

Best for Women

A Publication of Soroptimist International of the Americas, Inc.®

Special Issue

COVID-19 Message

A reassuring message from SIA President Tina Wei-Kang Pan

Dream Programs and COVID-19

New resources to help assist women and girls in your community

SIA Relief Package

Support for clubs to move our mission forward



Photo credit: Chelsea Foy

Our Next Big Goal

Reaching More Women and Girls Through Our Dream Programs

President's Message

I hope you and your family are safe and well during this challenging time. I urge you to follow the recommendations of your local and national governments. And use this time together to reconnect with your family.

Rest assured your Board and staff are working hard to keep our impact moving forward. The women and girls we serve are more vulnerable than ever and your Board and staff are doing everything possible to continue to serve them through our Dream Programs.

We know Soroptimists are doers, and their first instinct is to think about ways to help others during a crisis. Even though most of us are in isolation with our families, there are things we can still do to help the women and girls. Our program team at headquarters has prepared a marvelous resource with many great ideas on how to virtually provide support to the women

and girls in your community. You can find it on the SIA website in the program resources section in a document called [Dream Programs and COVID-19](#).

And we have started a campaign on Facebook that will lift up our spirits and help us cope with these difficult times. Please check it out and add to the inspiration with stories of your own.

We are all in this together, and we will all get through it together. As we work virtually, your Board and staff are here to help you. Don't hesitate to call on us.

Please watch a video version of this message [here](#).

Looking forward to brighter days ahead. 🌸



Transformation: A View from Spruce Street

A message from the SIA Executive Director & CEO

Our health and wellbeing are of the utmost importance to us. First and foremost, we want you to stay well and healthy as we weather this crisis together.

Even though you can't meet in person right now, we have prepared a lot of materials to fill the void. Please find that information on page 5. And although we're all disappointed that we were forced to cancel our Bellevue convention, let's all look forward to our next opportunity to meet in 2022 in South Korea.

As President Tina states in her message, Soroptimists are doers. Please consider ways we can continue to help women and girls during this time of great need. They were vulnerable before this crisis hit; they are more so now. Be sure to check out the program resources on page 3, which give some great ideas on how to help.

We still have much to celebrate. Please read the cover story in this special issue of *Best for Women* and learn how our *Dream It, Be It* program is helping to put girls on a healthy path. And please, if you are able, donate to our SIA Disaster Fund so we can support our clubs and headquarters operations during this unprecedented time of need. See pages 6 and 7 for more information.

As our planet pauses to keep each other safe, I ask that you please keep the women and girls we serve in your hearts. Wishing you, your families and your communities good health and resilience. 🌸



Going Digital

This special issue of *Best for Women* is being published in a digital format in order to get urgent news to our members as quickly as possible. To save time, and printing and shipping costs, *Best for Women* will become fully digital going forward. Members can expect the same quality in a digital format, which can be produced more quickly at a greatly reduced cost. In addition, publishing *Best for Women* in this way will reduce our carbon footprint and contribute to a more healthy environment for Mother Earth—which we know is very important to our members. Please be sure that headquarters has your email address, which is the best way we have of communicating with you! 🌸

46th Biennial Convention Update

Dear Soroptimist Members,

It is with a heavy heart that I report your SIA Board of Directors has discussed and decided for reasons outside of our control to cancel our 46th Biennial Convention in Bellevue, Washington, USA, July 22-25, 2020. We will be terminating our contract for cause with the Hyatt Regency Bellevue Hotel because of the global public health pandemic.

For all of us, this opportunity to come together in person to celebrate our impact and plan for our future is a high point of membership in our global organization. But right now, with the coronavirus/COVID-19 still spreading, and with international travel restrictions and limits on the number of people who can gather together, we know this is not the right time for our convention. At this time, we are focused on our families, our communities and the women and girls we can serve during this crisis.

This decision in no way diminishes our desire to share information and excitement about our Dream Programs, our next Big Goal or our Diamond Campaign. It does not diminish our desire to celebrate the outstanding work of clubs and regions. It does not diminish our desire to thank our donors. And it does not diminish our desire to thank our out-going leaders or pledge our support to those who are taking up new leadership roles.

Your SIA Board has decided to retain the club convention fee to cover the costs of terminating our convention. A significant component is a reserve established, on advice of legal counsel, for any potential claims and expenses that may arise out of our termination for cause of the convention contract itself. Although we believe that the termination was proper, until there is a final resolution, it is prudent to keep an appropriate reserve in case of any dispute. Funds will also be used to share convention content in new and different ways. In addition, we will be exploring new ways to consider our proposed bylaws changes. We know this is a sensitive issue. Please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for a more complete explanation of how SIA is using the club convention fee to benefit all of us across our federation.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank Convention Chair Stephanie Smith and Co-Chair Sue Riney and their wonderful committee chairs: Colleen Schmidt, Program; Kathy King, General Session; Kelly Fogarty, Sponsorship; Leanne Davis, Marketing; Karen Marshall, Exhibitor; Ann Rutledge, Volunteer Coordinator; and Theresa Heidt-Vanderschoot, Hospitality. I know I speak for all our members when I say thank you and express my regret that we will not be able to experience all the wonderful things you had planned for us.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact siahq@soroptimist.org.

Sincerely,






Tina Wei-Kang Pan
2019-2020 SIA President

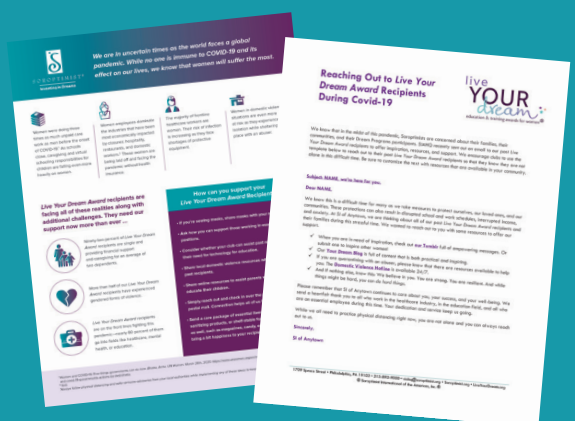
Members who were registered for convention either as a paid registrant or a delegate have received an email on refunds and hotel reservations. Read our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

Dream Programs and COVID-19

In these difficult times, we are focused on protecting ourselves, our families, and our communities from the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We are canceling club face-to-face meetings and events. We are practicing physical distancing and following the mandates of government and public health officials. And, because we are Soroptimists, we are worrying about and wanting to help the most vulnerable members of our communities.

The program team at SIA has prepared several new resources to help you assist women and girls in your community:

-  **Infographic:** Learn how Covid-19 disproportionately impacts women and what you can do to help
-  **Customizable Letter:** Customize and send this encouraging letter to your club's Live Your Dream Awards recipients
-  **Covid-19 and Dream Programs:** Read suggestions for working with Dream Program participants during these difficult times



If your club has been supporting women and girls during this time, we would love to hear from you! Please share with us at program@soroptimist.org.



Reaching More Women and Girls Through Our Dream Programs

Editorial Note: In this time of COVID-19, it's important to stay hopeful and concentrate on what's important. The women and girls we serve constitute a vulnerable population. In times of crisis, they are the hardest hit. Now is a great time to celebrate the impact of our programs and think about how we can continue to support our mission. Please enjoy this update on the impact of our Dream It, Be It program.

Beginning in 2012-2013, SIA clubs around the world began to work on our 2012-2021 Big Goal of increased collective impact. Clubs committed to reaching more women and girls through our *Live Your Dream Awards* and *Dream It, Be It*.

For some clubs like SI/Modesto North, CA (Sierra Pacific Region) this meant evaluating how the club was spending its human and financial resources. Club members gathered to have a candid discussion about the programs they were currently supporting in the community. Using the SIA's Working as One tool, they found their resources were stretched too thinly and some programs didn't focus on women and girls. They decided to narrow their focus. President Charmaine recommends that each club president use the Working as One instructions and PowerPoint, and allocate the

1.5 hours to meet with their clubs and go through all the activities. She adds, "The Working as One activity is a fantastic resource to guide clubs to be mission specific."

Using SIA resources, the club communicated with community partners about projects it was going to discontinue. Club members explained that SIA was answering the call of the United Nations to accelerate

"The Big Goal of increasing our collective impact focuses our momentum to reach more women and girls than ever before, and our club is ready for the challenge set forth by SIA."

**—Charmaine Monte
President, SI/Modesto North**

women's economic empowerment as a key strategy to end global poverty. SI/Modesto North would support this focus by doing more locally through SIA's Dream Programs.

With the new focus, the club was able to more than double its *Live Your Dream Awards*—from giving four awards to eight awards, with an increase in funding from \$8,000 to \$12,000. Club members are also focused on

Things to Note

building their *Dream It, Be It* project to reach more girls through partnerships with their local high school, Girl Scouts and at-risk youth programs.

When asked about advice for other clubs, 2017-2018 President Kristi Engel said Soroptimists need to be creative about engaging the next generation of members. "Service club membership is declining but we know there is no shortage of women who understand and want to support helping women and girls get access to education and out of poverty." SI/ Modesto North focuses on membership recruitment and retention by inviting potential members to participate in the Dream Programs and ensuring volunteer opportunities are aligned with member interest.

While doing all this locally, the club is still committed to supporting women and girls worldwide.

Since SIA's Big Goal began, SI/ Modesto North has increased its donations to SIA by 110 percent. The club has exceeded SIA's request to give 10 percent of funds raised locally, and budgets to give 12 percent. Club members believe in supporting women and girls beyond their own community and understand that by pooling resources, SIA can have a bigger impact.

While focused on our current Big Goal, SI/Modesto North members are both excited and supportive of our 2021-2031 Big Goal: *Invest in the dreams of half a million women and girls through access to education.* They look forward to making that next Big Goal a reality. 🌟



■ Region Conferences Go Online

During this time of COVID-19 when most of us are sheltering in place, SIA headquarters is providing these materials to help fill the void caused by our inability to meet in person. Click [here](#) for materials.

■ Dues Raise Rescinded

At its February meeting, your SIA Board voted for a \$2 dues increase to keep up with inflation and increasing costs. However, due to the financial strain COVID-19 is putting on everyone, the Board reconsidered its decision and rescinded the dues increase. Federation dues will stay at the \$74 rate for FY20-21.

■ Board Summary

Read the February 2020 [Board Summary](#) to learn about significant actions taken by your SIA Board at its meeting in Philadelphia.

■ Electronic Balloting Info

The COVID-19 health emergency is changing the way we do business. SIA headquarters has provided guidance to clubs and regions regarding authorizing electronic votes and using virtual meetings in place of elections usually held during club meetings. Please see the [website](#) to learn more.

■ Calling All Soroptimists!

During these challenging times, we could all use more positivity to lighten the mood and our spirits. Please post on our [Facebook page](#) uplifting videos or photos of people doing selfless things to help others. Be sure to include club activities that help local women and girls. We will reshare them so everyone who follows Soroptimist can see! 🌟

In Memoriam

We are sad to report that **Joyce Byrne**, 1990-1992 SIA president, passed away in December. She joined Soroptimist in 1975 and also served as Desert Coast Region governor and club president. Joyce, who held a Ph.D. in leadership and human behavior, guided SIA through unprecedented change as the recommendations of what was known as "The Plan" were implemented. Our heartfelt condolences to Joyce's family and friends. Visit the [In Memoriam](#) page for more information. 🌟



Appeal to Keep Soroptimist Strong

The challenges our world is facing are unprecedented as COVID-19 wreaks havoc on life as we know it. And that includes our organization. Your Soroptimist club is not meeting face-to-face. Many Soroptimist clubs well-planned event to raise funds—canceled. Your region conference—canceled or postponed. Club and region leaders are working hard to minimize financial losses.

And, of course, we all worry about the women and girls who continue to need our help. In fact, they need us now more than ever. Because we serve a vulnerable population, we know this crisis is affecting them disproportionately.

Our organization is facing steep challenges as well. Your Board of Directors and headquarters staff are making strategic choices to minimize the loss of planned revenue and adjust our budget to ensure we can continue to deliver our programs and services to you, and follow the new laws being ordered federally, state-wide and at the local level.

We strongly believe it is critical we take care of you—our members and clubs—so you can continue to directly support the women and girls who need our help. That is why we are asking you to make a contribution to SIA's Disaster Fund *if you are in a financial situation to do so*. Your gift will go a long way toward providing support and continuing our mission during this time of crisis.

Let's use this time as we pause in our normal routines to plan and prepare for the future. Together we can keep all of Soroptimist strong and serve the vulnerable population of women and girls well into our second century.

Thank you for being a Soroptimist. Thank you for being a good world citizen. And thank you for keeping the women and girls we serve in your hearts. Be well. Stay safe.

Read the entire appeal [here](#). 🌸

How we plan to help you:

1. Our federation Board has rescinded its decision to increase dues \$2.00 in club year 2020-2021.
2. Our federation Board has expanded the definition of Disaster Fund to be used to:
 - a. defray federation and SI dues
 - b. defray fees such as general liability for clubs in Canada and the USA

How you can help:

- Please keep yourselves safe and healthy by practicing physical distancing and keeping your spirits high.
- Contribute to the [SIA Disaster Fund](#) right now if you are able. These emergency funds will help you—our clubs and members—to support the women and girls who rely on you, and keep SIA headquarters operating.
- The program department at SIA headquarters developed this [resource](#) to provide ideas on how to continue your support of women and girls.



Contribute to the SIA Disaster Fund

SIA Relief Package

COVID-19 is an unprecedented global pandemic that will have far-reaching effects on the world's economy. Therefore, it is critical we support our clubs in moving our mission forward.

According to the United Nations, women will experience the effects of this disaster disproportionately because:

- women play a disproportionate role in disease response, and therefore are at an increased risk of infection.
- women will be hit harder by an economic fallout, because they work disproportionately in insecure labor, and being quarantined can prevent them from meeting their families' basic needs.
- during crises, gender-based violence increases when households are placed under strain.
- when health services are overstretched, services for women and girls suffer.

For these reasons, our mission is needed more than ever, and it's imperative that our clubs are able to continue serving the women and girls who need them.



In response, SIA's Board of Directors has approved an SIA Relief Package from disaster funds from our unrestricted reserves to:

1. defray SIA federation dues and SI per capita payments
2. defray fees such as club general liability per capita insurance in Canada and the USA

Administration of SIA's Relief Package Funding

Our SIA Relief Package will allocate funds to clubs with:

- Fewer than the Board recommendation of 12 members as of February 29, 2020, to mitigate these clubs from disbanding.
- More than 12 members who are active (defined as members paid for the current club year), regular members renewing for the 2020/2021 club year.

Please note, funds are limited.

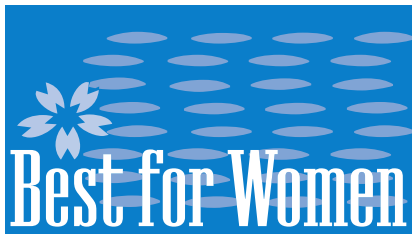
SIA Relief Package funds will be administered as follows:

Individual members who meet the eligibility requirements and wish to apply for SIA Relief Package funding will submit an application form to their club treasurer. Club treasurers will file their club's request for SIA Relief Package funding on behalf of all members of their club who have submitted an application. Requests will be processed in the order in which they are received.

SIA staff is now developing the communication plan and associated process for members to request these funds. It will be shared by email to club officers and members in early May.

Funds will be on a first-come first-served basis to members who meet one of the following criteria:

- ✓ Lost employment and experienced a loss in wages
- ✓ Business owner whose business income has significantly decreased or was forced to close
- ✓ Members who are providing financial support for their significant others, or dependents who experienced a loss in wages, or whose business suffered as a result of COVID-19
- ✓ Members, their significant others, or dependents, incurred health care expenses as a result of COVID-19.



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Get in the Network!

Does SIA have your email address?

Members:

Email is the primary way we communicate with you. This includes informing you when the digital version of *Best for Women* is published. Make sure you are receiving important emails and alerts by [reviewing your profile](#) and making any necessary changes.

Clubs:

The best way for headquarters and prospective members to contact clubs is through the Soroptimist club email accounts. A designated member should be

checking the club email account regularly (at least once per week) to keep up to date with the latest SIA news or to connect with prospective members. In addition, in February 2020, SIA moved to electronic mail ballots, which was communicated through club email addresses.

For help with setting up or accessing the account, visit the [Club Administration](#) area on SIA's website or contact siahq@soroptimist.org.

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