be an empowering weekend! Join in the learning and the fun and you too will become more confident and empowered.

Wishing you continued success in your learning,
Governor Angela

"The best that an individual can do is to concentrate on what she can do, in the course of a burning effort to do it better." Elizabeth Bowen

Soroptimist Resources!

Soroptimist International
www.soroptimistinternational.org

Soroptimist International of the Americas
www.soroptimist.org

Western Canada Region
www.wcsoroptimist.org

Soroptimist Foundation of Canada
www.soroptimistfoundation.ca

Conference 2009

Come up to Sun Peaks Resort, Kamloops and join in the fun of learning through interactive sessions, enhance the strengths of your club and become empowered!

SEE YOU THERE!
Governor Angela

Thursday Evening April 30

to

Sunday Morning May 2, 2009

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...improving the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world."

Membership

Great news for Western Canada! Membership is on the rise! In the past year we have gained 63 new Soroptimists! This year, we are looking forward to welcoming some new clubs. In BC, Victoria Westshore and Squamish are rallying the troops to raise awareness about Soroptimists and we're planning for these areas to charter in 2009! If you know of someone in these cities who may be interested, they can join in the fun and energized upswing of chartering a new club.

How can the internet help with increasing your membership? Facebook is very popular today, and the website is most popular with the age group of 35-44. Signing up for a Facebook account only takes a minute. Benefits include: showcasing your Soroptimist membership to your friends and family; access to Soroptimists all around the world for ideas on membership drives and successful group projects; sharing of information on Soroptimists and staying up to date on what's happening. Also, if you're interested in advertising on Facebook, you can choose the demographic and location of your target member and have a pay-per-click link to your website (for as low as 25cents per click).

Did you know that you can view Soroptimist videos online at the YouTube website? SIA HQ has promotional videos that you can watch and share with your friends and prospective members. You can also watch videos from around the globe of Soroptimists and their events and even put up your own videos of your club's events. This is great for publicity *and* for inspiration!

SIA YouTube home page: <http://www.youtube.com/user/SIAHQ>

We're looking forward to putting on a presentation at the Leadership Retreat at UBC in August to show how using the internet can be fun, easy, and beneficial to the clubs!

For information on membership or to share ideas on how your club is attracting new members, please contact Patricia Dye, Region Membership Chair at patricia.dye@telus.net

Fundraising

Founders Pennies

The tradition of giving pennies began in 1943 when they contributed to the Madame Noel Funds. In 1946 the fund was renamed the Founders Fund, and it provided international fellowships, scholarships and other awards to improve the status of women.

Founders pennies are now used to fund the Women's Opportunity Awards and other SIA programs that improved the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world and represent approximately 10 percent of the \$1.5 million contributed income needed for programs.

Congratulations WCR for reaching 100% participation. We reached our goal!

Laurel Society

The Laurel Society is the permanent recognition program of Soroptimist International of the Americas that honours dedication to the organization and its mission. With a minimum donation of \$1,000.00, you can join a prestigious list of Laurel Society members committed to helping women and girls live their dreams.

How Laurel Society contributions used?

Laurel Society contributions are used to fund Soroptimist programs and awards: Women's Opportunity Awards, Club Grants for Women and Girls, Soroptimists STOP Trafficking, Violet Richardson Awards, Making A Difference for Women Awards and the Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence.

Laurel Society donors are acknowledged with a special commemorative pin representing their membership status.

For more information about Fundraising or to share ideas that have worked for your club, please contact Carla Busanardo at carlab@netscape.ca

Programme—International Focus



In early February, the Soroptimist International Quadrennial project, Project Sierra: a Family and a Future, received 8 Soroptimist visitors from around the world. During the Study Tour, we drove for over 17 hours and 700 km through the red dust and hot air of Sierra Leone, witnessing the difference we are making in the lives of women and girls.

The teenage mothers thanked us in song for giving them a chance at a future. It was very emotional; they looked so young. We saw them in their programs, learning skills and we visited some of the girls that are now independent and practicing those skills to earn a living. The program is working and the beneficiaries are so grateful for your support!



Public Awareness

It is with regret that I inform you that Linda Cunliffe, Public Awareness Chair, has stepped down from her position due to personal reasons. Linda worked diligently to formulate a strong and achievable work plan for the Region Public Awareness Committee. I would like to thank Linda for her work envisioning how raising public awareness and working together with the other Region Chairs will build a stronger Region Team.

The goals set out in the work plan reflected the goals of the Region Strategic Plan.

The objectives are:

- 80% of clubs will place two or more press releases, ads or public service announcements each year
 - 75% of clubs will give one or more presentations to outside groups to promote the Soroptimist mission
 - 100% of clubs will be familiar with SIA produced public awareness materials that build the Soroptimist brand
- 100% of clubs will utilize the “Live Your Dreams” campaign information and products, i.e. DVD, to promote Soroptimist in their community

How is your Club doing? Take a moment to review the objectives and check out the resources in the members section, Public Awareness, at www.soroptimist.org

Greetings from our Newest Club!

Hello to all my fellow Soroptimist club members everywhere. It is an honour to be a member of such an incredible organization. My name is Eileen English and I am the President of the newly chartered Soroptimist International Ridge Meadows club located in beautiful British Columbia, 45 km east of Vancouver. My fellow club members and I chartered on January 12, 2009. We were sponsored by Soroptimist International TriCities to which we owe a really big thank you for all their support and financial assistance for the past year. Our chartering event was officiated by Angela Bunting, Western Canada Region President, and member of Soroptimist International TriCities with the assistance of Bea Kelly, Soroptimist International TriCities, Dana Martin, Western Canada Region Secretary and Soroptimist International Tri Cities President, Chari Grant. The photograph shows our members being flanked by Angela and Bea. These two remarkable women have been holding our hands and leading us on our incredible journey since January 2008. We held our first official Business Meeting on February 10th, 2009.

I am privileged to be working alongside such an amazing group of diverse women from all walks of life, experiences and ages. Strong friendships are being formed between us already. Other than myself, our Board is made up of Trudy Arndt-Harrison VP, Deb Quon Treasurer, Margaret Hennessey Director and Membership Chair, and last but certainly not least our awesome Secretary Shirley Karasz. On behalf of all our members, we would like to thank all the Soroptimist International clubs not just in Canada but in other parts of the world for their good wishes and donations. I've received so many emails, letters, cards and telephone messages, it is truly astonishing.

The main focus during our first year will be to assist homeless and/or abused women and young girls in the Ridge-Meadows area. We already have connections with Cythera Transition House for battered women, the Salvation Army Caring Place for homeless women and have made overtures to a representative of the Katzie First Nations. We are also working towards becoming a multi-cultural club in an effort to break-down barriers between cultures. We are planning to hold our first fundraiser in May. We have now started our incredible journey together and watch out for us to continue onwards and upwards, learning and teaching as we go and having fun in the process.

From our members to all Soroptimist International members everywhere a big HELLO and a huge THANK YOU for this wonderful feeling of belonging to something amazing.
Eileen English, President
Soroptimist International Ridge Meadows



Coming Events

S.I. Surrey invites you and your teens to their Live Your Dream: 9 Life Lessons for 2009 - 10:00 to 4:00 pm April 25, 2009 at Kwantlen College, Surrey Campus. Please check our website sisurrey.org for more information on our keynote speaker, conference presenters, workshops, schedule, and location.

Successful Events

SI Tri-Cities held their Annual Awards Luncheon at the Westwood Plateau Golf Club in February. The event which included the presentation of the Making a Difference for Women Award, Women's Opportunity Award and Violet Richardson Award, a presentation from TCO² and a silent auction, raised over \$12,000. For more information on this event please contact President Chari Grant at davidg1@uniserve.com

SI Calgary held their 2nd Annual Live Your Dreams Fundraiser at the Delta Bow Valley Hotel on Monday, March 2. The evening was a dinner and silent auction and included a guest speaker. After dinner Governor Angela and President Sherri Rau presented cheques to the Violet Richardson and Women's Opportunity Award winners. Their Making a Difference for Women Award winner received a beautiful plaque. The event raised \$12,671 which goes to their Soroptimist awards program. For more information about this event, please contact President Sherri Rau at sherri.rau@shaw.ca



SI Calgary's award winners with President Sherri Rau & Governor Angela Bunting

Club Projects

Twelve members of SI Tri-Cities spent a sunny and productive day in April volunteering with Habitat for Humanity at their Burnaby build site



...improving the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world."

S.I. of North & West Vancouver held their annual awards dinner on March 5th and, as always it proved to be another heart-warming evening, especially when it was announced that the Club had just received Direct Access grants totalling \$18,000 from the Province of British Columbia for three local organisations. Grants of \$7,000 each were awarded to The North Shore Safe House for Youth and The North Shore Women's Centre and the Avalon Recovery Society received \$4,000.

There were 15 nominations for the **Violet Richardson Award** and three were chosen to receive this year's awards. First place went to Tessa Bendyshe-Walton for her work with the Free the Children organisation and her volunteer activities with the Kiwanis Care Centre. In 2nd place was Tara Lee and her community organisation was the Inglewood Care Centre. Tara was unable to attend in person and the award was accepted on her behalf by Ariana Saraifi. Third place went to Victoria Lee for her volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity.

The two recipients of the **Women's Opportunity Award** were Antonietta Gesualdi and Heather MacDonald. These two single mothers received grants to help them further their education and improve their ability to make a better life for themselves and their children.

The Making a Difference for Women Award went to Marguerite Hardin of the BC Schizophrenic Society who has been helping families of the mentally ill for almost 25 years. Marguerite received a donation of \$1,000 from the Club for her organisation.

For more information about SI of North & West Vancouver's awards please contact Doris Cowan at wdcowan@shaw.ca



The winners of the Violet Richardson Award. On the left is Tessa Bendyshe-Walton, in the middle is Ariana Saraifi (representing Tara Lee) and on the right is Victoria Lee.



STOP Trafficking Initiative!



The global economic crisis threatens to swell the ranks of victims of human trafficking, the 21st century's hidden version of slavery, according to the United Nations anti-crime chief.

"My hunch is that it will make more people vulnerable," said Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime. "The impact of the economic crisis will push more business underground to avoid taxes and unionised labour."

Each year, the UN estimates approximately 1-4 million people are trafficked, making it the third largest illegal market after drugs and arms. The RMCP believes that some 800 of these victims end up on Canadian streets annually. I believe that the RCMP have underestimated the problem.

Victor Malarek, a W-five senior investigative reporter published his new book: "The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men who buy it" this month. He says: "Without man, there would be no demand. There would be no supply. It would not be profitable for pimps and criminals to stay in this business if never-ending platoons of men weren't prowling the side streets in search of purchased sex. Male sex buyers who are willing to close their eyes and shell out \$50 or \$100 for a few minutes of physical bliss while deepening the misery of countless women and children. The stark reality is that little will be done to stop this insanity until men start taking responsibility for their actions, until men realize that they are the problem, and that this global sex-slave calamity exists solely because of their insatiable demand and duplicitous behaviour. Yet invisible in most discussions, reports, and research are the men who use and abuse these women. They are the ultimate consumers of prostituted women. They are the crucial missing link."

At the Western Canada Region conference at the end of this month, we will launch a project that will raise money for beds for trafficked women in Canada, raise awareness about the demand side of trafficking and will endorse a proposal to turn the law enforcement attention towards the users of trafficked victims. Together we can make a difference.

Janneke Lewis

Western Canada Region Stop Trafficking chair. You can reach Janneke at jannekel@telus.net

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Western Canada Region Kudos

The Central Alberta club heard some really great news a few days ago, our Violet Richardson award winner for 2008, Meagan McLavish, an amazing young high school student, just received the Loran Award and the selection process is one of the most rigorous in Canada. She has rec'd a \$75,000.00 scholarship and is one of 30 Cdn students to receive it out of 3200 applicants. The awards are granted on the basis of character, service and leadership potential. Guess we picked a good one!!!!"

Come & Join the Region Team!

Western Canada Region seeks Public Awareness Chair

An exciting opportunity awaits you! Working with the Region Team you will use your creative ideas to raise the awareness of SIA's public awareness materials that build the Soroptimist brand. You will chat directly with the Public Awareness Chair for each Club to discover how they are promoting Soroptimist within their communities. Preparing informative articles for the Action Line and participating in the annual Leadership Retreat and Conferences will round out your role.

If you have an interest in completing the balance of the term, until June 2010, please contact Governor Angela angela.bunting@shaw.ca.



What's Cookin' in Leadership:
Ingredients for Personal and Professional Success

Soroptimist Women's Leadership Institute
Chicago, Illinois • Westin Michigan Ave.
July 3-4, 2009

Join us for an exciting NEW two-day event unlike any other!

- Enhance leadership skills
- Network with other leaders
- Listen to dynamic speakers
- Participate in interactive break-out sessions
- Celebrate the United States' birth!

Visit the Meetings/Conventions area at Soroptimist.org/Members to register online, make hotel reservations, view program details and get the latest information.

Attendance is limited to the first 400, so register today!

Did you know...we're growing!

Once again this has been another strong year for our Region and here's the stats to prove it:

- From August 2008 to March 2009 our Region has increased by 67 members
- That's an increase of 16%
- We have one new club with 19 new members!
- Since last August, all but one club have either maintained or increased their numbers
- Congratulations to SI Saskatoon who have seen the biggest increase in membership across our Region - 78%
- Congratulations to SI Courtenay for the largest number of Life Members - 9!
- In August 2008 we had 4 clubs who had low membership and were at risk of losing their Charter. As of March we only have **none** in the Region

Thanks for all that you do to help your Club, your Region and Soroptimist in general grow!

Now go and practice your elevator pitch!