

PROGRAM CHAIR REPORT

FOR THE 2014-2015 CLUB YEAR

The programs of Soroptimist International of the Americas improve the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world. Resources are available to clubs to participate in federation programs and also local-level initiatives to help women and girls live their dreams.

Social and economic empowerment are closely intertwined. Women are economically empowered when they have control over their own finances and well-being – when they can have a voice in the financial decisions to shape their lives and the lives of their families. Women are socially empowered when they have a personal sense of autonomy, self-confidence, and the power to control their private and public lives. Women’s social and economic empowerment is necessary for successful and healthy women and girls, as well as families and communities.

While still providing support for and encouraging participation in programs such as Soroptimists STOP Trafficking, the Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence, Club Grants for Women and Girls, Disaster Grants and the Violet Richardson Award, Soroptimist International of the Americas programs have evolved in the past year to focus on what have become known as **The Soroptimist Dream Programs**

The Soroptimist Dream Programs – the Live Your Dream Awards and Dream It, Be It – are dedicated to helping women and girls achieve social and economic empowerment.

Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women

Since 1972, Soroptimists have been empowering women through The Live Your Dream Awards (formerly Women’s Opportunity Awards). Live Your Dream Awards assist women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families. The program gives them the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects. Recipients have typically overcome enormous obstacles including poverty, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. They may use their award to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education or training, such as books, childcare and transportation.

The Live Your Dream Awards saw many successes during the 2013-2014 club-year:

- The number of clubs participating increased from 1,012 to 1,055 (4%). 80% of all clubs participated.
- 16 regions had 100% participation.
- 1,277 women received the award, an increase of 42 (3%) from last year.
- Funding reached \$1.74 million with an increase of \$117,298 from last year (7%).

Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls

For the past two years, Soroptimist has been researching and designing a new program that will empower girls in the same meaningful way in which the Live Your Dream Awards program empowers women. This past July at the 42nd Biennial Convention in Vancouver, Soroptimist launched Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls. This program will help girls grow up to be strong, successful, happy adults. Dream It, Be It targets girls in secondary school who face obstacles to their future success. It provides girls with access to professional role models, career education and the resources to live their dreams. Soroptimist clubs in 19 countries and territories 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. The topics covered include career opportunities, setting and achieving goals, overcoming obstacles to success and how to move forward after setbacks or failures.

The SIA website has an array of essential tools for your participation in all programs. You are encouraged to visit and make use of them, particularly for the Dream Programs.

An important resource for the Dream It, Be It program are the guidelines for working with youth. Please share these guidelines with your club members and anyone else helping your club with the Dream It, Be It program.

Soroptimist programs are the heart and soul of what we do. All the hard work that goes into Fundraising, Public Awareness and Membership culminates in Program. We are who we help to grow.

All clubs are encouraged to embrace our new program focus and we work together with like-minded members across the globe to help women and girls access the resources they need to Live their Dreams.

Christy Rumbaugh
SAR Program Chair