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through programs leading to social
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SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Recruitment Tip: The NO GUILT Soroptimist Club

These days it seems like everyone is busy all the time—we have hectic schedules, and every moment is precious! While recruiting new members, you'll often hear women saying they don't know whether they'll have the time to commit to Soroptimist. You may have run into scheduling conflicts yourself that prevented you from attending a Soroptimist event! Does your club accommodate members' schedules, or is there a culture of "guilt" directed at those who can't attend meetings as often as others? It's important to offer members and prospects flexibility with regard to their participation in meetings and activities—especially if you're recruiting members who may be balancing the chaotic schedule of a young family as well as their professional life!

Across the federation, many leaders have promoted a club philosophy that's more positive, flexible, and better-aligned with the lifestyles of today's active women—the No Guilt Club. This is a great option for clubs that want to promote a welcoming and positive environment, without the pressure or guilt that can come along with strict tracking of attendance. A No Guilt Club accepts members at varied levels of engagement, and recognizes each member gives what she can. Clubs should realize that a member's ability to participate may change over time, and avoid casting negativity her way during a period of lower involvement.

However—this doesn't mean that No Guilt Clubs shouldn't set basic standards and expectations for all members! Cathy Standiford, past SIA president and 2014-2015 treasurer of SI/Garden Grove (the club that developed the idea of a No Guilt Soroptimist Club over 15 years ago), emphasizes the balance between flexibility and responsibility. When implementing a No Guilt policy or philosophy, make sure that members understand their core responsibilities such as paying dues and participating in key club events. Be clear about expectations and find ways to be flexible in how members meet them.

"A true Soroptimist has many things going on in her life at the same time," said 2014-2015 President Dyann O'Brien whose club SI/Eureka, CA has fully and successfully embraced this philosophy. SI/Eureka keeps the No Guilt message front and center, and offers email updates between meetings so that those who can't attend are still in the loop. Communicating expectations is a key part of the recruitment process. As a prospect makes the decision about whether to join your club, it will be crucial for her to know up front exactly what is expected and required from her, and it will be reassuring for her to understand what type of flexibility may be offered.

When you recruit someone to join your club, remember that she may have family, work, and other community responsibilities on her plate already. But if she's willing to give some of her time to help your club in its mission to improve the lives of women and girls, that's what makes her a great potential member.

Openness and flexibility help promote a positive and healthy club environment. This puts a club policy in place to prevent negative attitudes and resentment from arising among the most active members toward those who may be less available. And a healthy club environment feels warm and welcoming to prospects!

What's the power of a no guilt club? SI/Eureka has inducted 14 new members since September 2014—that's no coincidence! President Dyann has been promoting the No Guilt Club since the first Founder Region President's Round Table this year, and it's clearly made a huge impact! What changes could you make in your club to promote positivity and downplay the "guilt factor"? Maybe if you made those changes, your club could see 14 new members in the new club year!