

HOW TO: HOST A SUCCESSFUL CLUB EVENT

You've selected a Live Your Dream Award recipient, and now it's time to celebrate! Follow these tips to make the event a memorable experience for everyone. You can make a big impact—and start a lasting bond—by showing that you value your recipient's input on how to make this experience accessible, welcoming and positive for her and her family.

Communication

The #1 tip for holding a successful event? Communication! All the tips below have this in common. You won't know what your club can do to make this a great experience for your recipient until you ask!

Anticipating Her Needs

Chances are, she shared quite a bit about herself in her application. Use that information to anticipate her needs. For example, if she disclosed a history of addiction, it may be thoughtful to host an alcohol-free event. If you know she's taking three classes and working full time, ask about her availability before picking a time and date. If she states her vehicle is unreliable, have a club member offer her a ride. If you know she's currently unemployed, offer to cover some costs associated with her attendance, such as childcare or transportation.

TIP: While it might feel good to hand over the award funding at your club event, delaying the funding could negatively impact your recipient. Instead of waiting to distribute funding until your event, send the funding as soon as your recipient is confirmed and present awardees with a certificate at your event.

Location and Transportation

Consult with her when choosing a venue. Ask what transportation she has access to (e.g. public transportation, her own vehicle, a ride with a family member). If she takes public transportation, choose a venue close to a bus or train stop. Consider covering the fare or gas money it takes for her to get to the event and back home. If she lives far from your club, consider choosing a location closer to her. Once you have chosen a location, let her know in advance, so she has time to plan accordingly.

Ensuring Her Comfort

A little thoughtfulness can go a long way. Let her know what kind of attire is appropriate for the event to help her feel more prepared. Consider hosting your event at a location where a suit or fancy clothing would not be required.

Invite her to bring guests who have supported her goals and aspirations, such as her family, teachers, or references. Having her supporters present will make the event a celebration of her accomplishments, and help her feel more comfortable in a room of new people.

Identify a contact person to be available the day of the event. This person can answer any questions regarding directions, parking, or other logistics, and then greet her as she arrives, introduce her to others, and ensure a warm welcome.

TIP: Personalize your event as much as possible. Include her favorite meal, dessert, or flowers. Ask how she wants her name written on her certificate, and what else you can do to make her feel comfortable and welcome at a celebration of *her*.

Childcare

If she's bringing her children, ensure the venue is appropriate for children and ask what you can do to make the event enjoyable for the kids. You might offer to provide age-appropriate activities such as colored pencils and paper, a puzzle, or a craft. If she plans to leave young kids at home, offer to cover the cost of childcare. Any way your club can help to reduce her stress will help her focus on the most important part of the event—celebrating her!

Speaking

When inviting your recipient to speak at the event, think about it from her point of view. Consider how writing about your own obstacles in an essay would feel different from recounting them aloud to a roomful of people. Surely, hearing about your most painful life experiences would be compelling for the audience, but might be very difficult for you. Similarly, no matter how empathetic and supportive the audience, not every woman will feel comfortable talking about her obstacles.

For these reasons, your recipient does not have to speak at the event at all. Nor does she have to share her story with the audience, even in writing.

Ask what would make this a positive experience for her. Perhaps discussing her obstacles would make her feel brave. Perhaps, it would transport her back to dark times and make her feel small. If she chooses to speak, encourage her to highlight her strengths and accomplishments. Ultimately, empowering her to be the author of her own story is the most valuable part of this experience.

When introducing her to your audience, rather than detailing her obstacles, consider sharing what about her application inspired your club to select her as a recipient and want to support her (e.g. she has strong goals, cares about her family, eloquently describes dreams for her future).

If she's not comfortable with public speaking, you might offer another solution, such as asking for written remarks from her that you will print out and distribute at each table.

Whether or not she chooses to speak at your event, your club could invite someone else to speak about the importance of education and overcoming obstacles in pursuit of dreams.

TIP: Assure her that no matter what, you're excited to celebrate her, are proud of what she has accomplished, and want to learn about her aspirations for the future.

Engage Others

Who else within your community can be included in your celebration? An event highlighting Soroptimist's signature program and the individual women we serve can be an ideal way to thank your judges, honor past recipients of the Live Your Dream Award, or inspire other women who are interested in learning more about Soroptimist. Consider inviting local politicians and other community leaders, or a local newspaper that can highlight your club's impact in the community.

Photography

We recommend seeking a volunteer photographer in your community who can take beautiful photos of the recipient and her family—lovely for them to have and for your club and SIA to have to promote the Live Your Dream Awards! Email photos to program@soroptimist.org. Below are some tips to ensure your photos are as amazing as your recipients are!

- The higher the resolution, the better.
- Please do not send us photos in a Word document—we need the actual picture file. JPG, EPS, and PNG are all good file types, as long as they are high-resolution!
- Large group shots do not usually make good photos. Close-ups are more compelling. Generally, photos should include up to four people so that you can clearly see everyone's faces.
- A simple background focuses attention on the subject and makes clear, strong pictures. Do not be afraid to ask people to move to a better location if the background is distracting.
- Try to create backdrops for photo opportunities ahead of time--for example, hang Soroptimist banners in key locations, display the logo, etc.

TIP: Invite your recipient(s) to be in a photograph (after obtaining permission via the media consent form) with club members. Share the photos with the recipient(s) as a reminder of her special celebration, with club members as an example of their meaningful work in the community, and with a press release to local media.

Beyond a Cash Award

Consider providing [additional support for your recipient](#). Asking for her input is a great step to ensure your gesture is not only meaningful, but also meets her needs. Perhaps she needs a certain book, piece of equipment, an item of clothing for an interview, a self-care item, groceries, or childcare so she can catch up on her tasks or have some quiet time to herself. Perhaps you can match up club members' professional experience with a need, such as mentorship or mock interviews.

Reminder and Overview

Your recipient is likely managing many responsibilities. Contact her with a reminder before the event and ask if she has any last-minute questions. Walk through an overview of what to expect (e.g. you will be near the entrance to greet her when she arrives; at 7pm she will receive the award and give her remarks; at 7:30pm dinner will be served).

EVENT CHECKLIST

You can use the checklist to ensure you have discussed important information with your recipient so she feels comfortable and prepared for the event celebrating her achievements.

Availability

I know our recipient's availability and confirmed she is available to attend our event.

Location

Our recipient is able to travel to our event or transportation has been arranged.

Children

I know what activities our recipient's children like and/or childcare has been arranged.

Speaking

I understand what our recipient wants to share and how.

Additional Support

I learned what additional support would be most helpful to our recipient and have made plans with my club to provide it.

Event Reminder

I contacted our recipient to remind her of the event details and to provide an overview of what she can expect during the event.

SCRIPT FOR PRESENTATION OF CLUB AWARD(S)

Items that are underlined and in italics are places where you will need to add in your own information.

Hello and welcome! Thank you all for being a part of this special celebration today. We are here to honor Alice and her inspiring achievements. Alice, everyone here today supports you and believes in you and wants the very best for you and your family.

As Soroptimists, we know many hard working and courageous women. They're members of our clubs, they're leading the many regions of our organization, and serving on our board of directors, and they're the women we support with our Live Your Dream Awards.

Since 1972, Soroptimists have been empowering women through the life-changing Live Your Dream Awards. These awards assist women who support their families financially and give women the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects.

SI/Anytown has been supporting women in the Eastbrook community since 1994. We have provided more than \$15,000 in cash awards and additional support including mentoring, interview attire, and gift cards. Women who have received Live Your Dream Awards have gone on to graduate with degrees in nursing and education, get promotions and better-paying jobs that allowed them to move their families to safer neighborhoods with better schools, and work more consistent hours so they could be home more often with their children.

By working together, Soroptimists across 21 countries and territories annually provide over \$2.4 million in cash awards to more than 1,500 motivated women who are working tirelessly to make a better life for themselves and their families. Live Your Dream Awards recipients tell us they have been able to improve their standard of living, increase their self-esteem, and serve as role models for their children and other dependents.

The awards start here at the local, club-level where recipients receive \$1,000. First-place recipients then go on to be considered at a region level, where they may receive an additional \$3,000 or \$5,000. Top recipients are then considered at an international level and have the opportunity to receive another \$10,000.

But numbers are only part of the Live Your Dream Awards story. So many women tell us how much the support they receive from Soroptimists matters to them. Knowing that there is an entire global organization of women encouraging them and believing in them and their dreams helps to ignite change in their lives.

When women are educated, they have opportunity and choice, and they are much less susceptible to the many issues that can disrupt their lives. They will be less likely to live in poverty, less vulnerable to sex traffickers, more likely to leave a domestic violence situation, will be able to access healthcare; and, ultimately, raise stronger healthier families.

The Soroptimist Live Your Dream Awards focus on education for one reason: evidence shows that a quality education – *more than anything else* – holds the greatest potential to transform the lives of women and girls.

Our Live Your Dream Awards address a common need around the world *and* here in our own community. They quite literally make dreams come true.

Today, it is my honor to introduce Alice... [details she is comfortable sharing]

(Recipient remarks)

Thank you, Alice. You are a remarkable woman who overcame obstacles to be here today. You showed courage, strength, and perseverance. You set an example for all women, and we are honored to present you with a Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award today.

You join a group of very special women who have received Live Your Dream Awards... [acknowledge past recipients who may be present and/or what past recipients have achieved]

Despite what these women have been through, and are still going through, so many of them are able to use these awards to rise up and improve their lives. And so often, they take their experiences to help improve the lives of other women and girls. That's the beautiful cycle of long-lasting change that the Live Your Dream Awards create.

So Alice, we are very excited for the next chapter of your life. And we look forward to your many accomplishments to come!

We know that success usually isn't a straight path - often there are obstacles and detours along the way – and that we can't make it there alone. Soroptimists are committed to supporting the women who receive our Live Your Dream Awards. We want to acknowledge their hard work and be a part of their path to success.

But Soroptimists don't do this work alone, either. You – our community – are also part of making dreams come true. Your financial support, your precious time volunteering and supporting our causes, helping us spread the word about our important work, and being here today... make it possible for Alice [and other past recipients present] to know her dreams are within reach, and our whole community is behind her.

So I hope Soroptimist of Anytown continues to have your support. Because we have big dreams of serving more women of Anytown – with cash awards and other assistance. Women tell us they need mentoring, school fees, networking, financial planning, and childcare. Can you help us provide any of these things? If so, there are donation envelopes and index cards on your table. Please write your contact information and what skills or interests you have that you would be willing to share with these inspiring women. A couple volunteers will walk around with baskets to collect the envelopes and index cards.

I know this community is important to you, and so is igniting change for women. That's why you're all here today. I appreciate the many ways you each have contributed to our life-changing Live Your Dream Awards, and I am excited to continue working together with all of you to turn dreams and potential into reality for women and families of Anytown.

Thank you!