



Soroptimist International of the Americas

2016-2017 Annual Report

FY16/17 Soroptimist Board of Directors

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FY2016-2017

“The Live Your Dream Awards will help me to further my growth, accountability and commitment to be a transformational agent and end this cycle [of poverty and abuse] for my family!”

—Trafficking Survivor and Live Your Dream Awards Recipient

Our organization exists to economically empower women to rise above their difficult circumstances and achieve their life goals. What we do is powerful and transformative.

In FY16/17, Soroptimist focused on setting the direction for our organization’s future—a future where our organization is thriving and helping even more deserving women and girls.

We know that access to education is the most effective anti-poverty intervention. And because we measure the outcomes of our Live Your Dream Awards and Dream It, Be It programs—we also know they achieve their stated goals of economically empowering women and girls who face obstacles such as poverty, violence and teen pregnancy. The transformation doesn’t end there. Our programs ignite a ripple effect that spreads to the families of the women and girls we help, their communities, their countries and our world.

We are proud our work aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, “We will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals if there is no accelerated action to empower women economically.” We agree, of course. Our award-winning Live Your Dream Awards and Dream It, Be It programs absolutely support five of the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for women’s equality.

We live in a rapidly changing world. Entrenched social inequalities that keep women and girls down require a new way of thinking and doing. Throughout our history, Soroptimist has demonstrated a willingness to chart new territory. To take risks. To try new things to adapt our collective mindset to a changing world.

We are eternally grateful for the strong partnerships throughout SIA. To the women and girls we serve, who inspire us every single day. To our clubs and members for the tireless work they do in their communities. To our generous donors, who make dreams come true for the amazing women and girls we serve. And to our committed leaders and professional staff, who confidently guide our organization into the future. Heartfelt thanks to all of you for your dedication and passion.



FY16/17 SIA President

RoseMary Reid



**FY16/17 SIA
Secretary/Treasurer**

Virginia “Gigie” Peñalosa



SIA Executive Director & CEO

Elizabeth M. Lucas, CAE, MBA

The Soroptimist Dream Programs

The Soroptimist Dream Programs—*The Live Your Dream Awards: Education & Training Awards for Women* and *Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls*—are dedicated to helping women and girls achieve economic empowerment.

Thanks to your support of these programs, we are giving women and girls the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential and live their dreams.



in 2017, our Dream Programs earned two American Society of Association Executives “Power of A” Awards. *Dream It, Be It* received The Summit Award, ASAE’s highest award given to associations that make exemplary commitments to creating a stronger America and the world. Soroptimist is one of only six associations chosen for this honor.

In addition, the *Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Grants for Women* was named an 2017 ASAE Power of A Gold Award winner.

These awards speak volumes about the strength of our collective work. SIA’s Executive Director Elizabeth M. Lucas (second from left, top row) and Senior Director of Program Services Lori Blair (first from left, front row) traveled to Washington, D.C. to proudly accept the prestigious awards.





Live Your Dream: Education and Training Grants for Women

The Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards program provides financial support to head-of-household women striving to enhance their economic status and create better lives for themselves and their families. Recipients may use the cash grants however they choose in support of their education goals—including for tuition, books, childcare and transportation.

This year, thanks to our generous donors, funding for the program increased by 11 percent and SIA gave 112 additional women awards!

In FY16/17:

1,467

women's lives were improved

+\$2 million

in education grants was disbursed through the program

100%

of Soroptimist countries and territories gave awards

“Education is so important for mothers because they have a major influence on their children’s education. This award will help me continue my education and graduate, so that I can provide a good example for my children and give back to my community.”

—Sara, 2017 Live Your Dream Awards Recipient

Each Year, Soroptimist Grants Three \$10,000 Live Your Dream Finalist Awards



Rochelle

The Philippines

As a young child growing up in the Philippines, Rochelle dreamed of becoming an elementary school teacher. Her mother worked abroad and as the eldest, Rochelle had to raise her three younger siblings, one of whom has special needs. Her difficult upbringing turned even darker, when she was raped by her father and became pregnant with his child at the age of 14. After living in fear for years, her father was found guilty and is serving a three-term life imprisonment sentence. Determined not to let her past keep her dreams out of her future, Rochelle is currently working toward a bachelor of science degree in education and is scheduled to graduate in 2021.



Aislinn

Alabama, USA

Aislinn dropped out of high school to help support her parents and take care of her aging grandparents. After she got married and had a daughter, she knew she wanted to make a better life for her child. She decided to enroll in community college. After a few semesters, her grades were good enough to transfer to a local four-year university, where she is studying sociology and women and gender studies. But her struggle is far from over. Her husband was recently diagnosed with a terminal illness. When she sat her daughter down to explain what this news would mean for their family, Aislinn told her if they were going to make it, they had to be their best selves—they had to do better. This statement, as a guiding principle, is a mantra that keeps Aislinn strong and informs the projects and commitments she takes on. She is on track to graduate in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in sociology and plans to go on to graduate school.



Sara

Michigan, USA

Sara grew up in Iraq. Her family sent her to the United States to marry a man she did not know, in hopes that she would have a better, safer life and escape the chaos going on in her country. As it turned out, her marriage proved to be a nightmare when her husband began physically and mentally abusing her. She realized that if she was going to leave, she needed a plan for economic independence, so she enrolled in community college. Sara completed her associate's degree in pre-elementary special education and graduated with honors. From there, she transferred to a four-year university. Then the abuse escalated. Sara and her children were able to safely escape to a domestic violence shelter. Though she is still fighting legal issues surrounding her divorce, she and her children are surviving and moving forward. Sara continues to work on her bachelor's degree in elementary special education and will graduate in 2018. Her dream is to become a teacher and eventually obtain a Ph.D. so she can help improve her state's public schools.



Watch Rochelle and Sara tell their amazing stories at:

Soroptimist.org/awards/live-your-dream-awards-finalists.html

Photo Credits—Rochelle: Cine Verités, Aislinn: The University of Alabama in Huntsville, Sara: Dynasty Media Network



Empowering Women to Change Their Lives

Soroptimist trusts women to use their award money in whatever way helps advance their educational goals. Each woman is empowered to make the best decision for her circumstances. Giving women control over how they use their awards increases their self-confidence. It motivates them to reach for their dreams. Our recipients prove that with just a small boost of financial resources, women can get back on track and achieve their goals.

Past Live Your Dream Awards recipients report:



80%

increased their standard of living for themselves and their dependents



97%

earned or are continuing to work toward their educational degree/certification



94%

serve as a role model for their dependents



96%

have increased self-esteem

“I believe that with [my faith]—combined with hard work, patience, self-confidence, determination, and people who trust me—my dream to get a college education and become a teacher is within arm’s reach.”

—Rochelle,
2017 Live Your Dream
Awards Recipient



Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls

Dream it, Be It aims to help girls grow up to be strong, successful, happy adults. The program targets girls in secondary school who face obstacles to their future success. *Dream It, Be It* provides girls with access to professional role models, career education and the resources they need to live their dreams.

“It was so great to hear about other women’s successful career stories. It was also great to build ourselves up and become visionaries of our future ... I’m grateful for women like yourselves, creating better opportunities for the young women of my generation ... truly.”

—*Dream It, Be It* Participant

In FY16/17:

12,265

girls participated

540

Soroptimist clubs hosted *Dream It, Be It* projects in 14 countries and territories

\$312,853

was contributed by clubs in support of local *Dream It, Be It* projects, along with 34,979 volunteer hours

Dream It, Be It photos courtesy of SI/Capitola By the Sea, CA

Helping Girls Succeed

Girls hear they can achieve anything they want, but so often they cannot feel their own power. It is not enough to encourage young girls to dream big without direction or skills to make those dreams a reality. By reaching girls when they are teens, we can equip them with the tools they need to make good choices, rebound from obstacles, and get on track to achieving their educational and professional goals.

Dream It, Be It participants report:



89%

are more confident about their future success



87%

feel more prepared to pursue their career goals



88%

created achievable goals for the future



83%

believe *Dream It, Be It* has provided them with new tools to overcome obstacles to their success



87%

understand how their values can connect to possible careers



86%

were introduced to professional role models



“I loved the whole idea of empowering us. They made us feel like no matter our background or situation we can make it. We can become something successful.”

—*Dream It, Be It* Participant

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women & Girls

In FY16/17, Soroptimist awarded grants to Soroptimist clubs to help fund projects throughout the organization's 20 countries and territories. By addressing specific local needs, these grants helped clubs make a lasting difference in the lives of women and girls in their communities.



IN FY16/17:

\$120,000

was granted to 28 Soroptimist projects in 10 countries

2,712

women and girls were helped through club grants projects

Clubs Report:

**SI/Moses Lake, WA
(Northwestern Region):
received a \$5,000
Soroptimist Club Grant
for its “Dream It, Be It
Moses Lake” luncheon.
The event for teen girls
featured resume support,
mock interviews, and
a dress for success
fashion show.**



969

women and girls gained
access to educational
opportunities



849

women and girls were
provided opportunities for
economic advancement



429

women and girls
were given tools and
resources to help them
live free from violence



237

women and girls
gained access
to healthcare

LiveYourDream.org

LiveYourDream.org is a digital action network, powered by Soroptimist. This online movement is fiercely dedicated to ensuring every woman and girl has the opportunity to reach her full potential and live her dream. Supporters create impact through Soroptimist's two life-changing programs leading to economic empowerment—*Live Your Dream: Education & Training Awards for Women* and *Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls*. They take action to address some of the most serious challenges women and girls face today, such as gender-based violence and lack of access to quality education.

IN FY16/17:

91,948

total supporters signed up through LiveYourDream.org

20,290

actions were taken to help women and girls reach their full potential

98

supporters served as virtual judges for Soroptimist's Live Your Dream Awards program

LiveYourDream.org proudly received several notable awards in FY16/17:



- Hermes Creative Award for Overall Nonprofit Website.
- Communicator Award for Creative Excellence in Websites/Activism.
- Davey Award: Silver Winner

Impact-Storytelling: **Women Write to Empower** **Other Women & Girls**

LiveYourDream.org's *Your Dream* blog features stories from real women, mentors, feminist writers and self-care proponents who produce the kind of inspiring headlines we wish the news would cover on a daily basis. We highlight survivor stories and topics that speak directly to women and girls we aim to reach through our Dream Programs. We publish pieces that make you think, offer advice, and show you how to take the first step toward making change happen in your life and in your community.



Visit the *Your Dream* blog at:
YourDream.LiveYourDream.org

Soroptimist Membership

At the end of FY16/17, Soroptimist comprised 20 countries and territories, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guam, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, United States, and Venezuela.

IN 2017:

Clubs: 1,262

Members: 29,881

**Change in members
from FY15/16:** (349)

“When I first became a Soroptimist I was very shy and insecure. Over the years I’ve excelled in the positions I’ve held. People look up to me! [My membership] has made me feel more worthy and given me more confidence.”

—Soroptimist Member

FY16/17 Financials

Fiscal Year Ended August 31, 2017

Statement of Financial Position

	FY2017	FY2016
Total Assets	\$13,659,277	\$14,384,416
Total Liabilities	2,293,850	2,844,305
Total Net Assets	11,365,427	11,540,111
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$13,659,277	\$14,384,416

Statement of Activities

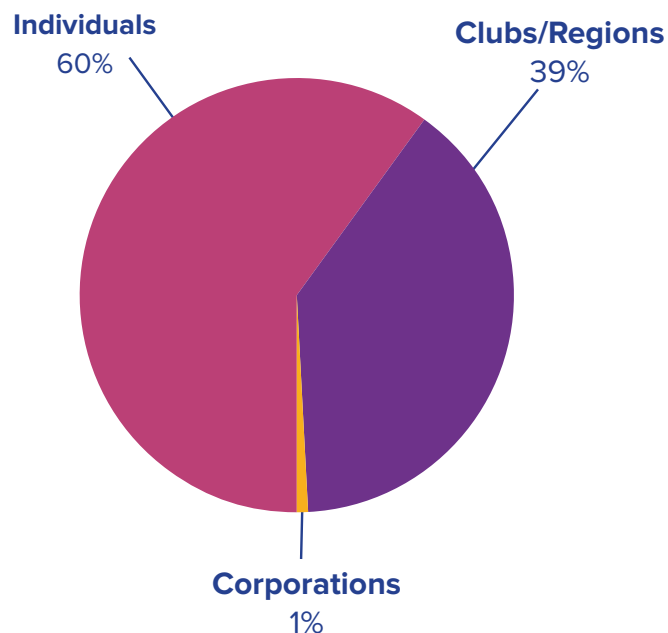
	FY2017	FY2016
Revenue	\$5,570,940	\$5,999,445
Expenses	5,745,624	6,248,339
Change in Net Assets	(\$174,684)	(\$248,894)

Net Assets, Beginning	\$11,540,111	\$13,628,156
Reclass of Member Dues to Deferred Revenue	-	(\$1,839,151)
Net Assets, Ending	\$11,365,427	\$11,540,111

Financial information taken from the audited financial statements dated August 31, 2017. The full audit is available at <Soroptimist.org>. A copy may be requested by contacting Soroptimist International of the Americas at <siahq@soroptimist.org>.

Who Supported Us This Year

Fiscal Year Ended August 31, 2017

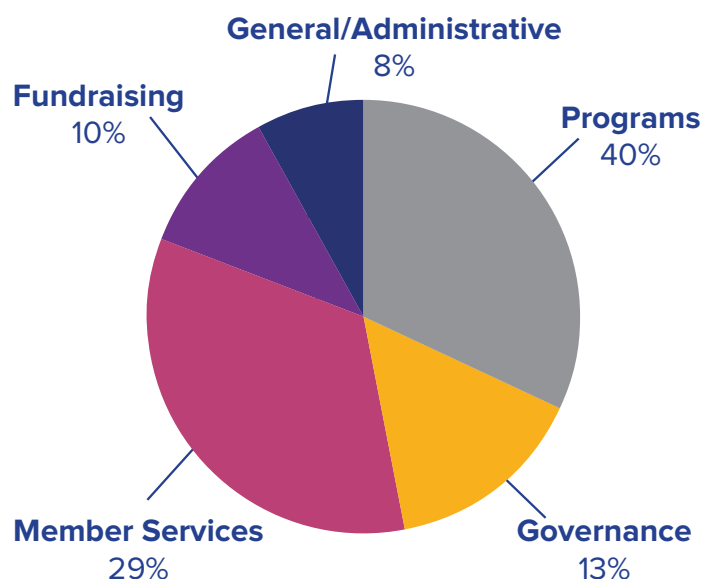


Contributors

	FY2017	FY2016
Clubs/Regions	\$735,849	\$894,054
Individuals	1,123,396	789,743
Corporations	12,000	20,000
TOTAL	\$1,871,245	\$1,703,797

How We Use Our Operating Funds

Fiscal Year Ended August 31, 2017



Program Services

	FY2017	FY2016
Programs	\$2,268,515	\$1,995,670
Member Services	1,666,871	1,236,380
Governance	772,911	731,888
Convention	-	1,197,427

Support Services

Fundraising	\$589,848	\$773,194
General/ Administrative	447,479	313,780
TOTAL	\$5,745,624	\$6,248,339

Donor Spotlight: Catherine Standiford



“I give financially because I want to radically bridge the gap [between our results and the greater need], and it takes money to do that. It takes money for resources, to help clubs to do more. It takes money to offer more awards. It takes money to do research. It takes money to make sure our Dream Programs achieve the goals we set. So I do it because I see our potential as an organization to do more, and I want to help with that.”

—Cathy Standiford
SI/Huntington Beach, CA, USA

When you ask Past SIA President Cathy Standiford why Soroptimist is her cause of choice, she quotes her mother: “See a need, and fill it.” Cathy lives by these words. She sees the world’s greatest need as the immense gender inequality facing women and girls. She sees filling that need through Soroptimist and its global Dream Programs as the answer.

Cathy’s dedication began nearly 30 years ago as a member of SI/Huntington Beach, CA. She then advanced to governor of Soroptimist’s Desert Coast Region, ultimately being elected to the SIA Board of Directors, where she served as SIA president in 2009-2010.

In the years since her accomplished presidency, Cathy continues to contribute selflessly to Soroptimist. She currently chairs her club’s *Dream It, Be It* program, and is a founding member of SIA’s Donor Relations Taskforce. And though reaching the Laurel Society’s elite Inner Circle some time ago, she continues placing value on our programs—just last year pledging \$50,000 to support our online activist platform, LiveYourDream.org.

In her view, Soroptimist should aspire to contribute to an even greater number of victories in women and girls’ lives than it has ever before, and Cathy is committed to making this inspirational dream come true.

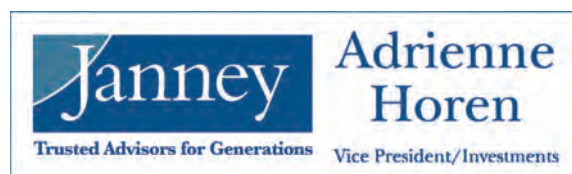
While Cathy gives so much to Soroptimist, she feels she receives an immense amount in return. On the *Live Your Dream Awards*, Cathy says, “the act of empowering other women to live their dreams empowers us too.” She describes *Dream It, Be It* as a “fantastic, fantastic opportunity for us and the girls we’re helping ... the opportunity to do real career mentorship with girls who need the extra support rocks my world!”

Another reason Cathy prioritizes Soroptimist in her life is the alignment of the Dream Programs’ outcomes with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. “There are lots of organizations doing good things, but many aren’t necessarily helping to achieve women’s and girls’ empowerment on a global level. Our Dream Programs do that! We can show a direct nexus between the Dream Programs and the Sustainable Development Goals, and I think that’s something we should really be proud of!”

Just as Cathy is proud of Soroptimist and our work to help women and girls, Soroptimist is immensely proud she has chosen us as her “cause of choice.” We couldn’t be more grateful to her. With her aid, we will ensure her vision of helping even more women and girls comes true.

A speical thank you to Cathy and all of our generous donors for helping women and girls to reach their dreams. View the complete FY16/17 donor list at [<http://bit.ly/SIAdonors16-17>](http://bit.ly/SIAdonors16-17).

Thank You to Our Official Sponsors



Interested in becoming a Soroptimist sponsor?

Contact Susan Doughty at <susan@soroptimist.org>.

With generous support from our donors, Soroptimist is helping women and girls in tangible and sustainable ways.

Won't you join us?

Make a donation today at
<http://bit.ly/DonateSoroptimist>



Soroptimist International of the Americas

Improving the lives of women and girls through
programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

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