



# Soroptimist Across Canada

## Eastern and Western Canada Regions – Fall 2023



*Soroptimists in both Eastern and Western Canada Regions recognize that we live, work and play on the traditional ancestral lands of many First Nations across our country. We acknowledge the tumultuous history endured by the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, and we commit to moving forward with mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.*

Submitted by ECR Governor Gertrud Hocke and WCR Governor Suzanne Heron

**Gov Gertrud:** Welcome to the new all-Canadian Soroptimist newsletter! While I reflect about this new joint venture during the month of October, the theme of Thanksgiving comes to mind. I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to our Soroptimist members for your dedication to the volunteer work we do as Soroptimists. Your commitment to the Dream programs, and especially to the work you do in our local communities is incredible. You put your expertise, your knowledge and your time and energy into supporting women and girls in our country. A special acknowledgement to all the leaders in our clubs, who show courage to step up and manage the operation in our clubs. I am grateful to everyone involved for making this newsletter come to life, the writers of articles and especially our editors. Thank you.



and best practices were percolating in Eastern Canada. And I so enjoyed meeting you, Governor Gertrud, and many others from ECR, and want to keep connected.

**Gov Gertrud:** You are so right Governor Suzanne, being together at the SI Convention in Dublin was such a treat.

Most of the Canadian participants met for Dinner on Wednesday night and we finally got to know the people behind the faces we had so far only seen on Zoom.

The newsletter is another opportunity to get to know each other. We will highlight certain Soroptimists from WCR and ECR and learn about new initiatives. By sharing our successes and our challenges in our clubs we can all benefit and expand our horizons.

**Gov Suzanne:** Well, thank YOU Governor Gertrud, for moving this idea forward. For me, this is another example of our WCR 2023 theme: It's time to step out of the box! Our clubs are trying all sorts of different ideas this year: co-Presidents, partnering with new organizations for Dream It, Be It and fundraising, mentoring and buddy systems. Ever since the SI Convention in Dublin, I've wondered what great ideas

**Gov Suzanne:** We will be able to share great ideas, the impact of the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada, inspiration from the wider world of Soroptimist, how we are bringing in supporters and sponsors, and so much more. As you said, Governor Gertrud, this first edition gets the ball rolling, and now it can bounce around all our clubs. Who knows what ideas will emerge as we share our work and get to know each other? I know all our clubs and members will benefit from building our Soroptimist friendship across Canada.



Submitted by Lois Taylor, SFC Board Member

Canadian Soroptimist clubs established the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada (SFC) in 1963 as a registered charity. This status enables Canadian Soroptimists, individual and corporate donors to receive a tax benefit for their donations to SFC. In turn, the donations fund our educational programs for women and girls.

Our SFC Club Grants provide funding for educational club projects such as Dream It, Be It: career support for girls. SFC's main program is Grants for Women in Graduate Studies; each year SFC offers several grants to female graduate students in Canada pursuing careers that focus on improving the quality of women's lives. Thanks to our donors and wise investment of our funds, SFC has been able to award over \$100,000 to women in graduate studies since 2020.

Read on to get a glimpse of the high calibre of recipients of our 2023 Grants for Women who we feel privileged to support. To learn more, go to <https://soroptimistfoundation.ca/grant-recipients/>

- Aida Retta, Master of Education in Counselling Psychology, University of Toronto. Aida is using her experience doing community-based anti-violence work to engage in a project examining the relation between intimate partner violence, legal abuse, and legal outcomes for court-involved mothers.
- Cassandra De Freitas, McGill University. Cassandra plans to dedicate her background in social work, fitness and research to a career pursuing women's health, well-being, and empowerment.
- Laura Meng is studying medicine at McGill University. As a future physician, she aims to become an independent clinician researcher who dedicates a portion of her future practise specifically toward the needs of women.



*Aida*



*Cedar*

- Cedar McMehan, Nurse Practitioner Program, University of Victoria. As a former Registered Nurse, Cedar plans to focus her future as a Nurse Practitioner on women's health, recognizing transgender health and gender-affirming care as an integral part of serving all women.
- Laura Woodman, PhD student, University of Alberta. As a former educator who ran an accredited family day home for ten years, Laura plans to increase capacity within the family childcare field, which can improve educator life satisfaction and their ability to offer high-quality early learning and childcare.
- Chloe White, Master's student in Clinical Psychology, Simon Fraser University. As an eating disorder researcher and clinician, Chloe aims to fill a much-needed gap in Canadian mental health care by confronting issues that disrupt women and girls from achieving their goals.

Having just celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, SFC aims to propel our growing support of female empowerment into the next century!

# 16 Days of Activism

16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence – from 25<sup>th</sup> November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10<sup>th</sup> December, International Human Rights Day!

## READ THE SIGNS

Submitted by Erica Sollberger, Soroptimist International of Europe Communication Officer 2021-23

### Soroptimist's 'READ THE SIGNS' campaign is officially recognized and supported by UN Women

Our **READ THE SIGNS** campaign in 2022 made an impact Europe-wide, thanks to the collaborative efforts of our Unions and Single Clubs. With a well-defined concept and materials translated into local languages, we witnessed the birth of numerous exceptional ideas and projects. Our authentic power for change gained recognition from UN-Women, who supported the campaign and invited us to include their logo on our visuals.

At the request of our advocacy representatives and in collaboration with the program team, the communications team designed and developed this campaign with a focus on PREVENTION.

So, during the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, Soroptimists across Europe not only said “NO to domestic violence”, but also taught women to recognize the first signs of a toxic relationship. As never before, this cross-media campaign captured the public’s attention through concrete indications and attractive design. Our kick-off video reached over 100,000 people, and our Instagram campaign reached over 50,000 accounts. Posters and banners were put up



across Europe – they each included a QR code, taking you in seconds to a dedicated landing page (<https://soroptimist-projects.org/read-the-signs/>) giving links for anyone requiring help and describing eight key signs of domestic violence: Intensity, Jealousy, Control, Isolation, Criticism, Sabotage, Blame, and Anger.

Unions and Single Clubs used extraordinary creativity and placed “**READ THE SIGNS**” banners on billboards, buses, storefronts, and baguette bags. Press releases and panel discussions were also held to amplify visibility. To ensure language was not a barrier to women accessing this valuable, lifesaving information, we translated Soroptimist’s dedicated **READ THE SIGNS** landing page into English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, and Slovenian.

We also leveraged social media, releasing seven powerful video clips, each presenting a precursor **SIGN** of violence. All materials were accessible to our Unions and Single Clubs on a dedicated con-

tent creation platform. This allowed Soroptimists to translate the video clips and schedule them to go live across their local social media pages. The campaign started and ended with an impactful video message from our SIE President Carolien Demey.

However, this year (2023), we will take it a step further by introducing an essential component – **mental health awareness**. Recognizing the importance of mental health within toxic relationships, Soroptimist International of Europe (SIE) is again preparing seven new videos on this subject.

Recognizing the SIGNS of a toxic relationship requires mental awareness and understanding. Developing healthy self-awareness is critical to getting in touch with your own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and thinking about how they are affected by interactions with others. These psychological foundations of mental health will be addressed within the context of prevention and serve as topics for local panel discussions.

We would be happy and very grateful if Soroptimists from SIA could also like and help spread our READ THE SIGNS campaign.

## WIRED FOR CHANGE

From SIA's Best for Women: November e-newsletter

Every year Soroptimists around the globe support the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. People throughout the world unite to raise awareness about gender-based violence and call for an end to violence against women. The 16 Days kick off with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25 and end with World Human Rights Day on December 10.

### What is this year's theme?

"Wired for Change: Tech's Impact on Gender-Based Abuse." While digital tools make our lives easier, they also present new ways to perpetuate abuse against women and girls, as well as ways for women and girls to escape violence. You can learn more about technology-facilitated gender-based violence from the [UN Women](#) here.

### What are some ways to support the 16 Days of Activism?

1. Soroptimist International (SI) will provide unified messaging on this theme for all five federations to share. Re-share social media posts from SI and SIA.
2. Check out the [communications toolkit via Trello](#) for additional content, sample posts and graphics.
3. Use the hashtag #WiredForChange to amplify your club's work that educates women and girls about safely using social media or online harassment.



# Club Profile—SI Vancouver

Submitted by Lenore Riddell and Janet Law, SI Vancouver

On April 1926, women holding executive positions in the city of Vancouver gathered together to form the First Soroptimist Club in Canada. The club members focused on supporting unemployed and low-income women – particularly senior women. Our archives show that the club members raised funds and provided clothing and supplies to women who otherwise had very little. In 1931, as the Depression hit, they aligned themselves with the Police Women of Vancouver and became the first organization to offer safe shelter for women.

During the war years the club contributed by sending more than one hundred articles every month overseas and even bought an ambulance! We have remained committed to supporting international relief funds.

Closer to home, our club has a long history of donations to low-income senior centres and has funded awards to both young and mature woman students. Our Dream It Be It podcasts even won a Soroptimist award in 2022. Our holiday care packages are greatly appreciated by women who live in the downtown east side of Vancouver and inner-city schools.

In 1960 the club bought and built a 3 story 21-unit apartment building for senior women and in 1970, the club partnered with the Kiwanis Club of Vancouver to open a complex of ninety suites for low-income seniors. All this at a time women would have a hard time getting a mortgage by themselves.

Recognizing that today even more women disproportionately face conditions and concerns that affect their ability to find safe, appropriate, and affordable housing the Club has partnered with a woman-led development team to redevelop our small apartment building. By delivering this project with an experienced team of women professionals, we are furthering the mandate of the project through a gender-based look at what women need, but also are working to build capacity in the construction and development industry for women leaders to deliver projects in all areas of design, development and construction.

Designed to support women at all stages of life, this 13-storey building (135 suites) will include amenities such as indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, a rooftop patio, co-working spaces, and a flexible space for yoga and meditation. As the first women-led, developed and built rental housing development in Western Canada, this intergenerational housing is designed for women and with inclusivity in mind, boasting fully accessible suites on each floor and all homes as fully adaptable for people with disabilities.



# Club Profile—SI Thunder Bay

Submitted by Lee-Ann Nalezty, SI Thunder Bay

SI Thunder Bay was chartered on May 6, 1949. It is the most westerly club in the province of Ontario. At present there are 24 members in the club. Our past president Cheryl Ball is the Governor-elect for ECR and another member Karen Bortolin is the treasurer for ECR.

SI Thunder Bay, the Children's Aid Society of Thunder Bay (CAS), and the June Steeve-Lendrum Family Resource Centre (JSL) have formed a partnership to use the SIA Dream It Be It (DIBI) curriculum to support young women facing obstacles to education achievement: violence, homelessness, pregnancy, etc. These young women are Girls Transitioning to Adulthood. The goal is to assist the young women in identifying and achieving their educational goals. SI Thunder Bay is fortunate to have received grants from SIA and SFC to support this effort. With these funds, we are working with our partners and participants to develop a series of workshops that will focus on the following:

- ♦ education pathways that are available post secondary.
- ♦ careers in demand beyond 2023 that will be viable sources of income for women.
- ♦ financial support for achieving their educational goals.
- ♦ entrepreneurship as a student and as a full-time career.
- ♦ essential skills for future employment.
- ♦ mentorship opportunities with young professional women.

The club also stocks the CAS Cupboard with various food items and personal items that young women living on their own need. Through fundraising efforts, the club donated \$1875.00 to CAS which will be used for the CAS Spring Program.



Thunder Bay CAS recently awarded SI of Thunder Bay, the **Champion of Children's Award** for the club's on-going work in supporting young women transitioning to adulthood. Pictured below with the **Champion of Children's Award** are Devona Crowe, Dream It Be It Chairperson Cindy Figus, President and Shirley Smith, Fundraising Co-Chair.

Soroptimist International Thunder Bay will continue to work toward fulfilling the mission of Soroptimists - improving the lives of women and girls.



# Pillar Report—SI Toronto Live Your Dream

Submitted by Francisca Cole, LYDA Chairperson SI Toronto

Soroptimist Club of Toronto Live Your Dream Award program team is delighted and thankful for being selected as the program pillar in this first edition of the combined newsletter for both Western and Eastern Canada regions.

We are more than happy to share our experiences with other Soroptimist clubs.

The first strategy for success is that of team effort under the leadership of Estatira our club president and Nancy Brown my co-chairperson. The ladies play a significant role in ensuring the success of the program every step along the way from start to finish.

Next, we do our utmost best to cast our 'net very wide' by reaching as many people and organizations as possible outside the Soroptimist family. People we believe might know of eligible women in their community who need assistance.

We reach out to the following groups amongst others to spread the message about the award:

- Scholarships Canada
- Past Awardees
- Colleges and Universities
- Neighborhood centers
- Vocational and Training Schools
- Community and Recreational centers
- Places of worship
- Cultural Centers
- Charitable Organizations
- Food Banks
- Women's Healthcare Centers
- Employment Agencies
- Rehabilitation Centers



As a club we offer three awards of CAD\$2,000 each in addition to other gifts to three inspiring women to offset any costs associated with their effort to attain higher education. Last year we received twenty-five applications from resilient women passionate to achieve their dreams.

In addition, our awardees selection process is very transparent. We tabulate in an excel spreadsheet format the individual and cumulative scores awarded to each applicant by the judges. The three applicants with the highest cumulative scores are selected for the award. The winners are contacted immediately and the award package including the cheque is presented before the Christmas break. For the current year 2023/2024 we already have over twenty applications in our portal, and we are expecting more before the portal closes on November 15th.

The Live Your Dream Award is a signature program in the Toronto club as we believe that women who apply for this award can overcome obstacles, acquire education and new skills, and brighten their future in addition to that of their families.

Thank you everyone for the excellent work that we do by empowering women and girls, and best of luck with your programming.

# International Project—Lugari Youth Leadership

Submitted by Colleen Penrowley, SI TriCities

Since 1981, each Soroptimist International President has designated a specific project for Soroptimist members and clubs to support on December 10th, called the President's Appeal. Sharon Fisher, SI President 2019-2021, selected six key themes under the title Road to Equality. These are FGM, Human Trafficking, Rights for Older Persons, Migration, Domestic Violence, and Child Marriage. For 10 December 2020, Sharon's team announced a new Road to Equality project, supporting the Lugari Youth Leadership and Mentorship Training Camp, in the Lugari District of Kakamega County in Western Kenya.

This project is led by Khayanga Wasike, CEO and President of the Willing Hearts International Society Canada and a member of SI Eldoret in Kenya. Khayanga travels regularly to Canada to fundraise for the organization, and visits numerous Soroptimist clubs while here.

This annual event for girls aged 14-18 offers leadership skills, empowering young women to become catalysts of positive change within their communities. *Strong voices standing against harmful gender discriminatory practices*, the training programme affords girls with the knowledge and education on FGM, child marriage, and domestic violence, key themes of the Road to Equality Appeal.

Every year, invitations are sent to high schools across Kenya, asking the principals to send two girls from each school. November and December are school holidays, and the girls go directly from their schools to the camp for eight days of training.

Last year over 150 girls attended to listen to presentations on such topics as the importance of education, disease awareness, menstrual hygiene, and many others. For the first time, SIA's Dream It, Be It curriculum was introduced, including a career fair with mentors at booths to discuss careers in a variety of professions.

To read more about this valuable project just follow these links: <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/news-from-the-lugari-community-resource-centre-road-to-equality/>  
<https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/lugari-youth-leadership-and-mentoring-training-camp-2019/>

Sharon Fisher and a group of international Soroptimists have been in Lugari (November 1-8) to visit the camp and meet this year's cohort of 200 girls. More to come in our next edition!



# Leadership—Eastern Canada Region

Submitted by Keshala Fernando-Dissanayake, ECR Director of Programs/DIBI Chair

## **Empowering Others for Success**

Leadership is not simply about holding a position of authority; it is about empowering others and fostering their growth. Eastern Canada Region (SIA) Board of Directors under the guidance of Governor Gertrud (Hocke) had the pleasure of hosting a Zoom session on September 25, 2023, featuring a guest speaker, Theresa Randles, who shared profound insights on this subject.

Theresa Randles, a distinguished member of SI Hamilton, Burlington, and a regional representative for the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, enlightened us with her wealth of experience and knowledge. The session aimed to help us understand our personal motivations for volunteering and explore our unique leadership styles.

Through these exercises, we explored the diverse perspectives of our members, opening avenues for self-reflection and personal growth. It was inspiring to witness the enthusiasm and commitment of our region's club members.

To further enhance our SI SOLT knowledge, we engaged in a interactive twist on the classic game of BINGO. Hosted by Serena Reynolds and Keshala Fernando Dissanayakes, the game added an educational element to the conference and brought out the competitive nature of our members. Laughter filled the virtual room as everyone enthusiastically participated.

As we reflect on the event, we cannot emphasize enough the significance of understanding leadership as a process of empowering others. True leadership lies in our ability to uplift those around us, providing support, guidance, and encouragement to help them reach their fullest potential. Through events like these, we strive to foster an environment where everyone's voice is valued and amplified.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Theresa Randles for her insightful session, as well as to all our members for their active participation and enthusiasm. Your dedication makes our community thrive!.



*Theresa Randles*

# Leadership—Western Canada Region

Submitted by Vanessa Asaad, SI TriCities

At the **Soroptimist Leadership Institute** event (SLI), I enjoyed listening to the many perspectives on how to demonstrate personal leadership in Soroptimist from three inspiring leaders with varied backgrounds and experiences.

I hung on to every word spoken throughout the workshop and was encouraged to find my own ways to implement the advice given within my personal Soroptimist leadership. We explored questions in the workshop such as: "What inspired you to step into leadership?," "What motivates you to step up?," and "What do you need to grow as a leader?"



Soroptimist Leadership Institute

## I CAN Be A Soroptimist Leader



What motivates you to step up?  
What superpower do YOU bring?  
What do you need to grow as a leader?

This FREE workshop will explore the personal side of leadership, with inspiration from 3 leaders from different backgrounds and perspectives.

Online Zoom Event  
**October 12, 2023**  
6:00 PM 7:30 PM Pacific



Kiran Omar



Dr. Wanda Conyers Price



Yvonne Simpson



Presented By  
**SI South East Asia Pacific  
and SIA Western Canada Region**



I enjoyed collaborating with and answering these questions and others in breakout rooms with other Soroptimist members; I listened to the responses that were brought into discussions about how to be a Soroptimist leader. There was also an opportunity to mention ways that Soroptimists can grow in leadership and one of the topics discussed was having more younger girls and women join our wonderful Soroptimist community. As a younger member myself, I feel it is imperative to attract and engage younger members so that there can be a variety of fresh ideas and insights into how to grow the Soroptimist leadership overall. Some ways we can do this is by advertising and marketing in high schools, creating exciting leadership opportunities, engaging with social media, and asking them what they would want to do if involved as a member of a Soroptimist club. When asking for feedback, we can find innovative ways to include younger members in Soroptimist. I believe that showcasing who and what Soroptimists are in a way that appeals to younger audiences will ultimately help revitalize and expand the Soroptimist leadership as well as foster these members to step up as leaders. It is true that anyone CAN be a Soroptimist leader. Will it be you?

# Soroptimist Leadership Institute

Submitted by Gov. Suzanne

Here's the link to the Soroptimist Leadership Institute video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ0Q40-OxAY>

There will be more SLI workshops coming. Tentative dates are:

February 1 - Project management

March 27 - Inspiring Others

May 30 - Dealing with Disturbances

Huge thanks to our panel - President Kiran Omar of SI Surrey Delta, SIA representative to the SI Advocacy Team Dr Wanda Price, and Past International President Yvonne Simpson.

I'm working on a webinar on attracting younger members. There were lots of comments about this in our last Friendship Zoom, the MAGIC of Online Clubs, Meetings & Events. Link to that is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4k1gViWf-Tc&t=2s>

Gratitude for the technology that enables us to have events that bring us together and open the wide world of Soroptimist to all members.

## Member Profile— Erica Dormuth

Submitted by Brenda Benedict, SI Abbotsford-Mission

### Coffee chat with Erica

Erica Dormuth is a kind, encouraging, supportive, and accepting (except for herself) person. I asked her what was one thing she liked about Soroptimist and she replied the feelings of sisterhood. I asked what as a club can we do better and she suggested we show our gratitude for each other more often. In her first year as a Soroptimist Erica has taken over our social media accounts like Facebook and Instagram. She is going to train us all by creating "how to ..." instructions to be shared with the entire club so all will be trained in how to access and complete files and worksheets. Erica is a welcome addition to our club!



What about outside Soroptimist? Erica is a true cat lover and a cat rescuer. She volunteers to capture feral cats and kittens. She also volunteers at Mission Hospice. Erica will be moving into her 2nd year with SI Abbotsford-Mission. She has gone back to school and will be trying out all her new skills on our club. Erica is currently enrolled in the BC Institute of Technology Technical Writing Certificate program. Additionally, she is taking HTML5 and CSS. Next year, she will be pursuing additional certifications with BCIT, primarily focused on coding and database management.



# Member Profile—Serena Reynolds

Submitted by Renee VanderHarst, SI Grand Erie

“Serena” is derived from the Latin word serēnus. It means “tranquil, serene”.

But Serena Reynolds is a second-generation Soroptimist too busy “running with scissors” to be described as “tranquil”. She exudes energy, enthusiasm, and a desire help girls achieve their goals!

Serena is a member of Soroptimist International of Grand Erie. Over the past decade she has been part of several committees; from public awareness to fundraising (and has assisted with every committee and event in between). Most impressive and admirable is her passion for Dream It Be It.

In 2015, SIGE was the first ECR club to host a DIBI – Serena was fearless, not intimidated by the massive manual. Since then, she has mentored other clubs, invited participation, advocated for inclusion, and taken the lead on steering DIBI program development and Community Outreach projects - most recently the Big Goal Accelerator Project “Period Project for Secondary School Girls”. When the pandemic hit, she pivoted the entire club to host an online event – and encouraged other Soroptimists to take part.

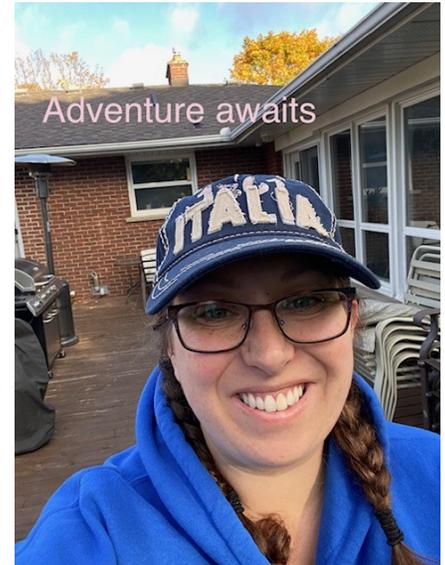
Serena is extremely passionate about the curriculum and its lasting positive impacts. She is incredibly proud of the steering committee girls in particular – many of which she has watched grow into more confident young women. Serena’s pride and devotion are contagious.

She has been a Soroptimist Grand Erie “Soroptimist of the Year”. She has been a part of ECR since 2020 (helping with committees and serving as tech master). Serena was integral to the 2023 SIGE-hosted ECR Spring Conference. Thanks to her mad tech skills we were able to host members and guests virtually during the first in-person event since the pandemic.

In her life outside of Soroptimist Serena is dedicated to the service of others. Her (very proud)

Mother Laurie would happily give you a long list of bragging points. Here are a FEW highlights:

- She followed Guides up to become a Ranger where she worked at their camps for 3 years.
- She was a Child and Youth Worker at Union House in Norfolk County for 16 years
- She has worked as an intervenor with Sensity Deafblind and Sensory Support Network of Canada for 13 years
- She has been an educational assistant for four years directly helping students succeed in their learning.
- She also works for Senior Support Services
- She is loving wife, sister and daughter, a youth caretaker, and a fur baby momma.



## Membership Mondays

“My proudest moment as a Soroptimist is when our “Dream It Be It” attendees have joined our club as young women to help improve the lives of other women & girls.”



SERENA REYNOLDS  
- MEMBER SINCE 2014 -  
[www.GrandErieSoroptimist.ca](http://www.GrandErieSoroptimist.ca)

# International Friendship Links

Submitted by Darlene Jamieson, WCR Friendship Chair SI Surrey Delta

I was fortunate to attend the SI Dublin Convention. I enjoy meeting with Soroptimists when we travel. My husband and I began our adventure in Denmark. I used the SI Chatline, Open Heart Open Door, SI club & Federation Facebook pages and website. I connected with Ulla Madsen and members of SI Copenhagen. We spend the day together before boarding a Scotland and Ireland cruise bound for Dublin.

<http://www.soroptimisteurope.org/country/denmark/>

We met with members of SI Edinburgh <https://sigbi.org/edinburgh/> and of Kirkcaldy (chartered 1953) <https://sigbi.org/kirkcaldy/> as well as SI Aberdeen (1927) <https://sigbi.org/aberdeen/> a new Friendship Link with SI Surrey/Delta.

We were treated royally! We enjoyed sharing a meal, short tours and learning about their club activities etc. I was able to connect with some of them again in Dublin. I received gifts of Soroptimist International Tartans, a deck of cards and book of 52 Scottish Soroptimists past and present. The cards and book were created for SI's 100th Anniversary. Pat Black -SI Edinburgh/SI Advocacy 2022-2023 is featured.



*Meeting with SI Copenhagen*



*At the David Welch Winter Gardens with members of SI Aberdeen*

<https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/staff-page/pat-black/>

From the gift of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of SI Presidents of Aberdeen I learned that the first president of SI Aberdeen was Fanny Cromar Bruce (nee Buckthought Morse) born in 1884. She moved to Canada 1910. Fanny was a journalist and during the First World War a volunteer reservist. Fanny worked for the Vancouver News Advertiser and later a freelance journalist. She was one of the early members of the Canadian Women's Press club whose mission was "to maintain and improve the status of journalism as a profession for women. At one time she lived in West Vancouver and then Nanaimo. One of their Friendship links was with SI Nanaimo.

It is so important that we share our rich history!

How many of you will meet with Soroptimists on your next trip? How many of you have new Soroptimist Friendship links after attending convention? There are so many possibilities. Let me know if you need help connecting with a Soroptimist club.

# Club Project—Confidence in the Kitchen

Submitted by Linda Braun, SI Saskatoon

Success, like a good meal, is best when shared! Hope Restored Canada, the Association of Saskatchewan Home Economists – Saskatoon, and Soroptimist International of Saskatoon are bringing together their skills and expertise to help women and families in need with a new program called ***Confidence in the Kitchen***.

The program, made possible through a grant from the Canadian Home Economics Foundation, kicked off its first of six cooking classes on September 28, 2023. The class included SI members Linda and Melanie as assistants to culinary educator Rose, with class participants and staff from Hope Restored, a charitable organization that offers support to people exiting sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Other home economists, SI members and Hope Restored staff will be involved throughout the series. Splendor Garden from Watson, Saskatchewan generously provided seasonings and pantry staples for participants and the Women’s Business Hub commercial kitchen space provided the excellent facility for our cooking needs.



Linda and Rose



Melanie

The first class included nutrition information, tips for cooking with seasonal ingredients, kitchen equipment safety and handling, safe food handling, plus a lot of hands-on cooking (cutting, whisking, measuring, and cleaning).

Participants were encouraged to taste everything prepared, including pumpkin, zucchini and butternut squash, zucchini-tomato bake, plus an array of pastas with three types of white sauces.

Participants were eager to take home the food products and do a bit of homework – bake cookies! Participants also took home a Kitchen Resource Kit with everything they need to get cooking (knives, whisk, apron, towel, measuring cups, cutting board, spatulas, etc.) plus their own *Confidence in the Kitchen* binder containing recipes and product information.

The second class scheduled for October, will highlight protein dishes, including meat, poultry and pulses.



Resource Kit and Binder



Resource Kits

# Club Project—DIBI Community Outreach

Submitted by Laurie Cappe, SI Grand Erie

SI Grand Erie has expanded our Dream It, Be It to include a Community Outreach project. Our DIBI committee works with a group of girls who earn school volunteer hours by helping with the hands-on Community Outreach project, sitting on the Advisory Steering Committee to help plan the DIBI event, and promoting the event to their peers and principals to get Bums in Seats. They attend four live 2-2.5 hour Think Tanks in Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb. During covid we did zoom meetings and porch drop offs. The girls are from the area we service of Brant, Brantford, Norfolk, and Six Nations of the Grand River (including Haldimand schools where girls live on Six Nations of the Grand River). We attempt to have representation from as many different schools as possible.



The planning for each year's Community Outreach Project begins at the November Think Tank, with the girls networking with the club DIBI committee on what it will be to ensure the content is relatable to their demographic vs what we think it should be. Then it is taken to the club. Soroptimists believe it's important to teach the girls to pay it forward and make them aware the world is bigger than their own bubble.

In 2023 the Steering Committee girls chose Period Poverty as the topic for the Community Outreach project and shared with the club DIBI committee possible barriers encountered during a girl's cycle. A public health nurse spoke at the January Think Tank to the girls about her career choice and touched on SIA's 7 sessions and how it related to her work and personal life. The floor was open to the girls and a very engaging and empowering conversation ensued. They and their parents were very grateful for this session. One Mom collected several boxes of supplies at her work and another one wanted to attend the DIBI event as she appreciated the period project content.

The girls said they don't receive menstrual or pregnancy education in high school. They requested including an educational component on these subjects. The health nurse provided several educational site suggestions. We created a Period take away card with QR codes for the girls. We also provided the school with a large poster and many were posted in the girls washrooms.



At the January Think Tank the girls assembled and labeled 45 collection boxes. They went out in Jan-March to the local businesses, stores, industries, corporate sponsors, community partners, parent's workplaces, community activities. A few of the stores opted to provide supplies.

Community support was overwhelming and the project bloomed. One of the collection box stores put on their sidewalk sign our project information and contact info. With our name, "Help end period poverty". The local radio news anchor saw it, went in and made a purchase and called us for an interview.

In April our club delivered 35 loaded boxes to 17 of the 18 High Schools in our area of service. Included were the educational take away card, DIBI emergency resource card, ziploc bags for soiled items, cloth bags to carry supplies, SIA teen dating bookmark; body health bookmark; a loaded DIBI folder for the staff and a SI GE Graduating SS Award poster. This project increased community awareness of our club and DIBI, cemented valued school relationships, and provided 5,748 girls with needed period supplies. A resounding success!

# ECR Fall Meeting

Submitted by Anamaria Turmacu, SI York Region

## Shaping a Post-Pandemic World with Lara Mills

The ECR Fall Region Meeting, organized by SI York Region once again, was an insightful gathering filled with discussions and inspiration. In a world still grappling with the challenges of the post-pandemic era, the event provided a platform for participants eager to explore the changing landscape of public awareness and communication. The evening was graced by a distinguished guest speaker, Lara Mills, a professor in the Public Relations Program at Algonquin College, Ottawa.



The event started with a warm welcome from Governor Gertrud Hocke, who emphasized the Event's significance in a world profoundly reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lara Mills took center stage at 7:00 pm, ready to share her expertise on the theme, "Public Awareness in a Post CoViD World". With a rich background, Lara's insights delved deep into the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic. She underlined the critical role of transparent, authentic, and empathetic communication in bridging the gap between people and organizations.

Ensuring transparency and accountability, ECR Treasurer Karen Bortolin presented the Treasurer's Report, offering a comprehensive overview of the region's financial matters. The evening continued with updates from various pillars, including Membership, Program, Fundraising, and Public Awareness. These updates showcased the region's commitment to engaging seasoned Soroptimists and highlighted initiatives such as LYD, DIBI and the Stargazer Recognition program, all contributing to the region's growth and impact.

Governor Gertrud presented the prestigious Dream Maker Award, celebrating individuals who exemplify the spirit of service and empowerment. This award symbolizes the core values of the organization and its members.

Throughout the event, attendees were invited to participate in upcoming events and conferences, with a special mention of the Spring Conference hosted by SI Toronto, which promises to be another valuable opportunity for learning and networking.

The evening drew to a close at 9:00 pm with closing remarks from Governor Gertrud, reiterating the importance of the discussions and insights shared.

Lara Mills, the event's guest speaker, profoundly impacted all attendees. Her insights on public awareness in a post-pandemic world provide valuable guidance as we navigate the uncharted waters of the new normal.

The ECR Fall Region Meeting, hosted by SI York Region, was a memorable evening of learning, connection, and inspiration. It served as a poignant reminder of the vital role of transparent and empathetic communication in our constantly evolving world.

# Fall Retreat—SI Saskatoon

Submitted by Melanie Kenny, SI Saskatoon

We were happy to find that everyone who lives in Saskatoon was able to attend our club Retreat on September 16. The committee, Colleen, Linda, Melanie and Tara, arranged a full day for the members of fun and information. We spent the time together learning about Soroptimist and ourselves while enjoying one another's company.



Our theme was Heart of the Mission. Prior to the day of Retreat members filled out a Google document about themselves with some interesting and fun facts and we were instructed to read everyone's information. Plus, we completed a Meyer's Briggs questionnaire for our speaker to scrutinize in advance.

We started the day with an opening quiz from our pre-Retreat homework and learned a lot about one another we hadn't known before. It was fun! Next Sharon Fisher's very impressive PowerPoint was presented re: The Road to Equality President's Appeal followed by a short business meeting where two new members were inducted. We spent a few hours with the Myer's Briggs assessment, facilitated by Barb Wotherspoon. It was very

interesting to learn about how we might react in personal and professional settings based on our different personalities. In the afternoon we were joined by a former LYD winner, Erica, who told us how important receiving the LYD award was to her and her family. She became an RN, following receipt of the award, and is now teaching and considering even more education. It was heartwarming to hear how important Soroptimist has been in her life and how her life and that of her family has improved. She is now mentoring another young woman to become educated and is seriously considering joining our club. Our final workshop was on telling magnetic stories and we learned how to develop a story to talk about Soroptimist when we are with people who don't already know about us.



We ate delicious food during the day, provided by Linda, Tara and Melanie and finished with sparkling pink cocktails and more delicious snacks while visiting.

What a fun time we had. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know one another better, to learn more about Soroptimists worldwide and to learn about ourselves and how better to promote the Soroptimist mission. Club members appreciated the Retreat and the feedback was excellent. We highly encourage other clubs to consider something similar. The event was fun and informational and full of camaraderie.

# Sponsor Recognition

Submitted by Wendy Buckland, SI Victoria Westshore

## **BIG WHEEL BURGER COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (BWB): A FORCE FOR POSITIVE CHANGE**

In a world where profit often takes precedence, there are businesses like Big Wheel Burger Community Foundation that choose a different path. The foundation provides funding to non-profit community groups through recommendations from their employees and online applications. Each month BWB chooses a cause and proceeds from their Feature Burger sales go to that organization. BWB believes that ***“Profits will come in a more meaningful way if you make them a side effect rather than the focus.”***

This remarkable organization also advocates a noble purpose in business, stating that ***“The goal should not be merely to do business with anyone who desires your product, but rather to build a community that thrives on your presence.”***



This initial connection, in 2019, marked the beginning of an extraordinary partnership characterized by shared values and a joint commitment to creating a more sustainable and compassionate world. It was then that Soroptimist International of Victoria Westshore (SIVW) was chosen to be the recipient of one month's Feature Burger sales, with all proceeds going to the "Dream It Be It" (DIBI) conference for high school-age girls. Unfortunately, Covid hit, and we were unable to have an in-person conference until March 2023.

It was at the 2023 conference that the relationship between SIVW and BWB took a significant step forward. Co-owner, Calen McNeil, attended the 2023 conference and felt the energy and excitement in the room. The conference provided the ideal platform for like-minded individuals and organizations to come together, to share their knowledge and inspiration with the young women who attended. The alignment between SIVW's mission and BWB's values became more evident.

After the DIBI conference, the relationship between SIVW and BWB deepened. The shared vision and commitment to the betterment/equality of women in our community was clear. SIVW reached out to BWB to ask if they would be the title sponsor for the 2024 DIBI conference. Their gracious acceptance marked a significant milestone in our growing partnership and their commitment to making a positive impact.

BWB's dedication to the community and SIVW was exemplified in a powerful way in July when they hosted a special feature burger. The result? A substantial contribution of \$5,000! Looking ahead, BWB has plans to continue its support by hosting another feature burger event for SIVW in March 2024.

The partnership between SIVW and BWB is not just about financial support; it's about working together to create a better world for all.

# Sponsor Recognition

Submitted by Laurie Cappe, SI Grand Erie



Soroptimist International of Grand Erie as the host wish to acknowledge the generous support of the following businesses, speakers panel, community partners, graduated Steering Committee panel, the DIBI Advisory Steering Committee and our generous facility hosts Tigercat with the 2023 DREAM IT \* BE IT career support event.

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**OTHER CONTRIBUTORS:** ~ BSCENE.ca ~ Brant Health Unit ~ Brantford Library ~ Brantford Police ~ Brantford Tourism ~ Clarks Pharmacy Simcoe ~ Contact Brant ~ DIBI Graduate Steering Committee ~ Fanshawe College ~ Foodland Waterford ~ Foodland Port Rowan ~ Ganohkwasra ~ Larry Brock MP ~ Mike's No Frills Port Dover ~ Mohawk College ~ Norfolk Library ~ Norfolk Roller Derby ~ Pharmasave Shellards Lane Brantford ~ Pharmasave Port Rowan ~ Rexall Waterford ~ RootsMarketing.ca ~ Roulston's Pharmacy ~ Sakshi ~ Shoppers Drug Mart Colborne St Brantford ~ Smart Choice Digital ~ Sobey's Simcoe ~ St. Leonard's ~ Tan to Perfection ~ Traci Southwood ~ Wendy Shelly ~ Will Bouma MPP ~ Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services ~ 2023 Advisory Steering Committee ~ Soroptimist International of Grand Erie members ~



# WCR Spring Conference 2024

Submitted by Dana Martin, WCR Conference 2024 co-chair

**It's Not Too Soon To Start Planning Is It?**

**No!**



Get out your phone, and put this date in your calendar. **May 2-5<sup>th</sup>, 2024**. This is the date of our **Western Canada Region Conference**.

Once again it will be held in Kelowna. If you attended last year you know how much fun we had, but **THIS** year we are going all out!

Before someone asks this, **YES** there will be wine! The wine tour is back. And, (a slight spoiler alert here) you will definitely want to attend the Thursday night social.

This conference is all about possibilities and celebration, and we hope you will all join us to make this the **BIGGEST** and **BEST** conference ever.

If you would like to help out at conference we'd love to have you join us. Please send me an email and I will sign you up!

We will be posting all conference information on the region Facebook page. You will start to see posts in the New Year.



Look for a promo of the ECR Spring Conference in the next issue!

# Region Teams

## Western Canada Board 2023–2024

**Governor:**

Suzanne Heron  
(SI Victoria Westshore)

**Governor-Elect:**

Chari Grant  
(SI Tri Cities)

**Treasurer:**

Susan Barber  
(SI Chilliwack)

**Secretary:**

Shirley Stewart  
(SI Langleys)

**Member-at-Large:**

Shelley DellaMattia  
(SI Langleys)

**Parliamentarian:**

Joan Jackson  
(SI Victoria Westshore)

## 2023-2024 Committee Chairs

**Membership:**

Donna Duvall (SI Abbotsford-Mission)

**Public Awareness:**

Feezah Jaffer (SI Surrey Delta)

**Fundraising:**

Anna Der (SI Edmonton)

**Program:**

Colleen Schmidt (SI Abbotsford-Mission)  
Melanie Kenny (SI Saskatoon)

**Celebrating Success:**

Megan Eastwood (SI Tri Cities)

**Advocacy:**

Janneke Lewis (SI N&W Vancouver)  
Carrell Wingrave (SI Canada West Online)

**Friendship:**

Darlene Jameison (SI Surrey Delta)

**Conference 2024:**

Dana Martin (SI Chilliwack)

Website: [wcsoroptimist.org](http://wcsoroptimist.org)  
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## Eastern Canada Board 2023–2024

**Governor:**

Gertrud Hocke  
(SI Cambridge)

**Governor-Elect:**

Cheryl Ball  
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**Treasurer:**

Karen Bortolin  
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**Secretary:**

Susan Rivers  
(SI Cambridge)

**Director:**

Raheleh Barkhordari  
(SI Toronto)

**Director:**

Keshala Dissanayake  
(SI Cambridge)

**Past Governor:**

Jennifer Oliver  
(SI Guelph)

## 2023-2024 Committee Chairs

**Membership:**

Jean Skillman (SI Toronto)

**Fundraising:**

Cheryl Ball (SI Thunder Bay)

**Program:**

LYD Raheleh Barkhordari (SI Toronto)  
DIBI Keshala Dissanayake (SI Cambridge)

**Celebrating Success:**

Serena Reynolds (SI Grand Erie)

**Website:**

Susan Pierce (SI Kawartha Lakes)

Website: [ecsoroptimist.org/](http://ecsoroptimist.org/)

Facebook: [facebook.com/Soroptimist.EasternCanada](https://facebook.com/Soroptimist.EasternCanada)

**Newsletter Team:**

Colleen Penrowley (SI Tri Cities)  
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Dianne Nielsen (SI Peterborough)  
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