



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women®

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

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Retaining & Engaging Our Younger Members

On Wednesday, June 20, 2016, a group of five Soroptimists under the age of 40 gathered to discuss their experiences as younger members of the organization. SIA's membership staff facilitated the conversation. This report summarizes the main focal points of the conversation, as a preliminary overview. Soroptimist clubs may use this information as they seek to engage younger women in their own communities.

- Younger Soroptimist members value opportunities for service, and they define service differently than many of our members and clubs traditionally have. While many clubs focus on service through the distribution of awards and funding, this group seeks experiences that are hands-on. Service opportunities for younger members are those that involve going into the community and working directly with the women and girls whose lives we impact with our programs. *Dream It, Be It* is an ideal service opportunity for engaging members in this age bracket, as they can work face-to-face with the girls they mentor through the program.
- Members in this age group see the future of SIA as very different – particularly in terms of simplifying the formalities and procedures that guide most Soroptimist functions, and using technology to make club business more efficient. They view it as their responsibility as the younger generation to push for change within their clubs.
- A major issue for younger women in our organization is finances. The cost of membership can be prohibitive for women just starting out in their career. Beyond the cost of membership dues, the costs of meals for meetings and required contributions mean that the financial strain of membership continues throughout the year. Only in some clubs are there flexible options available that accommodate younger members such as payment plans, optional meals or even credit card processing. While existing younger members know the value of membership and find a way to “make it work,” they report it is hard to recruit their peers from outside of the organization. It is also important to note that younger members do not like to be viewed as a “charity case” or have other members pay their way.
- Opportunities to connect with the larger Soroptimist community at region conferences and Convention are valuable educational experiences to this group, and provide fellowship and networking with other women who have similar values. Going back to the financial concern, these events can be quite expensive to attend and are not necessarily accessible to members in this age group.
- Younger members feel encouraged to take on leadership roles by tenured members - although they do not necessarily feel they are given the full training or orientation they need before taking on a leadership position. They are happy to step into leadership roles, but need support from experienced members and past leaders.