

# SOROPTIMISTS IN ACTION

WESTERN CANADA REGION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2022

## 2021-2022 Board

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(SI Victoria Westshore)

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Angela Bunting

### Dream It Be It:

Colleen Penrowley

### Live Your Dream:

Angela Bunting

### Public Awareness:

Shirley Stewart

### Fundraising:

Heather Rollins

### Membership:

Linda Cunliffe

### Celebrating Success:

Anna Der

### Advocacy:

Janneke Lewis

### Friendship Link:

Darlene Jamieson

## From the Governor's Desk

### It Takes a Village

Let's face it, Victoria is a bit on the expensive side. So to have our Conference there - and for as many people to come as possible - we've invited the village to support us. And as so often is the case, all you have to do is ask like-minded people.

Kate Zaytsoff, VP Operations for the South Region with HUB Insurance, is such a woman. Kate is all about giving other women a boost. She told me that when she headed to a HUB event for women, she found herself propelled into mentoring, and realized - "All my experience is going to help other women." Kate & HUB - who provide our Region's insurance - is our Live Your Dream sponsor this year.

Liza Rogers, Founder of Women in Real Estate Network (WREN), is another. As a single woman with a work history of overseas contracts, she found herself in a tough spot trying to buy her own home. Fast forward a few years, and she is at the helm of a social enterprise linking women to real estate investments, learning and partnering, and building a fund to provide more affordable housing choices. Liza & WREN is our Dream It, Be It sponsor of the 2022 WCR Conference.

Vancity targets their sponsorship around increasing financial resilience and inclusion, and upscaling the workforce - exactly what our programs do! Our local Assistant Branch Manager, Sean Ray, will be our Cocktail Sponsor so do say hello (and thank you) to him on Thursday evening.

Sponsorship can be personal too. SI Victoria Westshore created the Soroptimist Leadership Institute (SLI) so that women with more money than time can enable women with more time than money to empower other women through Soroptimist membership. We have one intern, young Vinny Aswathi, on a gap year, and she has dived into our workshops, meetings, club and Region Gen 4 committees.

At our last meeting she stood up to volunteer to *lead* our club's No Barriers. Period. project. I asked her what, if anything, the SLI had contributed to her choice. "Everything!" she said. "I am SO much more confident now, my friends say I am like a different person. I feel so much more knowledgeable and empowered." She went on: "Now I have the contacts and connections with women who I can turn to if I have questions or need advice from. I also feel more equipped after attending each SLI workshop because the workshops give me the opportunity to learn from women who have so much experience in the workspace environment. The knowledge I get, all in one place at the SLI, to me, means that I can now save my energy from looking for resources in different places to channeling that energy into helping the community and upgrading my skills."



Just as we Soroptimists are investing in the dreams of women and girls, a sponsor is investing in Vinny to become a champion of gender equality, our village is investing in our dream of working at our best to help other women be their best.



## Chilliwack Soroptimists are a Busy Bunch!

*Submitted by Dana Martin, SI Chilliwack*



It's been a busy club year so far for SI Chilliwack. When restrictions were changed we were able to meet in person once again for a few months, but recently we reverted back to Zoom meetings.

For **Heather's Hope Chest** we had a donation day in December. We asked for "new items" and the response from the community was tremendous. We also offered the opportunity to sponsor a shelf. This was also very successful and we have just received a \$1,000.00 donation from Chilliwack Ford to sponsor a shelf. So, all in all this was a very successful donation day.

We awarded 3 **Live Your Dream** awards, and 1 club award this year and then spent a day delivering flowers and cheques to all our successful applicants. This is Lori Jackson our LYD chair with our 1<sup>st</sup> place winner.



We have an incredibly vibrant **Dream It Be It** Committee. After our DIBI even last year word has spread about our program and we will be doing 3 DIBI events this year! Incredible!!!

Currently, all our efforts have shifted to our upcoming "5<sup>th</sup> Annual PJ's and Pearls Fundraiser." It's been 2 years since we have been able to gather and so we can't wait to get together again. We hope to see many local Soroptimist's come out and support us.

**SAVE THE DATE:** APRIL 9, 2022

**HERE IS THE LINK TO REGISTER:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/.../5th-annual-pajamas-pearls...>

We are also looking forward to the conference in April! It will be so great to see everyone.

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## Has your club voted for SIA's President Elect?

You should have received your club's individual link for voting for the incoming President Elect. Candidates are Bobbi Enderlin, SI Benicia, California (Founder Regin) and Sonia Maria Da Silva Loyola, SI Curitiba Batel (Brazil Region).

Their profiles can be found on the SIA website. They are amazing women who are well suited for the position. Please encourage your members to review the information and cast your club's vote!

Voting closes April 28th, make sure you get your vote in before leaving for Conference!

## Dolly Parton's Imagination Library – A Free Book Gifting Program

*Submitted by Melanie Kenny, SI Saskatoon*

SI Saskatoon recently had a visit from the Saskatoon representative of Dolly Parton's imagination library program at the suggestion of Darlene Jamison. Many Soroptimist Clubs in the UK and USA have become interested in this program.



What a fantastic idea Dolly had! Apparently, her own father was very intelligent but could not read so she decided to inspire all children everywhere learn to have a love of books and to read and so she initiated this wonderful program. The program is free, but of course donations are welcomed and needed. It costs the program \$250 for a child to be enrolled in the program from birth to five years and receive an age appropriate book, in the mail, once a month.

The books are high-quality and printed especially for the program on all kinds of topics. Young children get so excited when they receive their books addressed especially to them.

There were all sorts of anecdotal stories of babies pulling books from shelves and looking at books by themselves and how the lasting impact of reading early on carries through to later life. One of our members recognized a young family from Saskatoon on one of the slides presented. The program helps children get a really good start in kindergarten because they already have a sound knowledge of reading books. A great start in life would be to enrol a child in this program and it fits beautifully with our Soroptimist mission to educate.

The program is currently in place in all Western Canada Region provinces and is constantly introducing books that appeal to Canadian readers. Consider inviting a speaker to your club, the Canadian contact for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is below.

### **Jeanne Smitiuch**

Regional Director, Canada

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

548-900-5310 | 519-771-2543 cell | [jsmitiuch@imaginationlibrary.ca](mailto:jsmitiuch@imaginationlibrary.ca)

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/ca/>

## **SIA's Big Goal Resources Online for Club's to Access**

Organizations adopt a Big Goal to focus their work and articulate what they want to accomplish for those they serve. SIA's previous Big Goal of Increased Collective Impact propelled us to help women and girls to live their dreams. And it prepared us for success in the 2021-2031 Big Goal: Invest in the Dreams of Half a Million Women and Girls through Access to Education.



To help increase the global impact of your projects, SIA has created a [Big Goal resource section](#) on its website. This new section combines all the essential materials you will need to not only support the Big Goal, but to help you increase the critical funds needed to support that work.

<https://www.soroptimist.org/for-clubs-and-members/federation-information/sias-big-goal/index.html>

## Global Soroptimist Support for Women and Girls in Ukraine

Submitted by Chari Grant, Governor-Elect



*“For these seven days of war, for me – it’s like seven years.”*

*Tetiana Machabeli, Soroptimist International of Uzhhorod, Ukraine.*

On March 3, 2022 I attended a Zoom meeting hosted by SI of Sweden that addressed what Soroptimists around the world could do to help women and girls in Ukraine.

Two Ukrainian Soroptimists spoke: Hanna Biel, who is currently living in Germany and works to assist refugees from many different countries who are resettling in Germany; and Tetiana Machabeli, who lives in Uzhhorod Western Ukraine near the Hungarian and Polish borders. The two women spoke of the immense need, both in Ukraine, and in neighbouring countries where more than one million Ukrainians are currently seeking refuge.

Tetiana told us that she is currently in a shelter facility with a large group of women and children. She just spoke to a woman who is travelling on foot with a group of eighty children who live in a state-run orphanage in a neighbouring city that is under attack from Russian forces. The woman from the orphanage told Tetiana that although there are eighty children right now, she has no idea how many will actually make it to the shelter due to the ongoing bombing attacks.

Tetiana told us that although they are not currently under attack in Uzhhorod, the shelter they are in is only about one kilometre away from the local airport, and they have been warned that the airport is a likely target. She also told us that she has been contacted by parents with children who have epilepsy and diabetes who are running out of anti-seizure medication and insulin. These parents are desperate to find a source of medication for their children and don’t know where to turn. While she was speaking she said she got an alert on her phone telling her there was active bombing in Kyiv and Chernihiv. She said the alerts were increasing in frequency.

Tetiana and Hanna spoke about the atrocities that have already been committed – the hospitals and schools – including a school for the blind - that have been bombed. Hanna mentioned that an entire family – parents and two children – were shot while fleeing in their vehicle.

Soroptimists from around the world who were on the Zoom call asked what we could do to help. Both said money and critical medical supplies were the things that were needed most. Soroptimist International of Europe has set up a donation page that will accept PayPal and bank transfers. They are urging Soroptimists around the world to send funds to SI Europe and SI Europe will arrange to get the funds and supplies to the Ukrainian Soroptimist clubs.

If you have the means, I urge you to consider making a donation to the Soroptimist International of Europe [Disaster Relief Fund](#). You can specify that you would like your donation to go towards the war in Ukraine.

The meeting hosts urged us to lobby our governments to try to bring an end to this conflict as soon as possible and to not forget that the suffering will not end when the war is over. They also reminded us that it is not the people of Russia who want this war, only one power-hungry madman. There are Soroptimist clubs in Russia and we need to have compassion for them as their members are suffering too. That is a message we should all take to heart: In this time of immense suffering for so many – choose kindness – we need it now more than ever.



## Greetings from the Friendship Chair

Submitted by Darlene Jamieson, Friendship Chair

Following our Inaugural “ Sharing Soroptimist Stories Through Friendship “ zoom call there was much activity on the SI Chatline which included many new members sharing their soroptimist stories, soroptimist history, introductions, connecting, reconnecting etc. Through the Chatline it has been great meeting Soroptimists from around the world. Did you know that the Chatline and Friendship Link members gather for a lunch or dinner at conventions? Dublin July 2023 here we come.

It has been very difficult to read about what is happening in Ukraine but also inspiring and heartwarming to learn about what our clubs and federations are and we're doing to support women and girls through the SI Chatline and various Soroptimist Facebook pages.

Hopefully you had a chance to read Jayne's blog post on the region website regarding our January 29th zoom call with nearly 40 participants from around the world. It was so amazing for the attendees to hear from Edmonton's Friendship link with their Friendship link president Nataliya of Ukraine. <https://www.wcsoroptimist.org/blog/a-world-of-friends-jan-29-2022>

I so enjoyed Dana Martin's SI Western Canada Region Facebook story posts for Hilary and I can't wait read her posts for Kate Moore's story.

*If you have not already joined the SI Chatline why not? It is quite easy you just need to send Kate Moore an email with your club and contact info. Reach out to an SI Chatliner for her info.*

I hope you will join us for our second zoom call on April 2nd. BJ Gallagher from SI Edmonton will share her Friendship Grant with Christchurch. Do you have a Friendship Grant or Link you'd like to share? Do you know how to connect with Soroptimists when you travel?



We are hoping that we will have Henny or a representative from Open Heart Open Door attend.

If you have a Friendship Link please invite them to our zoom call. See you there.

As we begin to travel more we will also be seeing Soroptimists travel to Western Canada. Did you know that Hilary Laidler from SIGBI will be on a Rocky Mountaineer trip from Calgary to Vancouver in August. We are planning a Soroptimists meet up on their free day in Vancouver before boarding on their Alaska cruise. More details to follow.

### Has Your Club Started a No Barriers. PERIOD. Project?



SI Central Alberta collected this fantastic assortment of donated menstrual products at their recent awards celebration.

Are you collecting products? Share some photos and updates with the **No Barriers. PERIOD.** committee!

Post them on either (or both!) of these Facebook pages:

<https://www.facebook.com/NoBarriers.PERIOD>

<https://www.facebook.com/wcsoroptimist>

## Rebuilding Strong and Successful Clubs

*Submitted by Linda Cunliffe, Membership Chair*

March 2022 – nearly two years to the day that COVID changed our world! Let's hope the worst is over and we can get back to meeting in-person again and renew those hugs and warm friendships we all have missed so much. For the past two years we have focused on keeping our current members engaged – let's now turn the page and invite new members to become part of our amazing Soroptimist family.

*Suggestions from the SIA Members' site:* There is a simple way everyone can take ownership of membership. Some of the greatest untapped prospects are already in your circle. The following list of prospective members can bring new energy, ideas and enthusiasm to Soroptimist. They are the people you already know—family, friends and acquaintances!

**Family:** Mothers, daughters, aunts, cousins, daughters-in-law, sisters, nieces, sisters-in-law, granddaughters, etc. The list can go on, especially in today's world of non-traditional and extended family members.

**Friends:** You know who your friends are! They are your best buddies. The ones you call when you are happiest and the ones who hold your hand when you are saddest. You probably already have some great friends in your club—but remember, the more the merrier!

**Neighbours:** Your neighbours are part of your community and are likely invested in giving back through volunteering! You probably have a friendly relationship with them. Additionally, they're great prospects to invite to a club event because you can offer them a ride at no inconvenience to yourself! And she'll be more likely to agree to attend, knowing that she won't have to walk in alone, not knowing anyone.

**Co-workers:** The people you work with can be part of the prospective member pool. If you are retired or you have former co-workers who are retired, you can still ask them to join Soroptimist - what a great way to stay in touch! Don't forget vendors you may work with, part-time/seasonal workers, and contract employees.

**Award recipients:** Soroptimist awards are life-changing, and recipients often express an interest in remaining in contact with clubs. Keep the amazing women engaged by asking them to participate in club programs and events. If a former recipient is now in the financial position to do so, invite her to join your club. Better yet, consider gifting a year's membership to a recent recipient as a graduation gift when she completes her education.

**Donors:** Add to your prospect list the names of donors and individuals who have supported club fundraisers or projects. If you hold silent auctions or raffles, collect the names and contact information of participants for future follow-up.

**Former members:** Review old rosters and select names of past members who might be interested in renewing their membership. Some Soroptimists terminate membership due to the time constraints of family or career. This may have been a temporary situation or can be addressed by decreasing volunteer time requirements in the club. Many of these women still believe in the Soroptimist mission, so don't be shy about reconnecting with them.

**Local nonprofits or women's groups:** Invite associates involved in other volunteer and women's organizations to attend events so they can learn more about Soroptimist. Establishing partnerships with these groups and working together on projects is an effective way to reach the members of like-minded organizations who may also be interested in joining Soroptimist.

**Other contacts:** Anyone else in your circle such as volunteers who have helped with a club event or project, your neighbor's daughter, people you work out with at the gym, a speaker who visited a club meeting, etc. The list is endless!

*So many women out there who will be looking to forge new friendships and contribute to their community. Happy recruiting!!*

See you at Conference – Woo-hoo!!!!!!

# What a night!! SI Central Alberta Celebrates International Women's Day in Style!

*Submitted by President Sherri Smith, SI Central Alberta*

Wednesday, March 8 saw our club members very excited to FINALLY meet in person with our award winners for dinner and celebration of International Women's Day.

After two years of no events, we meet up at the venue, only to find a sign on the door that the restaurant is closed early that day due to unforeseen circumstances. What??? We have 20 people about to show up! Well, being resourceful Soroptimists, we scrambled, accommodated, organized and saved the day!! Thanks ABC Country Restaurant for coming to our rescue!



Our **Ruby Award – For Women Helping Women**, was presented to **Halima Ali**, the Executive Director of the Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association. Halima supports immigrant and refugee women and their families to overcome barriers, achieve economic security and prosperity, develop their own leadership potential and realize their dreams. This work has seen her honored as one of Red Deer's Women of Excellence in 2009 and a Daughter of the Year in 2020 by the Canadians for a Civil Society. She is a woman who inspires and encourages other women.

The **Violet Richardson Award** was presented to **Yasmin Albeny**, a Grade 11 student at Lindsay Thurber High School. Yasmin is a kind, caring and patient student who is generous with her time to tutor classmates, helps students apply for scholarships, helps with resumes and references, and is also part of Creativity, Activity and Service at her school where they meet to discuss what they can do to make our community a better place. Her charity donation will be going to UNICEF, Ukrainian Relief.



Another **Violet Richardson Award** was presented to **Hannah Ly**, a Grade 12 Student at Notre Dame High School. Hannah volunteers at the Red Deer Regional Hospital on Unit 21 and is very attentive to the needs of the unit and the patients she serves. She also volunteers at her school. Volunteering has taught her that little actions go a long way and that we can change the world for the better. Her charity donation will be going to the Pop Up Pantry at Notre Dame School.



The **Live Your Dream Award** was presented to **Amy Smart**, a single mom of 2 boys who resides in Sylvan Lake. She is attending the University of Calgary Continuing Education Professional Writing Certificate, specializing in Marketing and Public Relations. Her goal is to begin a career as a Copywriter/Editor, which will allow her the freedom and flexibility to spend more time with her children, buy their dream home and create their new future. Rising above obstacles such as an ended marriage, a closed business due to Covid, surviving breast cancer, being a single parent and returning to school, she has been described as one of the strongest, most positive people anyone could know.

Another **Live Your Dream Award** was presented to **Lisa Spencer Cook**, a single mother who resides in Red Deer. She is currently enrolled at Athabasca University pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, with the end goal of being a counselling psychologist. Her motivation comes from her beautiful 8 year old daughter who is autistic and has ADHD. She has also overcome the loss of a business due to Covid, and being a single parent returning to school. She is committed to paying it forward in the community, and to work with the often misunderstood, often overlooked area of neuro diversity and mental health.



Our last **Live Your Dream Award** was presented to **Josey Hindbo**, a single mother of two who resides in Caroline. Josey is attending the University of Alberta for a Bachelor's Degree in Education, in hopes of having a long successful career as a teacher. She states her children are her focus, her meaning, and the reason she does everything. She endures a 2 hour commute to attend classes, and has also been hit hard by Covid, when she was unable to run her summer business which provided her with the financial cushion for her family. She is a great inspiration to provide hope for others that with a strong faith and amazing support system, making a difference in your community and for others can always be a possibility.

## Big Goal Accelerator Projects

Submitted by Angie Bunting, Program Chair & LYD Chair

What is the “**Big Goal Accelerator Projects**” program?

At the beginning of the 2021 Club year SIA began collecting information from Clubs and Regions about their work outside of the Dream Programs that contributes to our 2021 – 2031 Big Goal. These projects are called Big Goal Accelerator Projects.

Club and Region work that increases access to education for women and girls facing obstacles and leads to economic empowerment count towards our next Big Goal!

To be eligible **all four** of the following criteria must be met:

- Work only with women and/or girls who are facing obstacles
- Provide access to education
- Ultimately lead to economic empowerment
- Be reported to SIA through the official reporting link

Dream Programs work should not be reported as Big Goal Accelerator Projects as they are already captured by SIA. Further, Clubs should try to report women and girls as individuals served. If a woman or girl participated in multiple club offerings they would only be counted once. This will provide a more accurate count of the number of women and girls we serve.

As we know women and girls face many obstacles to achieving economic empowerment, for example, poverty, violence, racism, teen pregnancy, single parenting, substance abuse disorder, trafficking, and being a foster care youth.

Having spoken with many Club Presidents and Club Live Your Dream Chairs I am aware of projects that would qualify to be counted in the Big Goal Accelerator Project Program. For example, several Clubs have awards for women who do not meet the criteria of the Live Your Dream Award program.

On the SIA website there are examples of what would be counted towards Big Goal and what would not be counted towards Big Goal. This is a good resource to help you decide whether your project fits the criteria. [www.soroptimist.org](http://www.soroptimist.org). Follow the links – For Clubs and Members – SIA’s Big Goal – Program Resources – Big Goal Accelerator Projects “Learn More” .

Please reach out to me with your questions. Looking forward to seeing you at Conference in Victoria.



### Have you started packing for Conference?!

The countdown is on - 7-ish weeks until we all meet in person in Victoria for the first time in two very long years! April 28th can't come soon enough!

This year's theme “**Building Back Better**” will motivate us all to focus on building our clubs back better, to invest in care for each other, more of the Soroptimist glue that holds us together. Building more connections between our clubs, and with our communities. Building our programs and services, that have been paused or curtailed, back into meaningful empowerment.

Register before March 31st - pack your ideas, tiara and sense of fun - and join us in Victoria! (Don't forget your knit square!)