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FACT SHEET: Soroptimist's Domestic Violence Initiatives

Organizational Profile

Founded in 1921, Soroptimist International of the Americas is an international volunteer service organization for business and professional women. Almost 100,000 Soroptimists in more than 120 countries and territories contribute time and financial support to community-based projects benefiting women and girls.

Organizational Mission

Soroptimist's mission is to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world.

Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence

In 1994, Soroptimist International of the Americas formally adopted the prevention of domestic violence as a major focus. Currently, Soroptimists participate in an annual event designed to focus attention on domestic violence as a workplace concern. Each year, on November 25 (the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women), Soroptimist club members distribute thousands of purple cards (the color associated with domestic violence) containing domestic abuse prevention information and hotline numbers. This campaign reaches out to women in the workplace, since most domestic abuse victims are employed outside the home, and violence at home often spills over into the workplace. In 2002, the campaign received an International Advocacy/Policy Achievement award from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Associations Make a Better World program.

Past Initiatives to Prevent and End Domestic Violence

Since 1994, Soroptimist has conducted several comprehensive projects aimed at preventing and ending domestic violence. These include:

- ***Every Home a Safe Home*** — Soroptimist joined with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) to produce and distribute *Every Home a Safe Home*, an informational resource for women trying to leave abusive situations and those who provide services to these women. Soroptimist clubs and NCADV distributed more than 100,000 copies of the award-winning *Every Home a Safe Home* booklets in six languages and Braille to women and social service agencies around the world. Soroptimist contributed more than \$100,000 in funding for this joint project. For its efforts, Soroptimist received the NCADV Allies Against Violence Award, which honors corporate or philanthropic groups that make a difference in the lives of domestic violence survivors.
- **Domestic Violence Prevention Grants** — In 2001, Soroptimist awarded \$30,000 in grants to agencies in Paraguay, the Philippines and Ecuador that provide information and assistance to women who are victims of domestic violence. Soroptimist targeted specific areas to help close the gap between countries and geographic areas that have victim services and those that don't. The funds have

been used to stabilize the organizations' ongoing projects while helping them carry out new initiatives to assist women.

- **Women's Opportunity Awards** — Soroptimist also addresses the economic component that often forces women to stay in abusive situations—and the lack of resources available to these women once they do leave—through its Women's Opportunity Awards program. This program provides cash grants to women who must obtain additional job training or education to realize their goal of economic independence. Each year, more than \$800,000 in Women's Opportunity Awards help women enter or return to the work force in order to support themselves and their families. Although the program is open to all head-of-household women demonstrating financial need, many Women's Opportunity Award recipients are domestic violence survivors. In 2001, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) named Soroptimist to its Honor Roll for this program, and in 2003, the program received ASAE's Award of Excellence in the Associations Advance America award program.

- **Soroptimist Club Grants** — Many Soroptimist clubs provide direct assistance to local domestic violence shelters in their communities. Through the Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls program, clubs can receive grants (in amounts ranging from \$1,000–\$10,000) for initiating or continuing innovative local projects that benefit women and girls. Many of these grants are awarded for local domestic violence projects. Soroptimist funds about \$175,000 annually in Club Grants. In 2001, the program earned an ASAE Award of Excellence.

- **September 11th Disaster Relief** — After ensuring that victims of the September 11th terrorist attacks and their families were provided for, Soroptimist International of the Americas donated \$40,000 in disaster relief funds to four lower Manhattan agencies that work to prevent and eliminate domestic violence. The New York Association for New Americans (NYANA) Center for Women and Families, the New York Asian Women's Center (NYAWC), Sanctuary for Families, and Barrier Free Living each received a \$10,000 grant to help restore services that were negatively affected as a result of the attacks in New York City. In 2002, additional donations of more than \$44,000 were made to NYANA and NYAWC to ensure continued and effective service to all clients, bringing the total contributions to about \$84,000.

- **Club Projects** — Many Soroptimist clubs throughout the world work on local projects that seek to prevent or end domestic violence. Projects include building and refurbishing domestic violence shelters, mentoring shelter residents and providing skills training classes to survivors.