



2009 • 2010

**Soroptimist International of the Americas Program Impact Report**



**SOROPTIMIST**  
Best for Women

# Soroptimist International of the Americas 2009-2010 Program Impact Report

In 19 countries and territories, Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) club members work to improve the lives of women and girls. Through their participation in SIA programs, as well as through myriad unique local projects, clubs address issues that affect women and girls. Some of these include education, employment status, healthcare, disaster recovery, domestic violence, sexual assault and sex trafficking. The resulting collective impact is extraordinary. In 2009-2010, more than \$2 million was distributed through federation programs, helping more than 10,000 women and girls live their dreams of a better life.

When clubs participate in SIA programs, and/or give money to ensure the programs remain strong, they become part of an international effort to improve the lives of women and girls. This report details the impact of those efforts and illustrates the power of women helping women.

## Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards

Established in 1972, the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards is SIA's signature program. It helps women who have suffered hardships, such as poverty and abuse, to reclaim and live their dreams. Award recipients are able to obtain the skills training and education they need to improve their employment status and standard of living—for themselves and their families.

In 2009-2010, the financial and personal impact of the program was impressive. For the sixth year in a row, almost \$1.5 million was disbursed in club, region and federation funds. In 2009-2010, 1,033 clubs gave awards for a combined total of 1,201 women. Federation-wide participation remained steady at 74 percent—the same as 2008-2009.

This year, 14 Soroptimist regions achieved 100 percent participation: America del Sur, Brazil, Camino Real, Desert Coast, Eastern Canada, Founder, Mexico/Central America, Midwestern, Philippines, Rocky Mountain, Sierra Nevada, Sierra Pacific, Southern and Western Canada. All 14 regions with 100 percent participation received a laptop computer for their first-place region-level award recipient. Jackson-Hewitt, as part of their sponsorship of the Women's Opportunity Awards program, provided laptops to the 10 U.S. and Canada regions, while SIA provided the laptops for the remaining four regions.

For 2009-2010, Jackson-Hewitt sponsored 25 laptop computers for Women's Opportunity Awards recipients within the U.S. and Canada. Ten laptops were presented to regions that achieved 100 percent participation, ten laptops went to club-level award recipients determined by a random drawing, and five laptops were presented to club-level award recipients from Southern Region District II, where Jackson Hewitt offices are located.

"I cannot even begin to explain how having a laptop available adds to my life. I am able to e-mail and do research whenever needed. It allows me to be more productive with my time and stay better organized, thus allowing me to be a better student and parent as I juggle life and school."—*Laptop recipient Tabitha Freytag, Camino Real Region finalist chosen by SI/Sunrise Santa Barbara, California*

SIA's federation-level recipients of the 2009-2010 Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards are: Lisa M. Boyd of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada; Myla H. Ningala of Baliwag, Bulacan, the Philippines; and Kimberly M. Thompson of Ashland, Oregon.

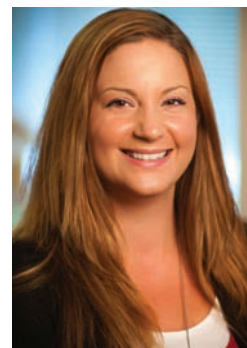
In 2002, **Lisa M. Boyd** found herself with two babies living on an isolated and derelict property, with no indoor plumbing, hot water, heat, phone or car. She was abused at the hands of her drug-addicted husband, and at one point was terrorized and harassed by people to whom her husband owed debt. Eventually Lisa summoned the strength to take her babies and escape from her situation. Soon after, Lisa met a woman wearing a "Habitat for Humanity" T-shirt. The woman offered her and her children a basement apartment in her home. Today, despite living with Multiple Sclerosis, a degenerative neuromuscular disease, Lisa is pursuing her dream of becoming a social service worker and plans to graduate from Conestoga College in Kitchener, Ontario, in 2011.



Lisa M. Boyd

**Myla H. Ningala** had always been a good student but had to drop out of school to help her sick mother and support her family. In search of work, she went to Malaysia, but found herself imprisoned by a couple who sexually and physically abused her. She eventually escaped but was arrested by the Malaysian police and thrown into prison. When a co-prisoner was being rescued, Myla begged her to get in touch with her mother, who was able to arrange her release from prison. Finally reunited with her children, Myla today is working on a bachelor of science degree in business administration at Baliwag University, majoring in computer science.

**Kimberly M. Thompson** had unstable parents and was placed into the foster care system at the age of 10. After graduating from high school, she was alone, with no family to support her. She ended up pregnant, in an abusive relationship and homeless. Working at minimum



Kimberly M. Thompson

wage jobs, Kimberly knew she had to go back to school to make life better for herself and her daughter. With the help of the Women's Opportunity Awards, Kimberly is now studying for her associates degree in early childhood education at Rogue Community College in Medford, Oregon. With a 3.8 GPA, she plans to graduate in 2011, the first in her family to earn a college degree.

Thanks to the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards, women like Lisa, Myla and Kimberly have reclaimed their dreams and look forward to a better future.

In an effort to determine the impact of the awards on the lives of Women's Opportunity Awards recipients, SIA conducted an anonymous survey of region-level award recipients from 2006-2007. Of those who replied, 100 percent stated that their sense of self-esteem and self-confidence had increased; and 89 percent reported an improved standard of living for themselves and their dependents. The following survey responses demonstrate the positive impact the Women's Opportunity Awards program has had on the lives of these award recipients and the extent to which their lives have been improved:

"The \$3,000 that I won was the foundation for everything—the beginning of a dream of being self-sufficient and able to provide food, medication, school and leisure for my family."

"I am now a registered nurse. I love who I have become. My kids now say things like 'when I go to college,' not 'if I go to college.'"

"Now that I have a bachelor's degree in special education, I was able to find employment at a higher rate of pay. I can be independent, never again putting myself in a position to feel stuck in an unhealthy, abusive situation."

### Women's Opportunity Awards Impact:

- 1,033 clubs participated
- 1,201 women's lives were improved
- \$1,472,416 was disbursed

Cost per changed life: \$1,226

## Soroptimists STOP Trafficking

The anti-trafficking project, Soroptimists STOP Trafficking, continued into a third successful year. About 149 clubs reported conducting some type of anti-trafficking awareness project such as sponsoring speakers, workshops and symposiums. Many events garnered media attention, such as President Cathy Standiford appearing on CNN's "Issues with Jane Velez-Mitchell: Reality of the Sex Trade in the U.S.," following the inaugural conference of the Northwest Coalition Against Trafficking, established by Northwestern Region. Cathy addressed Soroptimist's work concerning the trafficking of women and girls into prostitution.

Across the federation, clubs also continued to distribute trafficking awareness flyers, cards and other information.

The diversity and creativity of club projects is illustrated in the range of projects completed. For example, SI/Grosse Pointe, Michigan, USA (Midwestern Region) arranged for Governor Mary Parsigian and SI/Grosse Pointe President Diana Langlois to be guests on the John Prost Show, a current events show on local cable TV. They spoke on the Soroptimist mission and Soroptimists STOP Trafficking. The club also hosted a STOP Trafficking presentation in partnership with SI/Greater Macomb and two organizations where trafficking survivor and author, Theresa Flores, was the keynote speaker. Other speakers included Senator Martha Scott and a staff person from a local shelter for trafficking survivors. The presentation was taped for later viewings and a "call to action" was announced in Grosse Pointe to promote active community participation in anti-trafficking efforts.

In another example, SI/Fukuoka Kita, Japan (Japan Minami Region), in partnership with SI/Fukuoka-Higashi, SI/Fukuoka-Nishi, SI/Fukuoka-Chuo, SI/Fukuoka-Minami, SI/Hakata, SI/Dazaifu and SI/Kasuga, supported a sex trafficking film screening and panel discussion event organized by the Asia Women's Center. As a result of the event, SI/Fukuoka Kita invited a board member of the Asia Women's Center to hold a seminar in honor of the International Day of Human Trafficking Awareness. The club is also working with the Asia Women's Center to help victims of sex trafficking achieve independence. At the center's shelter, the club is funding the installation of a security camera to ensure the safety of victims.

Soroptimist clubs in Kawasaki and Kawasaki-Ruri, Japan, partnered with two gender equality and human rights offices and a civil liberties commissioner to create, exhibit and distribute anti-sex trafficking posters, flyers, and information cards throughout the year. The deputy mayor praised Soroptimist in his speech at a children's rights event for helping both children in Japan and around the world.



**SI/Kawasaki and SI/Kawasaki-Ruri's work was recognized by the Kawasaki Human Rights Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Protection Committee offered to partner with the club on its efforts to end sex trafficking.**

## Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award

Each year, Soroptimist is proud to honor the volunteer efforts of young women between the ages of 14-17 through the Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award program. During the 2009-2010 club year, 765 clubs (55 percent) participated, recognizing 892 girls whose volunteer actions have made their community and the world a better place. Across the federation, clubs and regions awarded \$248,576 to girls and \$124,758 to their volunteer



**Talia Leman**

organizations. SIA awarded an additional \$58,500, for a grand total of \$431,834.

Talia Leman of Waukee, Iowa, is the 2009-2010 federation Violet Richardson Award recipient. Just 15-years-old, Talia founded RandomKid: The Power of ANYone, an organization that works to harness the giving power of kids to support great causes. Today, RandomKid works on such projects as providing crutches and artificial limbs to victims of

the Haiti earthquake; planting vegetables for residents at local homeless shelters; and unifying schools to sell their own labeled water to raise funds for water pumps in Africa. As the federation finalist, RandomKid received \$2,500 in Talia's name.



**Stephanie Davis**

In honor of 2008-2009 Violet Richardson Award federation finalist Stephanie Davis (SI/Greater Bridgeport, CT, Northeastern Region), SIA donated \$2,500 to the Lighthouse Program. The program, which provides quality after-school and summer programming for low-income and at-risk youth, used the funds to support summer scholarships. In 2009-2010, SIA followed up with the program and learned that 98 students received five weeks of academic support

and were able to participate in recreational and cultural field trips as a result of the donation.

### Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls enable clubs to make a real difference in the lives of women and girls in their communities by addressing specific local needs. In March 2009, SIA received 92 proposals requesting \$610,000 in funding. A task force made up of members of the SIA Program Council reviewed the proposals and recommended funding to the SIA president for approval.

For the 2009-2010 club year, a total of \$175,000 was granted to 31 Soroptimist clubs for new or ongoing projects. Grants ranged from \$500 to \$10,000 and were given to clubs in six different countries: Brazil, Japan, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines and the United States. To date, 25 grant projects have been completed with 100 percent of clubs reporting having achieved their project objectives. As a result, the lives of almost 8,000 women and girls have been improved.

The grants not only helped women and girls, they also helped the clubs. Of the clubs that have sub-

**Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls Impact:**

- 462 women and girls were provided opportunities for economic advancement
- 753 women and girls were given tools and resources to help them live free from violence
- 654 women and girls gained access to educational opportunities
- 6,120 women gained access to health care

**Total number of women and girls helped: 7,989**  
**Cost per changed life: \$22**

mitted a final report, 68 percent gained new members, 80 percent received media coverage, and 72 percent developed new partnerships as a result of the funded projects.

Regardless of whether a club has applied for or received a grant, all Soroptimist clubs can celebrate in the success of the grant-funded projects to positively impact local women and girls

### Soroptimist Disaster Grants for Women and Girls

Soroptimist continues to focus on the special needs of women and girls before, during and after disaster strikes. During the 2009-2010 club year, one disaster grant of \$20,000 was awarded to SI/Santiago, Chile (América del Sur). SI/Santiago is using the funds to rebuild the homes of 10 women in the Huechuraba community following a devastating earthquake and earthquake-triggered tsunami. The women chosen provide the primary financial support for their families. While the homes are being constructed, the grant covers the cost of providing temporary housing for the women and their families.

In addition, SIA donated a \$10,000 disaster grant to Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) in response to the Haiti earthquake. In 2010-2011, SIA will launch a new partnership with SIE, enabling both federations to increase the impact of their respective disaster grant programs.

In order to encompass disaster preparedness as well as disaster recovery, the name of the program has been changed from Soroptimist Disaster Recovery Fund to Soroptimist Disaster Grants for Women and Girls.



**SI/Alto Parana, Paraguay (America del Sur) received an \$8,500 Club Grant to establish Training for Elder Care, a program providing professional elder care training to improve the quality of life and standard of living for low-income women. Funds helped purchase classroom furniture, teaching materials and supplies, and subsidized transportation costs for students. As a result of the project, 58 participants secured employment providing elder care, with two participants selected to accompany two elderly persons abroad to assist them during medical treatments. In addition, the club established an Association for Elder Care.**

### Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women

The Soroptimist Ruby Award honors women who have worked through their professional or volunteer efforts to improve the lives of other women and girls. In 2009-2010, club participation rose from

## Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls 2009–2010 Recipients

- SI/Alliance, Nebraska (Rocky Mountain Region), \$5,500, Alliance Shelter and GAP
- SI/Alto Parana, Paraguay (America del Sur Region), \$8,500, Training for Elder Care Providers
- SI/Amarillo, Texas (South Central Region), \$3,500, Downtown Women's Center
- SI/Ashland, Oregon (Northwestern Region), \$2,500, Soroptimist Strong Girls Strong Women
- SI/Bloomington-Normal, Illinois (Midwestern Region), \$2,500, VIP: Invitation for Communication
- SI/Boise, Idaho (Rocky Mountain Region), \$500, Human Trafficking Community Awareness
- SI/Brasilia Norte-Sul (Brazil Region), \$5,000, Embroidering Brazil
- SI/Columbus, Ohio (Midwestern Region), \$8,000, Gracehaven Renovations
- SI/Eastwood City (Philippines Region), \$10,000, Cervical Cancer Awareness and Prevention
- SI/Edsa Villagers (Philippines Region), \$6,500, Mentoring Little Women
- SI/Emerald Empire (The), Oregon (Northwestern Region), \$4,500, The Family Room
- SI/Farmington Valley, Connecticut (Northeastern Region), \$7,000, Partners to Eradicate Domestic Violence
- SI/Fukuoka-Kita (Japan Minami Region), \$5,000, Language Classes Taught by Immigrant Women
- SI/Greater Providence, Rhode Island (Northeastern Region), \$4,500, Freshen-up Totes
- SI/Guarapuava (Brazil Region), \$10,000, Prodesa Recipe for Life
- SI/Hakata and SI/Kasuga (Japan Minami), \$10,000, Support for Domestic Violence Shelter
- SI/Hamilton, Montana (Northwestern Region), \$3,500, Options for Women and Girls
- SI/Kent, Washington (Northwestern Region), \$3,500, Soroptimist + Homeless Girls = Academic Success
- SI/Kumamoto (Japan Minami Region), \$5,000, Hotline for Victims of Domestic Violence
- SI/Manhattan Beach, California (Camino Real Region), \$3,500, Breast Cancer Comfort Bags
- SI/Phoenix, Arizona (Golden West Region), \$5,000, Girl Power
- SI/Rio Negro (Brazil Region), \$2,500, Powerful Girls
- SI/Sacramento, California (Sierra Nevada Region), \$2,500, Money Matters
- SI/Saguaro Foothills, Arizona (Golden West Region), \$4,000, Star Power Workshop
- SI/San Francisco, CA (Sierra Pacific Region), \$9,000, Shelter from the Storm
- SI/Santos-Praia (Brazil Region), \$10,000, Women of Change
- SI/Saratoga County, NY (North Atlantic Region), \$3,000, Project Hope and Power
- SI/Stuart, FL (Southern Region), \$10,000, Save Our Selves: Breast Cancer Awareness Program
- SI/Toms River Area, NJ (North Atlantic Region), \$5,000, Adopt a Village Teen Mentoring
- SI/Volcan, Panama (Mexico/Centroamerica Region), \$6,000, Hands of Hope
- SI/Washington, DC (South Atlantic Region), \$9,000, Kitchen Renovations for Homeless Shelter

36 to 38 percent, with a total of 500 awards given throughout the federation and a total of \$135,096 donated to the recipient's charitable organizations. As a result of program participation, 213 new club members were gained and 282 clubs received media attention.



**Lisa Culp**

For the first time ever, SIA launched online judging to determine the federation-level award finalist. Voting was open to Soroptimist members as well as to the public at large. Information about the Ruby Award, along with photos and information about the top three region finalists, were translated into all federation languages and posted on the home page of SIA's website. A total of 5,783 votes were received, with Lisa Culp of Sacramento, California, chosen as the recipient of the Soroptimist 2009-2010 Ruby Award. In honor of Lisa, SIA donated \$5,000 to Women's Empowerment, the non-profit she started.

Working with the homeless for many years, Lisa began to notice more and more women and children on the streets. Searching for a way to stop the cycle of poverty, she founded Women's Empowerment, a non-profit that educates and empowers homeless women with the skills and confidence necessary to get a job, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and regain a home for themselves and their children. The ultimate mission of Women's Empowerment is to end homelessness one woman at a time. "If you save a woman, you save a family," Lisa says.

In honor of Edelvira Goes Ramos, 2008-2009 Ruby Award federation finalist (SI/Curitiba, Brazil Region), SIA donated \$5,000 to Casa de Apoio Mae Solidaria (Solidarity Mother's Support Home), a childcare center Edelvira established in her home to support low-income working women in the impoverished area of Parana.



**Edelvira Goes Ramos**

Edelvira, who also mentors homeless girls and young women and helps them find employment, has been recently working to establish a community sewing cooperative. In 2009-2010, SIA followed up with Edelvira and learned that the funds from SIA have enabled her to expand the center's services and outreach, thus helping to improve the lives of more women and girls in her community.

### Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women Impact:

- 500 outstanding women were honored with the award
- \$135,096 was given to the recipients' charitable organizations
- 282 clubs received media attention for the award

### The Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence

Women deserve to feel safe wherever they are—including the workplace. The Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence is an ongoing effort to raise awareness about this issue. In its 13th year, the program focuses on the fact that women do not leave abuse behind when they go to work. Abusers often harass women at work by phone, e-mail or—in worst-case scenarios—by coming to the workplace.

During November 2009, 391 clubs in six countries—Brazil, Canada, Japan, Panama, Taiwan and the United States—participated in the campaign. These clubs pledged to help victims of domestic violence and raise community awareness, particularly within the business community. As a result of the campaign, members distributed tens of thousands of domestic violence hotline cards, organized public forums, collaborated with local advocacy groups, and supported domestic violence shelters. Clubs also encouraged employers to adopt and implement policies that protect women in the workplace.

In addition, SIA launched a new Soroptimist Workplace Campaign dedicated web page: [Soroptimist.org/workplace-campaign.html](http://Soroptimist.org/workplace-campaign.html). The webpage contains a variety of information, including program instructions, and materials and resource links geared toward employees experiencing domestic violence, their co-workers and their employers.

### New Program Resources

Each year, SIA headquarters staff works to provide clubs and members with new information and resources to assist them in achieving the Soroptimist mission. The following new resources were provided in the 2009-2010 club year:

- Launched outcomes-based evaluations for all federation programs.
- The Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards [application](#) materials were made writeable in all federation languages.
- The Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award [application](#) was made writeable in all federation languages.
- Online judging was established for selecting the federation-level Soroptimist Ruby Award recipient.
- A [Soroptimist Ruby Award report](#) was created that includes information about the work of each region recipient.

- A shorter Teen Dating Violence [model program kit](#) was created and translated it into all federation languages.
- An anti-prostitution resolution was created.
- A resource to help clubs best use white papers was created: [Soroptimist White Papers: Raising Awareness About Issues Affecting Women and Girls Worldwide](#).
- Two white papers were written—one on [prostitution](#), and one on [child marriage and mail order brides](#).
- A mini-model program kit was created: [Soroptimist One-Day Club Projects: Ideas for improving the lives of women and girls](#).
- A new resource was created, [Outcomes-Based Project Evaluation for Soroptimist Clubs](#), to help clubs measure the impact of their projects.
- A new format for the trafficking news alerts was created that includes graphics and introductory text.

### 2009–2010 Soroptimist Program Council Members

#### América del Sur

Luisa Haydee De Vischi

#### Brazil

Maria Lucia NoreMBERG

#### Camino Real

Michele Memmott

#### Desert Coast

Susan Haddock

#### Eastern Canada

Jean Skillman

#### Founder

Linda Hansen

#### Golden West

Pam Field

#### Japan Chuo

Kazuko Morita

#### Japan Higashi

Mieko Seki

#### Japan Kita

Chizuko Kamihara

#### Japan Minami

Kinoshita Asami

#### Japan Nishi

Hiroko Tamura

#### Korea

Kisoon Son

#### Mexico/Centroamerica

Sonia de Gutierrez

#### Midwestern

Cheryl Fouts

#### North Atlantic

Zarita Mattox

#### North Central

Shirley Smith

#### Northeastern

Heidi McNamar

#### Northwestern

Marie Howard

#### Philippines

Leticia Yap

#### Rocky Mountain

Janice Fitts

#### Sierra Nevada

Kay Whitaker

#### Sierra Pacific

Roberta Bean

#### South Atlantic

Deborah Mackes

#### South Central

Lou Kirby

#### Southern

Caroline Feagley

#### Taiwan

Hui-Ying Hsiao

#### Western Canada

Karima Hudda