

FACT SHEET

Award Summary

The Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. Recipients can use the award for tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense. Each year, over \$2.5 million is provided in cash grants to women in need. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$30 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families—leading to stronger communities, nations and the world.

Award Amount

The Live Your Dream Award starts at the club level where award amounts vary. Soroptimist International of Anytown will provide a [INSERT AWARD AMOUNT] award. Club-level recipients then become eligible for region-level awards granted in each of Soroptimist's 28 regions. The first-place region recipients then become candidates for one of three \$10,000 finalist awards.

Applications

Applications are available [LIST LOCATIONS], or by contacting [INSERT CLUB CHAIR NAME].

Deadline

November 15

Soroptimist International of Anytown

Founded in 1987, the Anytown club is part of Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. Anytown members join with almost 80,000 Soroptimists in about 120 countries and territories to contribute time and financial support to community-based projects benefiting women and girls. Soroptimist, a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on charitable donations to support its programs, also powers [LiveYourDream.org](https://www.LiveYourDream.org)—an online community offering offline volunteer opportunities in support of women and girls. For more information about how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, visit www.soroptimist.org.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE SEEKING APPLICANTS**NEWS RELEASE: Anytown Soroptimists to Offer Cash Grant to Women Seeking Financial Assistance For Educational or Training Expenses****Date****Contact Name, Phone Number and Email**

CITY, State— Women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families and seek financial assistance to continue their education or receive training can now apply for the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. Applications are available at the [INSERT LOCATIONS HERE], or by contacting [INSERT CLUB AWARD CHAIR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION]. The application deadline is November 15.

The Anytown club will provide a \$1,000 cash award to its award recipient, who will then advance to the Soroptimist [INSERT REGION NAME] Region level, where recipients could receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

Recipients can use the Live Your Dream Award to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. This includes tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense.

The Live Your Dream Award provides over \$2.5 million in cash awards to head-of-household women in need each year. Since the program's inception in 1972, more than \$30 million has helped tens of thousands of women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. A study conducted by The Fels Institute of Government, a research and consulting organization based at the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed the efficacy and impact of this program. It improves the recipients' quality of life; builds their confidence; strengthens their self-determination and makes them want to, in turn, help others. Helping women in this way has the demonstrated effect of leading to stronger communities, nations and the world.

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE HONORING AWARD RECIPIENTS**NEWS RELEASE: Anytown Soroptimists honor Live Your Dream Award recipient**

Present local woman with \$1,000 cash grant for educational expenses

Date

Contact: Insert Name, Phone Number and Email

CITY, State—Soroptimist International of Anytown, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment, will present a \$1,000 Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women to help a local woman improve her economic situation. The awards ceremony will be held [INSERT EVENT DETAILS HERE: at 6:30 p.m. on March 8 at the Anytown Ramada Inn. The Anytown Soroptimists hold its awards ceremony each year on International Women’s Day—the day that celebrates women’s contributions to society.]

Recipient Regina Harrison, 34, will use the cash award to complete her bachelor’s degree at Anytown College, where she is majoring in social work. Once she completes her studies, Harrison, a domestic abuse survivor, plans to counsel other women who have also left abusive situations.

“I had run out of money and wasn’t going to be able to complete my degree,” Harrison said. “The Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award came through just in time. I’m looking forward to finishing my degree so I can go on to help other women as I’ve been helped.”

The Live Your Dream Award provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. The award can be used for tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense.

The Anytown Soroptimists chose Harrison because of her optimistic attitude, her 3.8 grade-point-average in college and the excellent recommendations she received. Harrison has been raising three children on the money she earns working as a waitress.

Harrison will now advance to the Soroptimist [INSERT REGION NAME] level, where recipients can receive up to an additional \$5,000. The program culminates with three finalist \$10,000 awards.

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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Date

Klara Fries, Editor
Anytown Press
453 Maple Avenue
Anytown, Anystate 15235

Dear Ms. Fries:

You won't have to look further than Anytown to find an inspirational woman who has endured difficult circumstances, but carries on with courage and determination. She is a hero to the many local organizations, such as the Laurel House Women's Center, for which she volunteers. She is a hero to Anytown College, where she attends classes and participates in several campus outreach programs. And most important, she is a hero to her three children, who gave their mother reason to leave an abusive relationship and seek a better life.

I would like to share with you and your readers the story of Regina Harrison. Regina, 34, has inspired us with her profound story of struggle and triumph. For that, we recently granted her a Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Award for Women. Regina will use the \$1,000 Live Your Dream Award to finish her bachelor's degree in social work and find a job that will secure her economic independence.

The Live Your Dream Award is Soroptimist International of the Americas' major program. Soroptimist International of Anytown is one of nearly 1,300 clubs that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. The award provides women who serve as the primary wage earners for their families with the financial resources to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or additional skills and training. The award can be used for tuition, books, childcare, carfare or any other education-related expense.

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Regina was chosen as the award recipient from among 50 area applicants. She will now advance to the Soroptimist Any Region award level, where recipients can receive up to an additional \$5,000. Should she receive that award, Regina would then be eligible for an additional \$10,000.

Regina Harrison joins a long list of women who have reclaimed their dreams since 1972 with the help of the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. I believe your readers would be as inspired by her story as we were. I'll follow up with you shortly to determine your interest in this story. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
[INSERT CLUB CONTACT]

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARD SPEECH INSTRUCTIONS

The Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women speech provides a way for clubs to create awareness about the program and the Soroptimist organization. It was designed as a template and can easily be customized. The speech can be given whenever a club member is invited to speak—be it a community college, a meeting of another civic organization, a chamber of commerce meeting, etc. Here are some tips for effective public speaking. Contact the communications department at SIA headquarters with any questions about this speech or other public awareness activities.

10 TIPS FOR GIVING A GREAT SPEECH

1) Practice makes perfect.

The more you practice, the easier it will be to give your speech. It's fine to use notes or index cards—but the less you have to rely on them, the better your speech will flow.

2) Make eye contact.

Be sure to look around the room while you deliver your speech. Take care to connect with individual people in your audience.

3) Mistakes happen.

If you make one, just keep going. Everyone will be interested in the substance of your speech. They won't remember a few mistakes.

4) Speak slowly, clearly and loudly.

You want everyone to hear what you have to say. Even if there's a microphone, some people may have difficulty hearing.

5) Smile.

You have been invited to share about the wonderful contributions that Soroptimist makes to your community and the world. Display your feelings through positive body language, and remember to stand up straight.

6) Take a break.

If you find yourself “hemming and hawing” because you've lost your train of thought, just pause for a second or two. This will help you to get your bearings and it might also provide a dramatic effect.

7) Mix it up.

To avoid a monotonous delivery, try to vary your intonation.

8) Breathe.

Taking a deep breath before you begin speaking will have a calming effect. Also remember to take deep, regular breaths while delivering your speech.

9) Hang on.

Lightly gripping the podium or lectern will give you a feeling of stability and help to ease your jitters.

10) Enjoy yourself.

Although public speaking can be stressful, remember you are speaking to a friendly audience. Enjoy communicating a positive message about Soroptimist and the opportunity to flex your public speaking skills.

LIVE YOUR DREAM AWARDS SAMPLE SPEECH

Thank you for inviting me to be with you today (tonight). My name is _____ and I am a member of Soroptimist International of _____. Today (tonight), I want to tell you the story of a remarkable young woman named Kathy.

Kathy was born and raised in the USA's Midwest. She was a nice girl and excellent student who dreamed of one day working in the medical profession. When she was 16, she met a man more than 10 years her senior. Kathy, a self-described "ugly duckling" was extremely flattered by Joe's attention. Soon she found herself pregnant, and against her parents' wishes, dropped out of high school to marry Joe. Kathy's childhood ended that year, and her dreams for the future were put on hold indefinitely.

Almost from the beginning, there were problems. Joe, who worked as a roofer, rarely finished a job. The family would move so he could find work, but he would inevitably lose his job. Meanwhile, Kathy struggled to feed and clothe their growing family, living mostly on public assistance.

Joe began drinking heavily and acting erratically. He would tell Kathy that he was going out to get gas, and then not come home all night. He became abusive. He wanted to know where Kathy was at all times, and wouldn't let her work—despite the family's need for additional income. He was controlling and full of rage—a far cry from the sweet-talking man who had promised to love and support her.

Kathy stayed with her husband for more than a decade. She felt sorry for him and thought it was her duty to take care of him, just as her mother had taken care of her father. Kathy also believed it was best for her kids to be with their dad—regardless of how flawed he might be. Most of all, Kathy was terrified of trying to make it on her own. She was a mother to five children, without even a high school education or any realistic way to provide for her family.

One night, Kathy reached her breaking point. The kids were in the living room working on a school project, laughing and having fun. Kathy's husband came in, drunk, and asked her to drive him to a bar. When she refused, he stormed from the house and proceeded to wreck their car.

That day, Kathy, who was 28 at the time, vowed that by the time she was 30, she would be living in different circumstances. A couple of weeks later, when her kids came home from school, Kathy told Joe they were leaving. She stuffed their belongings into bags, while her husband begged her to stay. Looking at her children, Kathy realized that she'd been doing them more harm than good by staying with Joe. Kathy and all five children moved into her sister's two-bedroom house and Kathy got a job at a pizza parlor making minimum wage—certainly not enough to make her dream of getting off public assistance a possibility.

Some time later, Kathy was at a dental appointment. She was nervous after having not been to the dentist for many years, but the hygienist was nice and calmed her fears. Sitting in that chair, Kathy remembered her childhood ambition to enter into the medical profession, and thought to herself, "Maybe it's not too late."

Kathy spent the next several months researching the field of dental hygiene. She applied for government loans and grants, but they would only be enough to cover tuition. If she attended school full time, she wouldn't be able to work to supplement the public assistance. Uniforms, car repairs and upkeep, books, plus her family's regular expenses would stretch them to the breaking point. In addition, Kathy would have a two-hour commute—each way—to and from dental school.

But Kathy's dream would not be denied. She started school and worked as many hours as she could. One day, during her first year of school, one of Kathy's professors pointed out a notice with information about the Soroptimist Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women. Kathy read the requirements and thought to herself, "That's me!" She filled out the application, beginning her personal essay with "The last 12 years of my life have been filled with many trials. ..."

Kathy's compelling story resulted in her receiving a cash award from the local Soroptimist club and later a \$5,000 award from the region level of our organization. Several months later she received a call from Soroptimist's president, who asked if she was sitting down. She told Kathy that she had been chosen to receive the \$10,000 finalist Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award. "I was completely stunned," recalled Kathy. "I turned to my kids and told them the amazing news. Did we ever have a party that night ... screaming and jumping up and down!"

In a letter that Kathy wrote to us, she said: "This award helped me so much, not only financially, but emotionally. It helped me to believe that I really could make it. I don't know how we would have made it without Soroptimist's help. At last, my life, and the lives of my children had hope and direction."

Kathy went on to realize her dream of a career as a dental hygienist where she said she earned more working four days a week than she did in a whole month on public assistance. She met her current husband on one of her many trips to the hardware store. She and her husband, who live with their blended family in a country home on eight acres of land, later bought a hardware store. Kathy says that her story, including how she received the Live Your Dream Award, convinced the bank to finance the loan for the store.

"I've always heard that hard times build character," said Kathy. "If that's true, I must be quite a character by now," states Kathy. "But I know that I'm a better person for it. I'm stronger and I've learned a lot, like how to believe in myself. I have grown so much. I have a deeper sense of self worth and a lot more confidence in myself. I feel a great deal of inner peace."

Isn't Kathy's story amazing? When I think about all the little things that get most of us down, it's hard to imagine overcoming the obstacles that Kathy did. She's not alone, though. She joins tens of thousands of women who, since 1972, have reclaimed their dreams with the help of a Live Your Dream Award. We are so proud of this program, and of the women who have the courage to transform their lives. They have hope and an undeniable belief in their dreams. They are an inspiration to women everywhere who are desperate to change their lives. Kathy has shared her experiences with many of her patients who were looking for hope and direction. "I impress upon them the importance of reaching for their dreams," she says.

The Live Your Dream Awards are granted to women like Kathy who have already decided to change their lives but lack the financial resources to do so. Award amounts vary at different levels of our organization, with three top finalist awards of \$10,000. Each year, over 1,500 women receive over \$2.5 million in cash awards through this Soroptimist program. The award is not a scholarship and recipients may use the cash for any expense related to their efforts at gaining additional training or education. Kathy used hers to keep her car running while she made that long commute back and forth from the dental school. While the cash award is incredibly helpful, Soroptimist Live Your Dream Award recipients say that confidence and support they receive is equally meaningful.

As a global organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment, Soroptimist believes in helping women to live their dreams by providing them with the resources they need to change their lives. We also believe that when you help a woman, you also help her family, the community, and the world. Despite the enormous progress that women have made, they still suffer disproportionately from poverty, illiteracy, violence and discrimination. As women, we feel uniquely qualified to reach out to women the world over.

Maybe you know a woman who might be deserving of a Live Your Dream Award. Or maybe you work for an agency or a college whose constituents would be interested in this program. I urge you to contact us or to send these women our way.

I'd like to leave you with one last thought. Eleanor Roosevelt once said that the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. Kathy's dream was to get an education, earn a good living and provide a good role model for her five children. Soroptimist's dream is to make sure that women like Kathy get the assistance and support they need. What's your dream?