



# Soroptimist 101



SOROPTIMIST®

Investing in Dreams

# Welcome to Soroptimist!

We believe the economic empowerment of women and girls is the best way to transform their lives and the world.

For 100 years, Soroptimist International of the Americas, Inc.® has shown that with a financial investment toward their goals, women and girls who face obstacles such as racism, poverty, violence and teen pregnancy can achieve great things.

Our years of experience has taught us that **education is the key to unlocking economic empowerment of the world's women and girls**. When women and girls are educated, they have opportunity, choice and power to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families.

With help from our members like you, clubs, supporters and donors—we're making dreams come true for women and girls.

Thank you for joining us on this journey!



## Our Mission

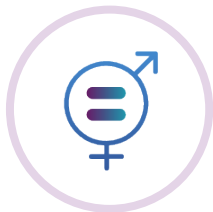
Providing women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

## Our Vision

Women and girls have the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential and live their dreams.

## Our Core Values

*Soroptimist International of the Americas is committed to:*



### Gender Equality

Women and girls live free from discrimination.



### Empowerment

Women and girls are free to act in their own best interest.



### Education

Women and girls deserve to lead full and productive lives through access to education.



### Diversity & Fellowship

Women from varied backgrounds and perspectives work together to improve the lives of women and girls.



# Soroptimist: A Strong History of Helping Women and Girls

Soroptimist is a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. Since our founding in California, USA, in 1921, we have grown to include over 25,000 Soroptimists in countries across North America, Latin America and the Pacific Rim. Powered by our volunteer members, each of our nearly 1,200 clubs supports community-based and global projects benefiting women and girls. Since our signature Dream Programs began, **we have helped more than 100,000 women and girls reach their goals.** Soroptimist's investment is paying huge dividends—not only for these individual women and girls, but for entire communities and nations.

More and more people are beginning to discover what Soroptimists have always known—the **best way to uplift communities and nations starts with educating women and girls.** This growing realization provides an unprecedented opportunity. With strong support from

philanthropic individuals and organizations, we can seize this opportunity to reach more women and girls with our brand-unifying Dream Programs.

Our long history of women helping women in need, our replicated program outcomes and our vast network of members and supporters position Soroptimist to effectively reach women and girls in the countries and territories we serve.

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***We're focused on the economic empowerment of women and girls because it is at the heart of lifting up society as a whole.***

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And we're just getting started. We've laid out an ambitious—but realistic—plan to reach far more women and girls. We are thrilled you have joined us!

*"I've had the privilege of witnessing the transformative nature of our programs and I look forward to our continued collective efforts to invest in the dreams of those we serve."*

Dr. Gloria "Ginger" Cole has been a member of SI/Los Angeles, CA (Camino Real Region) since 2007. Since then, she has served as club president, vice president, *Dream It, Be It*® chair and Violet Richardson Award chair, as well as region governor, governor-elect, secretary and parliamentarian.

As president, she will work with the Soroptimist Board to oversee Soroptimist's strategic planning and program development for the organization. She will also help lead Soroptimist's efforts to increase its collective impact in helping women and girls to reach their full potential.

In addition to her Soroptimist activities, Ginger earned a Doctorate degree (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership from the University of California, Los Angeles and a Master of Education degree in Educational Administration from California State University in Los Angeles. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta, Foothill Alumnae Chapter, loves to travel and enjoys live theatre, concerts, and jazz.

She is currently an educational consultant, grant writer, and project monitor. Most recently, Dr. Cole was honored by Business Life Magazine as its 2023 Woman of Distinction.



**Gloria "Ginger" Cole**  
2024-2025 SIA President

# Benefits

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Soroptimist uses annual dues to ensure our members have a fun and meaningful club experience while accomplishing our collective mission—today and into the future. Surveys tell us members value the following benefits from their membership:

## Mission-based Programs.

Members **experience joy and a sense of accomplishment** by working with other like-minded women on global programs that provide women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

## Connections & Personal Development.

Members **grow professionally and personally**. Through friendships with club members, relationships in your region, and connections with members from diverse countries and backgrounds, you are able to grow your network. The opportunities for leadership development provide professional growth.

## Access to a Team of Non-Profit Professionals.

Members **receive guidance and resources from SIA headquarters**, enabling them to enjoy a meaningful club experience as they change communities for the better.

In addition to these values, here is a brief overview of the individual benefits members receive when they join Soroptimist:

- *Best for Women*, our monthly fully translated electronic newsletter which keeps you updated on Soroptimist initiatives and activities.
- Leadership development and networking opportunities.
- Opportunity to participate in and provide feedback through our social media sites.
- Access to contact information for other members, clubs and leaders via online directories.
- Special offers and discounts through our partners.
- Invitations to international biennial conventions.





# The Soroptimist Dream Programs

Soroptimist's Dream Programs ensure women and girls have access to the education and training they need to reach their full potential and live their dreams. Soroptimist is committed to investing in programs that have a sustainable, measurable impact on the lives of women and girls.

## Investing in Women to Achieve their Dreams

Our signature program, the *Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women*<sup>®</sup>, has provided cash awards to more than 43,000 women since its inception in 1972—empowering them to achieve economic independence.

Every year, Soroptimist **distributes more than \$3 million in education grants to over 2,000 women** all over the world.

Over half of our *Live Your Dream Awards* recipients are survivors of domestic violence, trafficking or sexual assault. Nearly all of the women and families we serve **have overcome enormous obstacles** including racism, poverty, teen pregnancy, and substance use disorder.

*Live Your Dream Awards* recipients may use the cash award to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education, such as books, childcare, tuition and transportation. This unique program is **helping women find their voice** and purpose while offering the resources they need to succeed.

The women and girls we serve are some of the most courageous, powerful and inspiring people you'll ever meet. Each and every one of them is a superhero. We are honored to share their extraordinary stories, which demonstrate the impact members like you make.

“You turned on a light inside me, opened the door to a new realm of being and invited me in with open arms. Words could never adequately describe the love and appreciation I have for this organization. I can only hope to one day change the lives of others the way you changed ours.”

—Colleen, *Live Your Dream Awards* Recipient





## Putting Girls on a Path to a Brighter Future

Our *Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls*® program **empowers girls to break the cycles of racism, poverty, and abuse** by giving them the self-confidence and knowledge they need to achieve success in their future careers and personal lives.

Although all girls face barriers because of their gender, **we prioritize working with girls who have additional obstacles** including racism, poverty, living in foster care, or teen motherhood. Soroptimist clubs work in partnership with girls in small groups or a conference setting to provide them with the information and resources they want and need to be successful.

By reaching girls while they are still young, we not only can help them stay healthy and safe in the short term, but we can reduce the number of women in crisis in the future. Putting girls on a path will help them realize their dreams.

*“I learned from the Dream It, Be It program that every woman has the power to achieve their dreams.”*

*—Dream It, Be It Participant*

## Our Big Goal

Soroptimist has a Big Goal of investing in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education by 2031. Achieving this audacious goal will ensure that we make a sustainable and measurable difference in the lives of women and girls, as well as their families and communities. This half a million figure comprises women and girls participating in our Dream Programs and Big Goal Accelerator Projects, which are club and region projects that also increase access to education for women and girls facing obstacles to their success. As we build on a decade of increased collective impact, we are ready to meet the needs of women and girls throughout our federation and make a name for Soroptimist the world over.

# Spotlight on Clubs and Regions

Our clubs and regions contribute to achieving our Big Goal of investing in the dreams of half a million women and girls through the delivery of our brand-unifying Dream Programs. The following examples are just a few of the amazing ways clubs contribute to our impact and brand recognition throughout the world.



**SI/Curitiba Batel (Brazil Region)** implemented a *Dream It, Be It* project in their community where they hosted a two-day conference for girls in their community. Along with utilizing the curriculum, the club provided lists of local courses that were free of charge for participants to continue their education. The club also brought in a speaker to share information about domestic violence and self-confidence.



**Desert Coast Region** hosts *Live Your Dream Awards* application workshops for current applicants, but they incorporate their relationships with past recipients to make the events even more special. The workshops honor former recipients by inviting them to share their stories and encourage new applicants. It's very motivating to the applicants to see someone that has been in their shoes succeeding because of the *Live Your Dream Awards* and the events help Desert Coast's Awards grow every year.



The *Dream It, Be It* program at **SI/Greater Santa Clarita Valley, CA (Camino Real Region)**, incorporated the conference model in their club's planning, and their largest conference reached 180 girls. One of the special aspects of Greater Santa Clarita Valley's program is that they bring in local women who are young but have endured some of the obstacles that the curriculum addresses. These women serve as "mentors," sharing their story with the participants and encouraging them to pursue their goals.



**Northwestern Region** had another great year for the *Live Your Dream Awards*. Along with increasing their region's club participation, the Region also attracted 20 new members to clubs. Clubs in the Region also distributed additional support to their recipients, including mentoring, job training, tutoring, tax/financial advice, and childcare assistance.





## Connect With Us

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### Soroptimist.org

As you learn more about Soroptimist, remember to visit our robust website to access more information about our programs and impact. Additionally, you'll want to check the **For Clubs and Members Area** frequently to keep up-to-date on resources, directories, and upcoming meetings and conventions.

### Shop for a Cause

Did you know when you make a purchase from Soroptimist you are showing your support for the world's women? Your purchase funds our life-changing Dream Programs for women and girls. Check out our store at [Shop.soroptimist.org/](https://shop.soroptimist.org/) for a fine selection of pins, jewelry, office accessories, apparel and printed items!

### Social Media

One of Soroptimist's key strengths is its ability to provide an international networking forum. To add to this strength, Soroptimist has developed several social online groups for members, which serve as a great way to share and exchange ideas with like-minded individuals. You can join one or all of the Soroptimist groups. Simply click on the links below to connect or visit [www.soroptimist.org](https://www.soroptimist.org) and click on the social media buttons at the top right of the homepage:

 <https://www.facebook.com/soroptimist>

 <https://twitter.com/soroptimist>

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/soroptimistinternationaloftheamericas/>

 <https://www.youtube.com/user/SIAHQ>

 <https://www.instagram.com/soroptimist/>



# Glossary

Like many organizations, Soroptimist has terms and definitions unique to our programs and members. To help you learn more about our organization, we have developed a glossary of terms you may use for reference.

## **Best for Women Digital Newsletter**

SIA's fully translated electronic newsletter, which keeps readers updated on Soroptimist initiatives and activities.

## **Big Goal**

SIA's 2021-2031 Big Goal is to invest in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education. We will do this through our Dream Programs and Big Goal Accelerator Projects.

## **Big Goal Accelerator Projects**

These are club projects that are not the Dream Programs but that do increase access to education for women and girls facing obstacles to their success. These are often scholarships, classes, or providing specific items required to access education.

## **Club Giving**

Club Giving is the way your club can help women and girls beyond your local community. Clubs are asked to contribute at least 10 percent of the funds they raise locally to fund our life-changing global Dream Programs, and increase the number of women and girls who benefit. When your club contributes to Club Giving it ensures that more women and girls close to home and across the world will have access to our programs. More women will be able to overcome challenges such as racism, sex slavery, domestic violence, poverty and drug abuse, and live more fulfilling lives. More girls will be able to overcome obstacles, increase their self-esteem, and pursue their dreams. Visit the [Club Giving](#) section of our website to see the benefits your club will receive with your contribution this club year.

## **Convention**

Held in even-numbered years, SIA conventions provide education, networking, cross-cultural and socializing opportunities. In addition to inspiring speakers and workshops, members also have the opportunity to

participate in the decision-making process and meet Soroptimists from around the world.

## ***Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls®***

*Dream It, Be It* is SIA's program that empowers girls to break cycles of racism, poverty, and abuse by giving them the self-confidence and knowledge they need to achieve success. Through small group workshops or a conference setting, Soroptimists mentor girls on setting and achieving their goals, moving forward after setbacks or failures, and discovering career opportunities.

## **Founders Pennies**

Celebrating the founding of Soroptimist, Founders Pennies are a classic, time-honored tradition for clubs to support SIA's Dream Programs in a creative way. They are collected by clubs in a variety of ways and are usually submitted with SIA dues. Founders Pennies are calculated by multiplying \$.06 per member times the number of years since Soroptimist's Founding in 1921. In the 2024-2025 club year, Founders Pennies are \$6.24 per member.

## **Laurel Legacy**

The Laurel Legacy is SIA's way of recognizing and honoring the generosity of those whose future gifts preserve the strength of our organization, and help women and girls to live their dreams. Arranging a planned gift to Soroptimist is an excellent way to support our programs well into the future.

## **Laurel Society**

The Laurel Society is SIA's prestigious recognition program for donors who contribute gifts totaling \$1,000 or more. Since 1994, over 10,000 Laurel Society members have given over \$20 million dollars towards the economic empowerment of women and girls. Donors can choose to designate their gift to the *Live Your Dream Awards*, *Dream It, Be It*, or Unrestricted Support, which provides funding where it's needed most. These gifts can be given as one-

time gifts or as part of a Stargazer Monthly Donation. Laurel Society members' generosity provides ongoing financial support beyond their membership dues, ensuring the organization's global programs have the funding needed to serve women and girls around the world.

## Leadership Round Table

Leadership Round Table (LRT) is an evolution of the Governors Round Table, held annually in a virtual setting, it is open to all SIA members. This training is held so Soroptimists can access critical leadership development content. Whether you want to become a better overall leader or feed your interest in becoming a future Soroptimist leader, LRT is an opportunity to learn and be part of the ever-changing and growing Soroptimist organization.

## Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women®

Soroptimist clubs have supported women's empowerment through access to education since 1972 with this cornerstone program. The award-winning, life-changing *Live Your Dream Awards* assist women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families by giving them the resources they need to improve their education, skills and employment prospects.

## LiveYourDream.org

Not to be confused with the *Live Your Dream Awards*, LiveYourDream.org® is Soroptimist's online volunteer community. Soroptimist developed this activist network to provide an alternative way to deliver our mission; strengthen and grow our brand; and increase financial resources to improve the lives of women and girls. LiveYourDream.org provides advocacy and action opportunities to spread awareness about causes such as access to education, empowering girls and ending violence against women.

## Soroptimist Blog

View SIA's blog for headquarters news; spotlights on clubs, members, donors and award recipients; advocacy actions and more.

## Soroptimist International

Headquartered in Cambridge, England, [Soroptimist International](#) is a coalition of five federations, which includes Soroptimist International of the Americas. The

other four federations that belong to SI are: Soroptimist International of Europe ([www.soroptimisteurope.org](http://www.soroptimisteurope.org)), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland; Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland ([www.sigbi.org](http://www.sigbi.org)), headquartered in Cheshire, England; Soroptimist International of the South East Asia ([www.siseap.org](http://www.siseap.org)), headquartered in Sydney, Australia and Soroptimist International African Federation ([www.siafrica.org/UK/home](http://www.siafrica.org/UK/home)), headquartered in Lagos State, Nigeria.

## Soroptimist International Foundation

Formerly known as the SI President's Appeal, the [SI Foundation](#) was established to raise awareness of projects and promote fundraising through continued Soroptimist member giving, legacy gifts, grants and other sources. The SI Foundation is led by the current SI President.

## Soroptimist International of the Americas Strategic Plan

A document that states Soroptimist's vision, mission, core values and strategic outcomes.

## Soroptimist Leadership Fellows Program

The Soroptimist Leadership Fellows Program, an accompaniment to the Leadership Round Table, is a certificate program that gives members an opportunity to further and enrich their leadership skills in an engaging and interactive way. The Fellows program is a multi-year commitment where participants must submit a brief application before becoming a Fellow. Participants experience heightened training in an exclusive setting followed by a completion ceremony after the 2-year commitment is complete.

## Soroptimists UpliftHER

On a quarterly basis, this exciting new member engagement initiative will focus on an obstacle that women and girls face on their path to formal education and economic empowerment. SIA headquarters shares information about the obstacle, as well as suggested projects related to that obstacle that count towards our Big Goal. Clubs can participate in the quarterly focus by sharing SIA posts and posting their own projects with the hashtag #SoroptimistsUpliftHER.





## Thank you for being part of our dynamic organization!

We appreciate your time and dedication  
to the Soroptimist mission!

### Contact Us

Get in touch with your headquarters  
staff! SIA's headquarters office provides  
many resources and assists Soroptimists  
with their volunteer work.

Regular business hours are  
Monday– Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (ET)

Staff can be reached in the  
following ways:

**Mail:** 1709 Spruce Street, Philadelphia,  
PA 19103-6103

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