



Governor's Message

Happy New Year! I hope you're all ready for 2012! I'm looking forward to our Region Board meeting at the end of January, club visits and of course our Region Conference in [Courtenay](#) in May. Planning for our Conference is going to be the focus of my attention in the coming months; I'm looking forward to working with the enthusiastic and committed Conference Committee from SI Courtenay. The theme for the Conference is 'Celebrate' and that's what we'll be doing – celebrating our successes, our projects, our clubs, and ourselves. You won't want to miss the party! More information will be coming out over the next few months as we finalize speakers and events.

The Fall of 2011 was busy – starting with the Region Leadership Retreat in September. We were happy to have approximately 60 members attend at our new location in Langley. I don't think anyone who attended will forget the experience – especially our [flash mob](#). We are still featured in the Public Awareness section of the SIA website. The forum on Human Trafficking was informative and a call to action for many who were there to hear the speakers.

At that event, I extended the "Just Ask One" challenge for the 2011-2012 club year. I'm asking each and every member of our Region to invite just one person to a club event or meeting by the end of April. And once they've attended, extend an invitation to join our wonderful organization. That's it. We currently have over 400 members in our Region, so if everyone did this and if even only half of those who were asked joined us, we'd be inducting 200 new

members by May 2012. Again, there will be a special prize presented at Conference to any club that inducts (and sends in dues) for ten new members between September 1/11 and April 15/12. Congratulations to SI of the Tri Cities who accepted the challenge last club year and were recognized at the Leadership Retreat. I'm sure you want a repeat win! I know that several clubs are hard at work on membership and I look forward to presenting several prizes in Courtenay – luckily I can drive to Conference this year so won't have to worry about excess luggage fees!

I can't believe that I'm already in the last six months of my term as Governor. The two years has gone by so quickly and there have been so many incredible experiences. Governor Elect Dana and I will be working together over the next months to ensure that the transition to her term as Governor is smooth and as stress-free as it can be. Thinking of transition – the call for nominations for the 2012 – 2014 Region Board has gone out. I hope that many of you are considering offering your time and talent to the Region Team. If you have any questions or want to talk about the expectations or the rewards of any of the positions, please talk to any one of the current Region team. We're all happy to share our experiences and our thoughts.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you over the upcoming months at club visits, at your events and most of all at Conference in Courtenay!

Governor Colleen Schmidt

Soroptimist Resources

Soroptimist International
www.soroptimistinternational.org

Soroptimist International of the Americas
www.soroptimist.org

Soroptimist Resources

Western Canada Region
www.wcsoroptimist.org

Soroptimist Foundation of Canada
www.soroptimistfoundation.ca

From the Action Line Editor

By Colleen Penrowley

Happy New Year! If you're wondering what happened to the fall edition of Action Line, there wasn't one. Your editor (that would be me) got bogged down with work and didn't get it out. As a result this edition has much of the material that would have been in that one, plus a few more recent club reports.

To those clubs who have consistently sent me material, thank you! We have 19 clubs in our Region but reports from only nine, and one of those I wrote myself. I'm confident the rest of the clubs are busy doing exciting projects, and I want to hear about them. If you send me a notice of an event or project I will post it immediately on the Region Facebook page and include it in the next Action Line if it's still relevant. Please send photos, especially photos of club members and/or project participants in action.

In this issue Jayne Carre of SI Edmonton [reports](#) on the SI [Convention](#) in Montreal. What a great experience! If you haven't already done so, check out some of the [photos](#) posted on the Convention website. Those who were there heard some wonderful speakers, including Dr.

Samantha Nutt. We have [reports](#) about Dr. Nutt's talk from Amanda Reaume of SI Vancouver and Alison Ferguson of SI Tri Cities. Alison's report is a small part of a [blog posting](#) she wrote on the SI Tri Cities website after the first day of Convention. It's an enjoyable read.

There's a lot going on in the Soroptimist world. Next week (January 9-15) is the [Northwest Conference Against Trafficking](#) in Portland Oregon. Look for a report in the next Action Line.

Have you checked the [Soroptimist International](#) website lately? Have a look at the new video, [Educate to Lead - a Fairy Tale Story](#).

Every Friday you can read a posting by a different Soroptimist from around the world on [SoroptiVoiceBlog!](#)

Coming up in July, SIA's [42nd Biennial Convention](#) in Honolulu. Will you be there?

And of course, our own [WCR Conference](#) in beautiful Courtenay BC, May 3-6. See you there!

Send me your ideas and news: cpen@telus.net.

Region Update – Public Awareness

By Joanne Ward, Region Public Awareness Chair

I encourage all the Clubs in our Region to use the SI Club [templates](#) to set up their club websites. In today's time, that is where everyone finds out what is available for organizations such as ours. If we are to have exposure, it is imperative that we have a web presence. This helps us develop a relationship with women who are seeking to volunteer and make a difference. It builds on-line presence and builds recognition of our name Soroptimist. Go to www.soroptimist.org to find the templates.

Also, as members, we must establish Social Media connections. One of my personal favorites

is [Facebook](#) as it helps us to establish relationships with each other and to nurture existing relationships. Have your camera everywhere and take photos and videos of club members in action. You can upload your video to [YouTube](#) - this is the fastest growing segment of Social Media and websites today.

Why not ask members to do a short testimonial of why they are a Soroptimist and what they like best about it? Also, what projects is your club working on now and what favorite things have members achieved in the past?

Region Update – Membership

By Heather Rollins, Region Membership Chair

The New Year brings increased interest from women wanting to find an organization fitting their values and goals. Most of our clubs experienced a slight downturn in membership as members were asked to renew this past June. My own club, Soroptimist International of Chilliwack, experienced a decline but the dedicated and passionate members are continuing their amazing work. We are making plans for the recruitment of new members and are very excited about the interest we have seen in our club recently. If your club is also seeing a downturn in membership, don't be discouraged, every club sees a downturn as women are constantly being torn in many directions and make the changes they need to have less stress in their lives.

I have had a remarkable increase in referrals from SIA Headquarters in the past few months and have been forwarding them to the appropriate clubs. If you receive a referral please be sure to follow up. These leads are important

because it is potential members seeking us out and they should prove to be great members of your club.

We are very close to chartering a new club in Kelowna, thanks to the outstanding work of Bea Kelly and Angela Bunting. New clubs are important in our quest to make Soroptimist the organization for women who choose to volunteer and offer their time. I commend Bea and Angela for their hard work to charter more clubs in areas like Kelowna, Burnaby and New Westminster. If you know a woman that might be interested in joining a new club or being part of chartering a new club let us know. I can be reached at heatherrollins@shaw.ca and I will be sure to follow that lead.

I hope you are able to keep growing your club in the coming year and spreading the word on the great work we do locally and around the world. You are our organization's best ambassador.

New Central Okanagan Club Coming Soon!



"The Three Amigos" Silverado, Kim Bush and Bea Kelly

On Saturday, September 10th, Kim Bush President of SI Osoyoos, and Doreen Janko, Past-President of SI Osoyoos joined Bea Kelly

and Silverado at the "Soroptimist Sign Up" table at the Kelowna Volunteer Fair. Bea followed up this Volunteer Fair with an Open House for prospective members on Monday, September 12th at the Kelowna Resource Centre.

Bea reports that the Open House went well with eight new women attending. Bea will attend the next few meetings via skype, and hopes to see this new club chartered in the spring.

However, they need several more members before chartering, so if you know a woman in the Central Okanagan who is a potential Soroptimist please give her contact info to Bea: bebe25@telus.net.

Region Update – Fundraising

By Kay Stewart, Region Fundraising Chair

Laurel Society

It is my pleasure to thank all of you who supported the Laurel Society and SIA Programs by participating in the Laurel Board Raffle by purchasing one or more squares. You may be interested to know that the WCR Board purchased two squares in honour of the two longest members at this year's Conference – Louise Johnson and Stella Moffat, both Soroptimists for over 40 years. Some clubs purchased one square in the club name, and had they won, were going to hold an internal raffle to have one of their club members named to the Society. Some members also bought squares in fellow members' names as a thank you for many years of service to their club.

If you have not already heard, the lucky winner was Gloria Riva Burdett of SI Calgary, who receives a Laurel Society Attache Sapphire pin. I know those of us who did not win are disappointed but we all know there is only one winner and I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Gloria. And there is always next year! Maybe your square will be the Lucky One next year! Carla and I started to sell squares again in Sept. at Leadership Retreat and will continue throughout the year with the draw being made at Conference in Courtenay in May 2012. I also want to thank Carla Bursnado for helping me with the sale of the Laurel Board as I could not do it without her. She is the expert and I am eternally grateful for her assistance with this project.

I want to take this opportunity to explain why we do the Laurel Board. We all know that giving \$1000 to the Laurel Society is a large amount of money and although there are at least 16 Soroptimists in WCR who have done this (and some for more) it is a difficult choice for many of us to make without being able to be issued a tax receipt. For this reason, doing a Laurel Raffle Board is one way WCR can support SIA programs such as WOA, VRA, Soroptimist Club Grants, Stop Trafficking & Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence. Remember that

\$10,000 comes back to the Region from SIA in WOA and VRA Regional Awards each year. When we think of it this way, buying a \$10 square sounds like a great idea. Indeed, if every one of our 458 members in WCR bought just one square we could sell at least 4 Laurel Boards and raise more than \$4000 collectively to support SIA programs, and all for just \$10!

Club Giving

We are proud to recognize clubs in our Region that contributed to Club Giving. Clubs are usually recognized at Conference and presented with a certificate of appreciation at that time. Because we had an abbreviated conference this year in Montreal, this did not occur. However, I want to assure participating clubs that Certificates will be forthcoming and Club Recognition has been posted on the SIA website. Six WCR clubs are recognized at the Friends Level (\$100-499): Abbotsford-Mission, Banff National Park, Saskatoon, Tri Cities, White Rock & Winnipeg; seven clubs at the Dreamers Level (\$500-999): Calgary, Central Alberta, Chilliwack, Courtenay, Edmonton, Greater Victoria and Osoyoos. We are proud to boast one club at the Believers Level (\$1000-2500) and that is SI of The Langleys. Believers Level clubs receive one entry into a draw for one complementary registration and meal package at the SIA Convention in Hawaii, July 2012. Congratulations and thanks to all clubs that participate in Club Giving. By doing so your club has local AND international impact and our Federation is able to reach more women and change more lives. As I shared in my Fundraising Report at Conference our WCR total contribution (through Club Giving and Founders' Pennies) was over \$8600 which is an increase of 7%. We also had 75% of clubs participating in Club Giving. Perhaps next year we can shoot for 100%!

Please send any comments or questions to Kay Stewart at dlegge@mts.net

SI Convention in Montreal

By Jayne Carre, SI Edmonton

Montreal feels like it was ages ago. It was a wonderful world convention and I want to tell you how much I enjoyed it. Kudos to all the organizers. My roommate Sheila Jefferson-Ross from California was perfect. We connected through the SIA Linked-In site. Our room at the Marriott Hotel was lovely with a great harbour front view. I thought it quite funny that the city tour guides refer to the Marriott as the cheese grater. And it really does look like one!

I attended all the keynote addresses which were my primary reason for coming. At the friendship evening, Karima Hudda introduced me to the amazing former Governor General, Adrienne Clarkson. It was so neat chatting with her about everything from pesky raccoons at her backyard bird feeders to multi-cultural families and the challenges faced by early Chinese immigrants. In Adrienne's keynote address the next morning, I was thrilled that she mentioned both Karima's family journey to Canada and briefly referenced my Chinese-Ukrainian family background. I must get a copy of her latest book.

Our SIE booth was a great success. Having a booth not only allowed us to fundraise for our club projects, it gave us the opportunity to meet many Soroptimists from around the world. We visited with one of our SIBath friendship link members from SIGBI and several members from SIBarados who had welcomed me into their club when I was commuting to that island country for 18 months.

Past President Yvonne stopped by our SIE booth accompanied by Past President Teresita Choa (Tess) who was our first customer purchasing a copy of "Invisible Chains", a book by Benjamin Perin on Human Trafficking in Canada. If anyone wants a copy, send an email to siedmonton@soroptimist.net and we can ship one out to you.

Our SIE booth focused on the **WCR Soroptimists Stop Trafficking** project. We were able to distribute lots of valuable information including copies of the article that past WCR Governor Carell Wingrave wrote for Womanition Magazine, copies of the Swedish Model and the Petition to MP Joy Smith who has taken on this challenge since WCR started the petition a couple of years ago. Many Canadians signed the petition at our booth.

Several individuals asked if there was a SI club in Montreal to join. We were able to collect some names for potential chartering members for an SI Montreal club and these have been passed along to WCR. We also distributed information for the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada, as BJ is a new board member for foundation and they did not have their own display, plus sold water bottles for another group without a booth. Thanks you to all WCR members who stopped by and made a purchase; we appreciate it very much.

One of the great pluses of attending conventions and conferences is the quality time that club members were able to share with each other, spouses and children. We got to know each other better, sharing evening meals and city tours and of course the convention seminars and events. Imagine our mutual surprise when walking back to my hotel I bumped into Carell's daughter Christine and her children. The Saturday just before convention we were all at the Carvel General Store's Yard event where Jacqueline had a Lemonade Stand raising funds for the **Because I am a Girl** project, but that is another story.

And guess what! Post convention, I was notified by SIA that my guess was the closest to the actual number of jelly beans, so I won the SIA 2012 Conference fees paid for Hawaii. I chose a number ending in 75 as it is our **Edmonton Club's 75th Anniversary** this year.

SI Convention Speaker Dr. Samantha Nutt – two reports

By Amanda Reaume, SI Vancouver

It was great to attend my first Soroptimist International Convention in Montreal this past July! I met a number of interesting women from around the world during the 5 day Convention. My favourite part of the convention though was hearing Guest Speaker Dr. Samantha Nutt speak about her experiences as the Founder and Executive Director of War Child Canada. For fifteen years, Dr. Nutt has been on the ground in the midst of major conflicts like Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Congo, Sierra Leone and Darfur. Dr. Nutt spoke about her first experiences in war zones as a medical school graduate in 1995 and a volunteer for UNICEF. The people that she met during that poignant experience motivated the work that she has done since then to help children and families in war torn areas.

Dr. Nutt was charming and intelligent as she spoke about her passion and she was gripping as she told attendees about some of the moving experiences that have informed her work. Dr. Nutt recounted the heart-wrenching tales of meeting women and girls who had been raped and beaten. She discussed the ways in which war takes a toll on women and girls and efforts that War Child Canada has made to help in war torn countries.

Dr. Nutt was recently named one of Canada's 25 most influential figures and Time Magazine named her one of Canada's Five Leading Activists. In 2010, she was awarded the Order of Ontario and in 2011, she was appointed to the Order of Canada.

During the question period, Dr. Nutt was invited to become a Soroptimist. I hope she takes us up on the offer. She would make a good addition to Soroptimists worldwide!

By Alison Ferguson, SI Tri Cities

Dr. Samantha Nutt is a 41 year old power house – a Canadian doctor who founded warchild.ca. Advocating for peace and social justice, she has worked in the most horrific war zones in the world: Darfur, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, DR of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and more. Her talk was eye-opening. Highlights (or lowlights, considering the subject matter) include:

- Don't assume the women's movement is over. Our complacency is dangerous. We must keep advocating for human rights for all.
- 70% of the world's poor are women.
- The universality of the female experience. She and a colleague attended a small Somalian village to talk to the women about the horrible practice of genital mutilation. Outside the hut, the men were peering in until the eldest woman hollered out something in her native dialect. Dr. Nutt got the translation. "Men, we are talking about vaginas in here. Either come in and listen or get the hell out of here". They, like most men, dispersed at the vagina discussion.
- Democratic Republic of Congo – 5 MILLION people dead since 1995.
- Half of the fighters are children forced into fighting.
- Rape is a widely used tool, making this a war against women.
- Basically it is an un-war – a war over control of economic resources (minerals, timber, gems, coaltan (80% of the world's coaltan comes from Congo, and it is used exclusively in electronics we all use, cell phones, computers, etc...)). The militias take control of the resources and sell it for money or weapons. The closer to coaltan mines, the higher the incidence of rape. It becomes a climate of impunity. The purchasers may be acting on behalf of governments or corporations.

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Abbotsford Mission

Soroptimist International of Abbotsford Mission held our annual dinner and auction on November 5, 2011. We had a capacity crowd of over 200 guests and a wide variety of items for guests to 'win', either in a raffle, a silent auction or live auction.

We are pleased to announce that our proceeds of over \$10,000 will be shared with the club's Conference fund, and with the Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley. We chose to provide funding for the Christine Lamb Residence – a second stage housing facility for women and children escaping domestic violence currently under construction in Abbotsford.

We were happy to have many Soroptimist guests from SI of the Langleys, SI Surrey Delta, and SI of the Tri Cities. The club also celebrated our 30th anniversary with a cake and were pleased to welcome many former members, including our charter president.



SIAM member Kathy Doerksen with some of the auction items.

SI Courtenay

On November 25, 2011 members of Soroptimist International of Courtenay "papered the town purple" as they distributed purple hotline cards to local businesses. These cards contain domestic abuse emergency support contact information.

Businesses are encouraged to place these cards in women's restrooms as it is important for women to know how to access support.

Purple is the colour associated with domestic violence and November 25, 2011 coincides with the United Nations designated International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women.

Worldwide it is the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender violence including Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women on December 6th.



SIC members Anneke Meyers and Gloria Gietz prepare packages for the 2011 Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence

SI Greater Victoria

A successful year end in June, 2011 at our club's award ceremony where our Women's Opportunity Award recipient, Elizabeth Wakefield was presented with a cheque from our Greater Victoria club, as well as a \$3000 WCR cheque as the runner-up award for 2011. Elizabeth is a single mom of a young son and she plans to upgrade her present LPN qualifications to become a registered nurse. She tearfully told club members how the two cheques will now allow her to fulfill her dream and to make a better future for her and her son.

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Greater Victoria (continued)



Club past-president Bev Lowsley with WOA winner Elizabeth Wakefield.

Also at the awards luncheon were representatives of our two major charity benefactors, Marlene Goley Manager of Women's and Family Services for the Cridge Centre for the Family and Liz Bloomfield, Executive Director of Victoria Single Parent Resource Centre.



Marlene Goley and Liz Bloomfield

SIGV supports Cridge Transition House for Women through New Beginnings Baskets for the 150 women passing through Hill house each year as well as Christmas stockings for residents. SIGV provides Christmas Hampers and gifts for Families and school supplies for September for single Parent Resource Centre.

SI the Langleys

It has been a busy few months for the Langley Soroptimists. June 4th was our very successful Lobstermania raising \$8750. 125 guests ate and danced their way through 125 2 lb lobsters – the delivery of the Lobsters to the tables is worth the price of entry alone! Perhaps we will see you there next year to find out how we do it.

Then Arts Alive, our annual event where we get out to an all day Arts Festival that sees the main street in Langley closed down to vehicles – We flog the best tasting dogs this side of New York City – the trick is the orange pop mixed in with the onions. We also used this years event to advertise our 2012 Bras for a Cause event coined Mardi Bras as it falls around Mardi Gras time. We advertised the event by stringing decorated bras around our Hot Dog tent and surrounding area.

And finally, our big blow out as we celebrated our 25th year as a Club. We celebrated with a special evening on September 24th.



Region Governor Colleen Schmidt and Governor-elect Dana Martin at the 25th anniversary celebration of SI the Langleys.

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Osoyoos

SI Osoyoos wrapped up the club year with dinner and Installation of the Board on Tuesday June 21st. Four members from SI Okanogan Valley in Washington State (our friendship link), came up for the evening, and did a wonderful job of installing our new board.



SI Osoyoos board members and guests.

In mid-August, Osoyoos Soroptimists were delighted to welcome Soroptimist Gerfriede Hoekendijk-de Wal and her husband, from The Netherlands. Gerfriede and her Rotarian husband met with a dozen Osoyoos Soroptimists, at dinner at a local restaurant. "Good conversation over good food led to good friendship, with our second international visitor in as many years" said President Kim Bush.



Gerfriede Hoekendijk-de Wal and her husband.

Members of SI Osoyoos celebrated the club's 25th Anniversary of Service with a Dinner and Silent Auction Tuesday Oct. 18 with many original members, current members and guests attending. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Ruby Award for Outstanding Community Service to Margaret Anne Turner by club Past-president Doreen Janko.



Doreen Janko presenting the Ruby Award to Margaret Anne Turner.

For the past 24 years SI Osoyoos has raffled off a hand-made rocking horse at Christmas with the proceeds going to the local women's shelter. Saturday, November 19 found the hand-made rocking horse displayed at the local Buy Low Food Store, with Doris Walton and Heide Wright teaming up to sell more than \$400 worth of tickets. Club members continued selling tickets a Toonie at a time, and held the draw on December 22. The raffle raised a total of \$2810 for South Okanagan Womens Safe House.



SI Osoyoos members Heide Wright and Doris Walton with the rocking horse.

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Osoyoos (continued)

At our November meeting we inducted and welcomed two new members, Judy Miller Bennet and Wendy Zelter.



Past President Doreen Janko, Judy Miller Bennet and Wendy Zelter, and Doris Walton former president and current member of the Board.



Sue McKortoff,
Osoyoos Town Councillor.

SI Osoyoos is happy to congratulate member Sue McKortoff on her election to Osoyoos Town Council. Sue has been active for many years in a number of community projects, including the Water Quality Committee, Festival Committee, Farmer's Market, and of course many Soroptimist Events. She is a former President of SI Osoyoos and is currently the club treasurer.

SI Surrey Delta

The *Totally Beautiful* program was initiated by Sarah Phillips, a member of SI Surrey Delta. It has been repeated several times now and will remain as our "signature" program.

Totally Beautiful is a strength based program designed for a target group of 6-8 young women ages 16-24 with FASD who are eager to become more included in mainstream, age appropriate

activities. The group also includes a peer support group of 4-6 typical young women, the same ages as the target group who act as role models and peer support in each session. In addition there are adult facilitators at each session. The target group and peer support group are treated identically at all sessions, the target group NOT identified as such and there is no discussion around "special needs" or "FASD" unless initiated by a target young woman. Adult Facilitators facilitate, not participate. During discussion groups adult facilitators ask questions and encourage all of the young women to speak openly and without fear of judgment or criticism.

There are 6 two-hour sessions over a 3 month period with each session including dinner, socializing, activities, and group discussion. At the end of each session the group members share their plans for the weekend. The primary focus of the 6 sessions is to enhance the social skills of all the young women allowing the target group to gain confidence and competence in their personal presentation leading to more inclusion in their school, workplace, and community. With increased self confidence, self worth each of these young women are less likely to be exploited, isolated and at-risk.



Some of the girls at the beginning of the *Totally Beautiful* program.

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Tri Cities

In September our club was honoured to receive a Spirit of Community Award from the Society for Community Development. As well, we were nominated in the not-for-profit category for an award from the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce. We won WCR Governor Colleen Schmidt's prize (a set of lovely hand-painted wine glasses) for inducting ten new members last year! And we welcomed new member Heather Martin to our club. We're aiming to win the Governor's prize again but are hoping for some competition!

In October our members worked shifts at the TriCities VolunteerFest at Coquitlam Centre, talking about Soroptimist throughout the day and collecting names of interested women.



SITC members Behnaz Behzadi, Heather Martin, Penny Bickerton & Heather McMurtry at the VolunteerFest.

Every month, year-round, we hold two Warm Place for Women evenings. Soroptimist members prepare and serve dinner to up to 60 low-income women and children each time. Always there are piles of donated clothing, brought to us by community supporters. And we have helpers! A group of kids come from Anmore Elementary to help at the Port Coquitlam dinners the first Thursday of every month. And in Coquitlam, on the third Thursday, we have the assistance of a group of teen girls from Pinetree Secondary and other young women recruited by our members. Christmas dinners in both locations were especially fun evenings. At the Coquitlam location which serves a large number of refugee families from Afghanistan (lots of kids), we had a visit from a Fari-speaking Santa!



The kitchen is a busy place! SITC members, friends and teen volunteers serve a multicultural Christmas dinner to our guests at the Coquitlam Warm Place for Women.

At our November business meeting we welcomed two new members, Lorraine Savage and Marya Koopal. Later that month we held a Fireside Chat, attended by members and guests. We introduced Soroptimist to six new women, and also celebrated Bea Kelly's 80th birthday.

And in December, instead of a regular business meeting we had our Christmas pot-luck and wrapping session where we wrapped gifts for two low-income families with a total of 12 children and stuffed ourselves with delicious food. What fun!



Visit from Santa!

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Tri Cities (continued)

Coming up in the New Year? We're busy planning "Empowering Our Teen Girls", to be held on Saturday February 18th. This will be a workshop for girls in grades 7 & 8 presented by [SafeTeen](#), founded by Anita Roberts who many of us heard speak at our 2009 Region Conference. There will be a concurrent session for parents, with everyone coming together for lunch followed by an afternoon drumming session.

Our big fundraiser of the year will be our Give Her Wings Gala, Saturday evening March 31st at the [Inlet Theatre](#) in Port Moody. That evening we will present our Women's Opportunity, Violet Richardson, and Ruby awards. Entertainment will be by [Al Foreman](#). If you're in metro Vancouver, please come out and support us. Contact [SI Tri Cities](#) for tickets.

SI Victoria Westshore

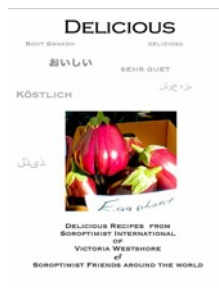
It is a very interesting endeavour to be part of a Soroptimist Club in its infancy. There is unlimited opportunity in developing the club's culture, focus, and personality. There are new relationships with individuals and businesses to forge, there are new paths in the community to begin. And there are coffers to fill with previously unpracticed methods of club fundraising. It's all new, it is fun, and it is challenging.

In order to make a difference in our community and with international projects which resonate with our members, it's necessary to have a decent pool of money on hand. We're surprising ourselves with how our yearling bank accounts are climbing with our small endeavours here and there, and we're now at the point of beginning to look at opportunities to help women and girls both here in the south area of Vancouver Island, and also through connections we're developing in local communities around the world.

Locally, we've been thrilled to receive a \$500 grant from The Soroptimist Foundation of Canada towards our 'Imagining Possibilities' workshop for young at-risk Westshore Victoria-area women. Club members were quick to volunteer their expertise and resources, and we very quickly had the four workshop segments planned and ready to be led by three of our members and a local business woman (who is certain to become a member in future), plus through local businesses we have meals and coffee lined up for the day of the workshop. Perhaps this will be an annual event. We're connecting with school counsellors and local nonprofits for referrals of the young women in need of this mentoring workshop.

Prior to joining our club, our two newest members, Laura Hougham and Jennilee Brack, began [Streets 2 Schools](#), an international nonprofit with a vision to provide children access to an education. In 2011 they successfully built and put into operation two classrooms in Tanzania. Through Jennilee and Laura our club was provided the opportunity to engage in a women-to-women microcredit loan with a group of women in Makanya, Tanzania, and with our small financial contribution, the Makanya women have been able to rent arable land near a river and to grow their first crop of onions, bringing them a little closer to future financial security.

Baby steps.... We're raring to take on things of significance, but we are taking the baby steps necessary for a very young club. We're focusing on bringing in members, and new members will bring with them new talents, new connections, new passions. We're ready for the next steps.



And just a reminder: we still have cookbooks for sale for \$18 plus shipping. These simple little cookbooks have helped us to begin to dream about our next steps.

Western Canada Region Club Events

SI Winnipeg

Soroptimist International of Winnipeg hosted our Annual Awards Luncheon on Saturday, April 16, 2011 with 80 guests attending. Susan Berthiaume, the recipient of the Ruby Award gave a moving speech about her work as Program Coordinator with Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc.'s Child & Youth Care Certificate Program (CYCP). The Program, in partnership with the Red River College, is for women with former experience in the sex trade. These women face sexual exploitation, assault, abuse, poverty, sexism, marginalization, and so very much more. Susan creates a safe and supportive space for women to break cycles of violence related to poverty, abuse and exploitation, as well as attain a quality education and more meaningful, stable employment.

Women's Opportunity Awards were awarded to Anna Wall and Evelyne Kiwanuka.

Evelyne, our second place winner, is pursuing her BSc in Psychiatric Nursing. She aspires to be able to influence health care policy and practice to reduce the stigma associated with mental health disorders and developmental challenges. Evelyne has overcome many challenges and seeks to provide a bright future for her two young children. Anna Wall is our first place winner and is pursuing a BSc in Environmental Studies. Anna's goal is to work in the area of forest conservation. Anna left home in her early teens and was living a troubled homeless life until after facing many challenges, with the help of the Urban Canvas Art program, she realized she could change her life for the better. Anna is the proud mother of a young son and seeks to be a positive role model. She has excelled at her studies and helps support herself in part through her art work. Anna was also the Region WOA recipient and a \$5000 cheque was received on Anna's behalf by Club President Kay Stewart at Conference in Montreal.

Sara Castellano is the recipient of the Violet Richardsdon Award. Her passion has been working with S.W.A.T. (Students Working Against Tobacco). Sara was also the VRA Region winner so received an additional \$1000 for herself and \$1000 for S.W.A.T. These awards were received at WCR Conference in Montreal and brought back to Winnipeg by Club President Kay Stewart.



Sara Castellano, Barb Tascona (from SWAT), Evelyne Kiwanuka, Anna Wall.

SI of Winnipeg has produced a *Love Me...Love Me Not* bookmark to educate young people about healthy relationships. The bookmarks have our club name and the crisis numbers for our community. The Manitoba Women's Advisory Council has partnered with us to distribute 25,000 bookmarks throughout high schools in the province. They are also committed to assisting us in distributing them in government and political offices and at government functions. We have also provided a significant supply to our women's shelters for their use in the community.

The Project was launched at our Annual Awards Luncheon in April 2011 and we had Chairperson of Women's Advisory Council (Status of Women) present as well as Executive Director of one the Women's Shelter and a number of politicians. We would not have been able to provide this scope of distribution without the support of the Advisory Council and are delighted with their partnering with us so that we are able to reach so many young people in our province with this bookmark.