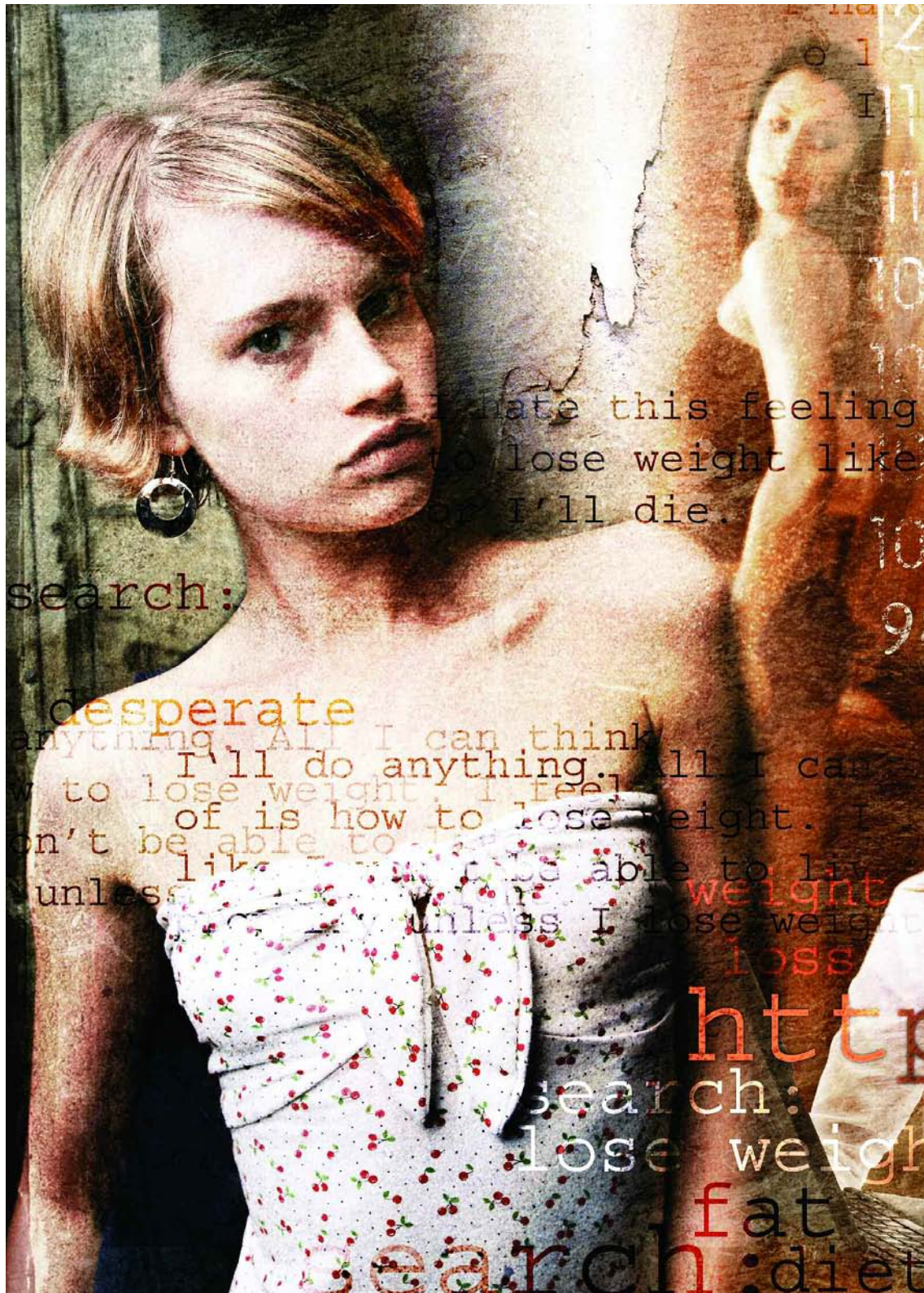


# A Sick and Twisted Web

Turning to the Internet for eating disorder tips and tricks

By Julie Gerstein



**F**rom the outside, 27-year-old Meg seems like any other bright, pretty, ambitious woman. She attended Wesleyan University, where she wrote for the student paper, and Fordham University, where she was a pre-law student. She's an avid amateur photographer and gifted poet. According to her profile on the popular online networking site Myspace, Meg loves Fiona Apple, Dave Matthews Band and Madonna. The site lists her interests as web design, writing and Starbucks. But dig a little deeper into Meg's list of interests and you'll find mentions of psychiatric wards, panic attacks, self-injury—and anorexia.

For the past 17 years, Meg has battled with the eating disorder anorexia nervosa. She's been in and out of hospitals for much of her life, tube fed more times than she can count and at 21 suffered a heart attack. And though she's experienced bouts of recovery—a year and a half was her longest and most recent period of recovery—recent stresses and frustrations have pushed Meg into an anorexia relapse.

But Meg, like so many women struggling with anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders, won't suffer alone. She has a vibrant online community of friends and acquaintances who, like her, head to the Internet for dieting and starvation tips, moral support and "thinspiration." Meg even runs her own pro-anorexia site where she and other anorexics who are not ready for recovery meet online.

But while pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia (often referred to as pro-ana and pro-mia) community members see the sites and the disease as a lifestyle choice, clinical psychologists and eating disorder experts believe that pro-eating disorder websites and forums are deadly and dangerous.

## A Worldwide Problem

Though it's difficult to know just how many pro-anorexia and bulimia sites are out there, estimates run in the hundreds, and there are exponentially more pro-anorexia sites than pro-bulimia sites. According to research from the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) in Seattle, Washington, most people that frequent the sites are young women between the ages of 13 and 25 (though older women and some men also visit the sites). Pro-eating disorder sites can be found in a variety of languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, German and French, an indication that the varieties of sites are as widespread as the disease itself.

Because of their controversial nature, various eating disorder groups in the UK, U.S. and Canada have repeatedly approached Internet service providers and search engine owners, such as Yahoo and AOL, to request that sites be removed. But for every site, forum or message board taken down, a new one pops up.

And there is certainly no shortage of young women and girls visiting the sites. The website Meg began in 2001 now boasts a 2,000 member forum, and she says the site gets around a million hits a month. "It's just about the biggest pro-eating disorder website out there," she says proudly via telephone from the small town in Arizona where she lives with her fiancé.

Eating disorders are generally divided into three major categories. Anorexia is characterized as restrictive eating, self-starvation and excessive weight loss. Bulimia is a severe eating disorder in which people binge on food and then self-induce vomiting or purging. ED-NOS—eating disorders not otherwise specified—refers to all disordered eating and dieting behavior that does not meet the clinical definitions of either bulimia or anorexia. Both anorexia and bulimia ravage victims' bodies and can cause heart problems, digestive tract difficulties, and brittle bones and teeth.

There are several well-known victims of eating disorders including actresses Mary Kate Olsen, Jamie Lynn Sigler, Tracy Gold, Christina Ricci and singer Fiona Apple.

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## Eating Disorders and Health Insurance

After struggling with anorexia for five years, Anna Westin of Chaska, Minnesota, USA, committed suicide. She was only 21 years old. Even though Anna wanted to recover, the high cost of treatment and a lack of adequate insurance coverage prevented her from getting the help she needed.

In the wake of her death, Anna's family, along with several other families, filed a lawsuit against a major health insurance provider (Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota). The suit charges the insurance company with systematically denying medically necessary treatment for people with eating disorders and other mental health concerns.

Though eating disorders are classified as mental illnesses, they are often considered a separate category from other psychological illnesses and disorders, such as schizophrenia and depression. Currently, only 10 U.S. states mandate health care coverage for the treatment of eating disorders: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, North Dakota, Vermont, Washington and West Virginia.

"Most insurance carriers in the United States do not carry inpatient treatment for eating disorders," says Lynn Grefe, CEO of the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), in Seattle, Washington. NEDA is currently lobbying for improved insurance coverage for eating disorders and is supporting bills in New Jersey and Massachusetts that would require insurance coverage for eating disorders.

The issue is complicated by the fact that in order to qualify as anorexic, eating disorder sufferers must lose weight to a point that is 15 percent or more below normal body weight and miss three or more consecutive menstrual periods. Many sufferers may not meet the clinical criteria for anorexia (even though they have suffered for months or years) and are unable to qualify for insurance coverage and treatment.

"The insurance issues are critical," says Dr. Doug Bunnell of the Renfrew Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "Virtually every family that deals with an eating disorder is financially strapped by it." —J.G.

## Encouraging Negative Body Image

Mothers who frequently obsess about their diets or complain about their bodies might want to reconsider. A recent study from Harvard Medical School found that women who frequently diet and discuss body image unwittingly encourage eating disorders and negative body images in their daughters.

The study, which was published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, found that 5-year-old girls whose mothers dieted were twice as likely to be aware of dieting and weight loss strategies as girls whose mothers didn't diet. Girls with mothers who dieted were also more likely to develop anxieties about weight and physical appearance.

The study found that children pick up on even subtle cues that their parents give them about body image and weight gain. Relatively innocuous statements—such as making self-deprecating remarks about fat thighs, or lamenting gaining an extra pound or two—can have a detrimental impact on young girls. Comments made by fathers about the slimness of their spouses or their children can have a similarly adverse effect.

Rather than count every calorie, experts encourage parents to emphasize healthy eating and fitness. By treating their own bodies right, mothers can send positive messages to their children.—J.G.

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Perhaps the most well known eating disorder victim is singer Karen Carpenter, who died from anorexia in 1983.

Because of the secretive nature of the disease, it's difficult to determine just how many people suffer from anorexia, bulimia and ED-NOS. Lynn Grefe, CEO of NEDA, the largest non-profit organization in the United States working to prevent eating disorders and provide treatment referrals to those suffering from anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorders, estimates that around 10 million people suffer from anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders in the U.S. alone. According to the Renfrew Center Foundation, around 70 million people suffer from eating disorders worldwide, and the numbers just keep growing.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, 1 to 2 percent of women ages 15-25 have anorexia, and an additional 3 to 5 percent are bulimic. And health officials in Japan report that eating disorders are one of the most common psychological illnesses among Japanese women. In China, the popularity of diet foods and fads has contributed to an increase in eating disorders there as well.

And, says Dr. Ovidio Bermudez, medical director of the Laureate Eating Disorders program of Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, and an expert on eating disorders in Latin America, the same is true of many areas of Latin America. "Statistics don't really exist, but if you talk about developed areas like Buenos Aires, Argentina, or Medellin, Colombia, the incidences of eating disorders are as high as anywhere in the world." Eating disorders are also on the rise in Chile and El Salvador.

Across the board and around the world, experts have found that people with eating disorders share several personality attributes. "There is a growing consensus that there is a constellation of personality characteristics manipulated by experiences and environment that put someone at high risk for anorexia

nervosa," explains Dr. Doug Bunnell, clinical director of the Renfrew Center, the United States' first residential eating disorder treatment facility. People prone to develop eating disorders, says Dr. Bunnell, are typically anxious, perfectionist, impulsive and intelligent.

Which is why Dr. Bunnell believes that pro-eating disorder sites are so dangerous. "For those of us that aren't genetically predisposed it won't make a difference, but for some it will be the connection to the illness."

Dr. Bermudez also faults popular media for creating a culture of eating disorders. "Everything around us says eat, eat, eat, but make sure you don't look like it."

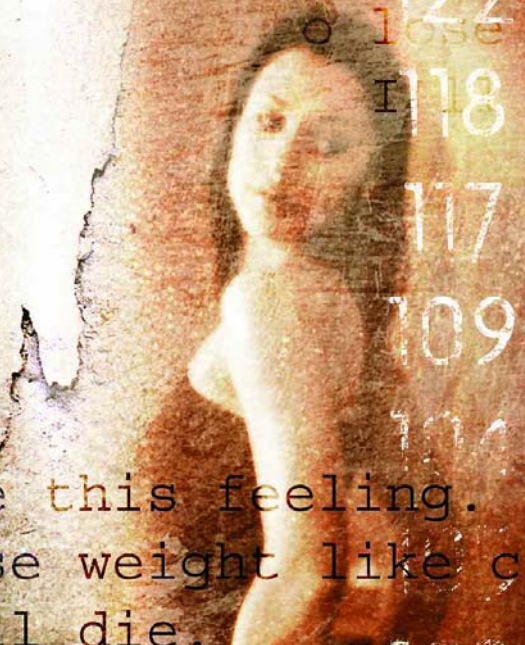
## Online Refuge

Until recently, Meg was living on disability after having been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Ironically, Meg qualified for state-funded help and medication for her bipolar disorder, but because she does not currently meet the clinical criteria for anorexia—weight loss to a point that is 15 percent or more below normal body weight and the absence of three or more consecutive menstrual periods—she was unable to qualify for eating disorder treatment, which is why she started her website.

"Lack of therapy, lack of understanding, lack of insurance—people who told me to put food in my mouth and get over it," says Meg, all drove her to create an online refuge.

Like many who run pro-ana and mia sites, Meg is adamant that her site is not for the occasional dieter or anorexic "wannabe." "It's for those who aren't ready for recovery, for people who may not have therapy and resources to access recovery or a hospital. But if people want recovery we want nothing more than health and happiness for that person," she says.

A recent post on a pro-ana forum confirms Meg's statement. A user named Sadfly wrote that was she pursu-



ing recovery: "I finally made the step to go to therapy. I have depression and am getting treatment. I am glad I did it coz I feel a lot better now. My eating has improved and I am working on becoming normal. ...Goodbye and lots of love," she wrote. In response, many members of the community wished her well and congratulated Sadfly on her progress.

"Just because the word 'pro' is before it doesn't mean we promote the disorder," says Meg.

In fact, most sites carry an explicit warning, similar to this one: "This is a haven for anorexics who aren't willing to recover. This is not a place for diet tips. This is not a place for developing an eating disorder." This particular website requires users to go through a screening process for membership, but many sites don't, and in reality, there is nothing preventing a casual browser from delving deeply into the pro-eating disorders universe.

Meg's website is set up like a house with a "bathroom," "kitchen," "bedroom," and "living room." If you go into the "bathroom," for instance, you might find information on laxatives and purging. In the "kitchen," members post low calorie recipes and dieting tricks. Meg's site also provides forums for members to enter into dieting competitions, and a section for "thinspiration," featuring images of emaciated models and actresses that, for people with eating disorders, trigger anorexic and bulimic behavior and motivate users to diet, starve and lose weight. Site users list their physical

statistics in graphic detail: their height, current weight, highest weight, lowest weight, goal weight and ultimate goal weight, which is typically in the underweight category for their height. Users often discuss issues they're having fasting, dieting, and hiding their anorexia from their friends and families.

Family trauma is often connected to eating disorders. Meg believes her anorexia is in part a response to physical and sexual abuse she endured as a child, a common experience among women with eating disorders. She estimates that around 90 percent of the young women she knows with eating disorders have been the victims of sexual molestation, and Dr. Doug Bunnell of the Renfrew Center also sees a strong correlation between sexual and physical abuse and eating disorders. Victims are often using eating disorders, he says, to regain a sense of control over their lives and destinies. "The women on my site are trying to vocalize something with their bodies instead of their voices," says Meg, "something that they can't vocalize with their voices."

Meg's site, like most pro-ana sites, featured what are known as the "sacred texts" of the pro-ana community. The sacred texts—The Thin Commandments, the Ana Creed, the Ana Psalm and the Letter from Ana—serve to highlight the psychological and social underpinnings of the ideology. Many of the texts refer to Ana as a physical being—a friend and confidant. "I will devote myself to Ana. She will be with me wherever I go, keeping me in line. No one else matters; she is the only one who cares about me and who understands me. I will honor Her and make Her proud," reads one version of the Ana Creed. The Thin Commandments state that "being thin is more important than being healthy." And another version of the Ana Creed highlights the connection between anorexia, control and the quest for perfection. "I believe in control," it reads,

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## Taking Action: How Clubs Can Help

- Anorexia is the number one killer of women ages 15-24. Clubs can lessen the likelihood that girls will develop the disease, and other eating disorders, by participating in the Violet Richardson Award program. Through the program, clubs can provide girls with positive role models, while boosting their self-esteem and empowering them to contribute to the world in meaningful ways.

- Another way clubs can bolster girls' self-confidence is to host self-esteem workshops that focus on body image, fitness and well-being. Clubs can also facilitate mentoring programs to help improve girls' self-awareness and present them with positive role models. Clubs can apply for a Soroptimist Club Grant for Women and Girls to help fund such projects. For more information on Club Grants, visit the library section of the members-only website.

- The high cost of treatment often forces those struggling with eating disorders to go without the help they need. Clubs can help alleviate this financial burden by working with the National Eating Disorders Association's state advocacy network, which works to expand insurance coverage, advocate for quality treatment, increase public understanding of eating disorders, and urge more funding for research. Visit [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) for more information on how to get involved.

- An estimated 70 million people suffer from eating disorders around the world. Clubs can help by raising awareness about anorexia and bulimia, and providing information on how those struggling with the diseases can get help. For more information, visit the websites of the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders [www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org); the Renfrewcenter [www.renfrewcenter.com](http://www.renfrewcenter.com), and the National Eating Disorders Association [www.nationaleatingdisorders.com](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.com).

## Pro-Recovery Websites

Though there are several hundred pro-anorexia and pro-bulimia websites on the Internet, many other sites offer recovery support.

One of the largest, oldest and most well-known pro-recovery sites on the web is Something Fishy <www.somethingfishy.com>. Started in 1995 by a recovering anorexic named Amy, more than eight million users have visited the site. The site's goal is "raising awareness, emphasizing always that eating disorders are not about food and weight; they are just the symptoms of something deeper going on inside. We are determined to remind each and every sufferer that they are not alone, and that complete recovery is possible."

In addition to providing information on eating disorders and treatments, the site also features a message board forum, a collection of poetry and writings from eating disorder survivors, and a memorial page to commemorate friends and loved ones lost to eating disorders. Most importantly, Something Fishy offers users the opportunity to gain support and chat with others working toward recovery.

But despite its positive message and goals, people with eating disorders or people interested in developing eating disorders can negatively distort information on pro-recovery sites, which is why Something Fishy and many other recovery sites insist on setting strict rules and guidelines for discussion. The site prohibits the discussion of numbers related to height and weight measurements and body mass indexes, and bans the posting of pictures that might trigger anorexic or bulimic behavior.—J.G.

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"the only force mighty enough to bring order to the chaos that is my world." The underlying tenets of the pro-ana movement are strength, control, purity and most importantly, perfection.

### Support or Sickness?

"I hate this feeling. I need to lose weight like crazy, or I'll die. I've never been this desperate before... I can't study, I can't sleep, I can't work, all I can think of is how to lose weight. Tomorrow I'm going on a week fruit diet. If that doesn't work, I'll starve. I'll do anything. I feel like I won't be able to live properly, to breathe properly unless I lose weight...

this can't be normal... lets hope next post I have some better news :( Love you girls, hope things are you going 10000000 times better for you then me :) xoxo"—Brie

"Hi It's been a while since i last posted! I just wanted to know if anyone knows any anorexia/bulimia inspired movies i watched girl, interrupted yesterday which includes anorexia a little but are there any more? Thanks, think thin!"—  
I\_See\_Light

"I use laxatives, which I know give mostly water weight loss but I feel like they help keep things moving so bad food isn't stuck inside me for any longer than it needs to be. I have tried to make myself sick but never have managed it properly, I end up all flustered and sore throated with my eyes streaming. I know its not good but does anyone have any tips on making yourself sick. I need to get rid of anything I eat immediately as my control over my eating is getting beyond a joke now."—  
Silverdreams87

For women like Brie, I\_See\_Light, and Silverdreams87, online pro-anorexia

forums and websites provide a safe place to communicate with other women and girls, and ask for support. But even Meg sees a potential problem in relying too heavily on the pro-anorexia community.

"These sites can offer support, understanding and comfort. People will resort to the forum instead of the therapist and in no way do I want to be a replacement for a therapist or real time support," she says.

Even worse, pro-ana site goers may think they're getting legitimate support, but, Dr. Bunnell points out, "These sites can be quite destructive in terms of supporting illness and connections to illness."

Further, says Bunnell, "Are people really making a free choice to be involved in this, or are they being encouraged to try behaviors that can be dangerous? It's not a benign event."

But Eda Uca sees it differently. Uca is the author of *Ana's Girls: The Essential Guide to the Underground Eating Disorder Community Online*.

Uca spent several months observing and interacting with pro-anas to write the book, and believes that pro-ana sites are more helpful than harmful.

"These girls are ill with or without the community. The community isn't making them sick though it certainly normalizes the behavior. But at the end of the day, most of the girls that pass through these communities don't stay for more than a couple months. The girls who are on these communities all the time, their eating disorders have already taken over everything. That they're talking about it doesn't create the eating disorders," argues Uca, who believes that it's a mistake to shut down pro-ana sites.

"When you shut the website down you don't cure the disorder. They were already

**"I hate this feeling. I need to lose weight like crazy, or I'll die. I've never been this desperate before. ...I can't study, I can't sleep, I can't work, all I can think of is how to lose weight."**



doing everything they were talking about before the website,” Uca continues. “Many [pro-ana community members] are totally cut off from healthy support networks, don’t have a lot of friends or family to begin with, or lost the support of friends or family because they became ‘diseased girls.’ It forces the girls to turn further inward.”

Dr. Bermudez disagrees. “There is a difference between support and recovery and support and illness. I don’t know how it would be supportive to teach someone to purge, or use laxatives or hide their illness from friends and loved ones.”

And, says Dr. Bermudez, the particular nature of eating disorders is such that “Patients don’t want to be found. It’s one of the few illnesses where the patient doesn’t want relief when they’re most ill.”

Lynn Grefe of NEDA likens pro-ana sites to a cancer website that advocated cancer patients not treat tumors. “People with eating disorders have a mental illness. They are not thinking

clearly. If you’re not feeding your body you’re not feeding your mind, and you’re not thinking clearly.” And, she says, it is especially dangerous for young women between the ages of 15 and 24, for whom anorexia is the number one killer.

Ironically, Grefe’s sentiments are echoed by a member of Project Shapeshift, a pro-ana online forum. When asked whether she believed anorexia was a lifestyle or a disease, poster “Ellie\_MNOP” wrote that anorexia is “a disease of which one

symptom is it makes you believe it’s a lifestyle.”

NEDA’s Lynn Grefe encourages parents to monitor their children’s Internet usage. “The websites are everywhere. They are terrible and dangerous and parents need to pay attention to what kids are looking at on the web.”

“In spite of the many efforts to shut these sites down,” says Dr. Bermudez, “pro-ana sites will keep popping up, just because these folks feel that they have something to say and share with others. Sadly, they don’t really understand how damaging this could be.”

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Staff Writer Julie Gerstein is a frequent contributor to *Best for Women* magazine. A senior writing lecturer at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Julie is also a freelance writer.

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**In the next issue:** Obstetric fistula. Please email Editor Jessica Levinson ([jessica@soroptimist.org](mailto:jessica@soroptimist.org)) with relevant information.

## IN MEMORIAM



SIA’s 1970-1972 president, **Eileene Bidwell**, died this past November at the age of 81. A longtime educator and civic leader, Eileene was a member of SI/El Centro, California, and later SI/Brawley, California. She first joined Soroptimist in 1954. During her tenure, she served in various capacities,

including chair of several federation-level committees, Pacific Region governor, and club president, vice president and secretary.

In addition to her Soroptimist activities, Eileene was a charter member of the California Personnel and Guidance Association and a member of Kappa Delta Pi, an educational honor society. She also served as president of the local California Retired Teachers Association and was deeply involved with the Imperial County Pioneers Society, where she served as lead docent for its museum.

Eileene will be remembered as a caring and compassionate woman dedicated to helping others and contributing to the world in meaningful ways.

Memorial donations can be made in Eileene’s name to the Pioneers Society, specifically for the support of museum tours for elementary school students.

### Imperial Pioneer Museum

373 East Aten Rd.  
Imperial, California  
92251

# Historic SI Meeting in Windsor

By Past SIA President Yvonne Machuk

**A**t the request of 2005-2006 SIA President Jean Barth, I was privileged to act as a consultant in the SIA delegation and to travel to the UK in August to meet with 50 Soroptimist leaders. I feel fortunate to have been part of what turned out to be a very historic meeting.

August 10 was a date that made the news worldwide due to the terrorist plot that was uncovered in the UK. Traveling that day into London Heathrow were 50 Soroptimist leaders who were gathering at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park for SI's interim board meeting for the 2005-2007 biennium. Despite the heightened security and altered travel plans, participants arrived safely.

The SI officers, federation voting members, programme team and other appointment holders enjoyed several days under the capable leadership of SI President Lynn Dunning.

The setting at historic Cumberland Lodge contributed to a very convivial and productive meeting. Morning walks, chats over tea and conversations at excellent meals offered opportunities to reap one of the most rewarding benefits of Soroptimist membership—international friendships. While English was the official language of the meeting, snatches of conversations could be overheard in many other tongues during our few days in Windsor. After full days of business, we were treated to entertainment nightly, provided by each federation in turn.

The first morning was spent in federation meetings where each delegation examined and discussed the items on the agenda to come before the board. President Lynn had organized discussion groups and round tables where participants were able to engage in very frank discussions about the future of our organization centered around advocacy and NGOs, program, public relations, marketing, membership and extension, structure, governance and finance. Each of us took part in two groups and the findings were presented to the body at large. The commitment, wisdom, energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the Soroptimists in all groups were testaments to the kind of extraordinary women who are part of SI.

One of the most exciting and significant actions taken at the interim board meeting was the establishment of a Strategic Planning Group to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for the organization. SI is engaging the services of an external, professional facilitator to help the group develop a draft plan.

SI President Lynn will chair the group and serve as project director. The group will include 2006-2007 SI President-elect Margaret Lobo, Executive Officer Rosie Coutts and one representative from each federation, to be appointed by President Lynn after consultation with the federations. An aggressive timeline was adopted in order to allow member input and have a presentation of the draft strategic plan at the SI Convention in Glasgow in July 2007. As SIA members, we are well acquainted with the importance and benefits of sound strategic planning and SIA Executive Director Leigh Wintz offered invaluable guidance in the discussions. How exciting it is to be a Soroptimist now and have the opportunity to be part of this process!

Also at this meeting, a selection panel made up of the four federation presidents, SI's Immediate Past President Joan Cromer, and President Lynn selected SIA's Dawn Marie Lemonds as 2007-2009 programme director and SIGBI's Margaret Cook as the assistant programme director. They will follow SIA's Lois Sagel and SIGBI's Margaret Alderson in these essential SI roles and will assume their positions in Glasgow. Dawn Marie currently serves as the SI liaison for the SI quadrennial project, Project Independence.

Another important decision made at the meeting was the approval of the proposal put forth by SIGBI for the 2007-2011 quadrennial project.

"Project Sierra—A Family and a Future" in partnership with Hope and Homes for Children in Sierra Leone will be the focus for our work internationally beginning at convention in Glasgow next July. Attendees at the meeting were able to view a film about the project and meet two Soroptimists from SIGBI who are involved. It promises to be a very worthwhile partnership.

Glasgow Convention Chair Joan Lunt reported on plans for an exciting and informative time for delegates next summer in Scotland. Excellent speakers, workshops, networking opportunities and excursions promise Soroptimists a time of learning, fun and fellowship. I encourage you to make plans to be in Glasgow July 29-August 2, 2007, to continue to learn about Soroptimist International and how we as members help women and girls meet the challenges they face, to renew old friendships and develop new ones, and to be part of the strategic planning process that will take us confidently into the future. 🌍



**Past SIA President Yvonne Machuk, SIA Executive Director Leigh Wintz and SIA President Tes Choa. During the meeting, Yvonne was appointed as convention chair for SI's 2011 convention in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.**



# Program

## 2006 Violet Richardson Award Recipient: Maranatha Estrada

Each year, SIA recognizes young women from around the world for their dedication to volunteer service. Soroptimist's Violet Richardson Award honors girls, ages 14-17, who have demonstrated a commitment to making the world a better place.

Maranatha Brogado Estrada, 17, of Kalibo, Philippines, is SIA's 2006 Violet Richardson Award honoree. Nominated by SI/Kalibo, Philippines, Maranatha is the chair of the Cagayunan-Aglucay Adolescent Reproductive Health Organization (CARHO), an organization that offers education and skills training to at-risk teens. As the chairperson, Maranatha has changed the lives of young people in her community by providing training and information to teenagers on domestic violence, teen pregnancy and reproductive health, and nutrition. The center runs dozens of events each year, including smoking cessation programs and health workshops.

Maranatha's parents guided her decision to get involved in volunteer service to her community. "When I was little, I saw how my mom and dad would help in our community, and I wanted to be able to make a difference," said Maranatha. She began volunteering when she was in elementary school as a member of the Girl Scouts. As a teenager, "I started getting involved in more complex problems in my community," explained Maranatha, "and tackling issues such as unemployed mothers, violence against women and girls, and substance abuse."

As the chair of CARHO, Maranatha has organized several successful programs, including a theater presentation for teens on violence against women, and a symposium on reproductive health. Teen pregnancy is a growing problem in the Philippines. According to 2003



**2005-2006 SIA President Jean Barth presented Maranatha with the 2006 Violet Richardson Award at SIA's 39th Biennial Convention this past July.**

United Nations Population Fund statistics, 3.8 percent of teen girls between the ages of 15 and 19 become pregnant.

Maranatha believes that part of what makes CARHO so successful is that the center offers peer-to-peer counseling and services. "We are teenagers helping to solve the problems of other teens," said Maranatha. One program she is especially proud of is CARHO's theater-based education program dealing with violence against women and girls, peer pressure and substance abuse prevention. "With this campaign, we go to different far-flung communities and share information with them about these issues," stated Maranatha. "We help in making teens aware and giving them access to services and information."

In addition to being recognized by Soroptimist for her volunteer efforts, Maranatha also received an award of outstanding achievement from the office of the president of the Philippines and the Philippines Department of Education. She also received a Principal's Leadership Award from her high school for her work with CARHO. And in 2004, CARHO was nominated for a best practices award by the United Nations

Population Fund for its work to promote reproductive health awareness.

In addition to her work with CARHO, Maranatha also serves as a member of the board of directors for the Asia-Pacific Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Organization and is the vice chair of the Provincial Adolescent Reproductive Health Core Group. After completing high school, Maranatha hopes to become a nurse and continue helping others.

Maranatha received \$140 for herself and \$100 for CARHO from the club, and an additional \$1,000 for herself and \$1,000 from the Philippines Region. And as federation finalist, she received an additional \$2,500 for CARHO.

This past July, Maranatha attended SIA's 39th Biennial Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and thanked attendees for the award. "Having been chosen the 2006 Violet Richardson Award recipient has opened many doors for me," she said. She then called the audience to action. "Let us create ripples and touch more lives."

**By Julie Gerstein  
Staff Writer**

This past year, 677 clubs participated in the Violet Richardson Award program, and more than \$213,000 was given to girls and their volunteer organizations. Without the direct financial support of clubs and members, this program would not exist. Contributions ensure that this program, as well as others that improve the lives of women and girls, will continue.

For more information about the Violet Richardson Award program, to make a donation, or to download an application order form, log on to: [www.soroptimist.org](http://www.soroptimist.org).



# Program

## Best Practices

Across the federation, Soroptimists recognize the pressures facing girls, including peer and media pressure to conform to a certain standard of thinness, popularity and prettiness. In order to ensure that girls recognize their self-worth, Soroptimists work with girls in their communities to educate them about important issues affecting their lives and to celebrate their contributions and accomplishments. Clubs do this through large gatherings and one-on-one mentoring. They focus on a variety of topics from dating violence to body image.

For years, [SI/Corona, California](#), has sponsored Dreams and Decisions, a day-long workshop designed for girls in 7th and 8th grades. The program teaches girls that dreams can be reached when good decisions are made.

Throughout the day, girls hear about a variety of important topics from other young people and local dignitaries. The goal is to raise awareness and create an atmosphere where girls feel safe asking questions. Each girl is provided with gift bags filled with fun things and a resource guide listing the names and phone numbers of agencies in the community that can help girls with a number of different problems. Each year, about 150 girls benefit from this project. In the past, the club has received four Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls to support their project, which now has widespread community support.

[SI/Tokyo-Komae, Japan](#), works with girls who live in a juvenile detention center because of drug offenses, prostitution or other felony offenses. The club started the program in 1996 as a way to make a difference in the lives of the girls, many of whom suffered abuse and neglect in their childhood. The members participate in various events held at the center including athletic activities, dances, Christmas celebrations and graduation. They give gifts to the girls and donate books to the library. They also work with the girls at an event sponsored by the Japan Farmers Association, where the girls pick flowers and harvest vegetables they cook upon returning to the center. During these events, the Soroptimist members talk with the girls to help them recover from the trauma of their early lives. The goal of the project is for members to show the girls caring and affection in order to help them heal.

Another best practice project is [SI/Boise, Idaho's](#), All Things Are Possible. By meeting throughout the year with 6th grade girls in low-income areas, members seek to elevate the self-esteem of participants. Recognizing that girls often set their goals well beneath their potential, this project seeks to expose the girls to positive, successful female role models. Each month, members hold two meetings with the girls focusing on topics such as confidence, goal setting, and the value of

women in society. Soroptimist members help the girls recognize their potential by providing living examples of strong, confident and capable women. Since the program was started in 1987, more than 540 6th grade girls have participated. Outside funding has helped to ensure that the club can continue to reach out to local girls.

In [Korea, SI/Seo Seoul](#) works with girls who have suffered from violence and poverty and live in a shelter. The members make financial and material donations. They also participate in a mentoring program so the girls feel loved and to help them develop confidence and self-esteem. Some members also teach English or math to the girls. The mentoring is one-on-one whereby members let the girls decide what they would like to do—for example learning to play piano or use a computer.

Finally, a number of clubs work with girls to recognize the difference between abusive and healthy relationships. A key component of these programs is for girls to value and respect themselves in order to demand the same from others, including boyfriends. Teaching girls and boys the importance of respect and healthy relationships can make a difference in a girl's relationships—now and throughout her life. Clubs, often partnering with other organizations, bring presentations to schools and create environments where students feel comfortable exploring the issue of dating violence. Clubs working on this issue include: [SI/Tonenumata, Japan](#); [SI/Newport Harbor Area, California](#); [SI/Brea/La Habra, California](#); and [SI/Caldwell, Idaho](#).

For clubs interested in starting a mentoring program, a model program kit is available in the library of the member's only section of the website, which provides step-by-step instructions. Clubs interested in more information on the projects above should contact the clubs or the program department at headquarters. 🌐

By Julie Gerstein  
Staff Writer



# Fundraising

## Accountability and the Soroptimist Club

**S**oroptimist clubs work on projects that benefit women and girls, and donors contribute to the organization in good faith with the expectation that contributions will be used to support women- and girl-focused aims. Because Soroptimist is a non-profit—and funded in large part by individual donations and fundraising—we are held to a higher level of trust and accountability than those in the for-profit sector, and it is our responsibility to demonstrate that we are deserving of that trust.

Recently in the United States, there have been several highly visible cases of corporate and non-profit wrongdoing and misuse of funds. In order to regain the public's trust, nonprofit leaders and policy makers are working to improve accountability. To that end, in 2004 Soroptimist International of the Americas took steps to become certified by the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organization's Standards for Excellence program. The Standards for Excellence is a comprehensive program that promotes ethical and accountable conduct in nonprofit leadership and management. The certification program is voluntary for organizations that wish to demonstrate a formal commitment to the Standards.

In addition to voluntarily complying with the Standards for Excellence pro-

gram, Soroptimist International of the Americas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States and must comply with the rules and regulations of the designation. Clubs in the United States are also given 501(c)(3) status under SIA's group exemption.

Fundraising gives donors the opportunity to support the Soroptimist mission, and donors' gifts are tangible signs of their desire to positively change the world for women and girls. Clubs can undertake several strategies to promote openness and accountability on the local level:

- Know and comply with local, state and national laws
- Stay true to the Soroptimist mission. There are many worthwhile causes, but as a Soroptimist club it is important that your projects and programs are focused on the organizational mission to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world.
- Retain transparency. Make sure your club clearly and truthfully communicates exactly how funds will be used, and is able to provide documentation.
- Ensure that no member benefits personally from funds contributed to the club.
- Keep costs in check. Evaluate the costs associated with your fundraisers so

that they are reasonable relative to the revenue generated. Costs should ideally be less than 25 percent—but no more than one-third—of the fundraising income.

- Say "thank you." Acknowledging donations not only lets the donor know that you appreciate their gift but serves to unite the donor and the club in carrying out the mission of the organization.
- Communicate. Keep the community informed of how the club has used the gift. This ensures a continued relationship with past donors and the possibility of future gifts.

By following these simple rules, a club can generate greater public awareness and enhanced public trust. This will in turn attract new members, strengthen mission-focused programs and increase contributions—and promote your club and Soroptimist as an ethical organization. When clubs participate in ethical practices, the entire organization is positively affected. Clubs throughout the federation should take steps to ensure the trust of their donors. 🌐

By Nancy Fusco  
Senior Director of Development

### Standards of Excellence

The Standards for Excellence was developed by the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations and is currently being replicated in six other states. The program is a comprehensive ethics and accountability program developed to increase the public's trust in nonprofit organizations and to help them act in an ethical and accountable manner.

The Standards are based on honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust, responsibility and accountability. With these underlying principles, the Standards address nonprofit program operations, governance, human resources, financial management and fundraising.

Opportunities are provided through the Standards for capacity building and strengthening organizational infrastructure; increased credibility with potential donors; and assurance that the organization is operating in a highly ethical and accountable manner.

The Standards for Excellence Institute is a national program that allows nonprofit organizations in any state access to the ethics and accountability code and educational resources. For more information visit <[www.pano.org](http://www.pano.org)> and <[www.standardsforexcellence-institute.org](http://www.standardsforexcellence-institute.org)>.



# Membership

## New Leaders = New Ideas: Understanding Change in Our Organization

**W**ho is right for Soroptimist? It is an age-old question, and one that is posed frequently to SIA headquarters by club leaders and members: who exactly are we “allowed” to invite to join Soroptimist? This question is a welcome one because not only does it demonstrate how focused clubs are on membership, but it gives SIA the opportunity to encourage clubs to take an in-depth look at their recruitment practices. An initial, quick and easy response to this frequently asked question is provided in the SIA bylaws:

Article IV, Section 2 of the SI Constitution reads: "Section 2. (i) To qualify for membership of Soroptimist International a woman should:

a) be working in a profession or business or in an occupation of comparable status or responsibilities to those of a person working in a profession or business (regular members); or b) be recently retired from or temporarily or permanently out of work from a profession or business or an occupation of comparable status or responsibilities to those of a person working in a profession or business (retired/unemployed members); or c) be embarking on a career in a profession or business or occupation of comparable status or responsibilities to those of a person working in a profession or business." (embarking members)

As clubs are well aware, however, the changing times—and changing pool of potential members with different attitudes and lifestyles—have caused us to stop and think beyond the words of the bylaws to determine who is right for Soroptimist. After all, inviting members who will be both productive and dedicated involves more than conducting a comparison to requirements included in a governance document. The requirements must be followed, of course, but in these days of fluctuating membership, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the bylaws and explore how recruitment efforts can be expanded within their meaning and intention.

### Profession or Business

Many clubs specifically ask for clarification of the phrase “profession or business” as used in the bylaws. It is understandable that clubs look for guidance in this area because in 2007, determining what constitutes a profession or business is not a black

and white issue. Even if it were possible to generate an all-inclusive list of titles and occupations considered to be part of the profession and business category, the list would be out-of-date almost immediately as women enter new and diverse fields and their professional lives evolve. Additionally, titles continue to become more and more unique to the industries they serve and don’t always fall into standard categories and rarely articulate the true meaning of a woman’s responsibilities and capabilities.

Therefore, because it is so difficult to provide a concrete definition of “profession or business,” SIA empowers clubs to be inclusive in their interpretation of this phrase (and the related “occupation of comparable status or responsibilities”) rather than exclusive. Instead of focusing solely on title and occupation, clubs are encouraged to look closely at the actual work a potential member does and how her attitude, enthusiasm, ideas, and skill set would add to the club. In other words, the primary focus of recruitment should be on specific contributions that an individual can make to the club and to Soroptimist.

This approach may be daunting for some clubs as it is based on a different mindset from that which may have been promoted in the past. Clubs have always been very conscious of and meticulous about following their own bylaws as well as the SIA bylaws when evaluating prospective members, and this is to be commended. Guidelines and procedures give clubs much-needed structure and consistency, and are especially important to those just starting out. However, narrowly interpreting these documents, even with the best of intentions, can adversely affect recruitment efforts by limiting the pool of potential members and eventually stunting the growth of individual clubs.

Additionally, clubs can hinder their recruitment efforts by following traditions not reflected in governance documents, but that have become ingrained in their culture. One example is only accepting members of a certain age, a requirement that is not part of the SIA bylaws. Clubs need to be mindful that evaluating members of today based on past practices will not be effective in attracting the leaders needed to secure and sustain Soroptimist and its mission well into the future.

Some clubs have already realized the value of expanding their idea of the “traditional” member in order to diversify and

grow. Others have said they are intimidated by this flexibility, as it leads them into new and somewhat uncertain territory. Clubs that are unsure if they need to consider expanding their parameters of membership should ask themselves the following questions:

- Has our membership grown over the past few years?
- Has the average age of our members decreased over the past few years?
- Do we add new members every year?
- Do our members represent a true cross section of the women in our community?
- Are our meetings held at times that are convenient for the majority of members?
- Do we share information and decisions with members who are unable to attend a meeting?
- Do we have a leave of absence policy?
- Do we offer leadership opportunities to all members, even new ones?

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, it is time to do an honest evaluation of your club’s practices to see if you are truly positioned for the future. Running a healthy and successful club now is commendable and worthy of recognition, but current success should not overshadow the need for long-term thinking. Who will carry on the legacy of the club in five years? You have a role in choosing the future leaders of your club by recruiting members to not only help

with today’s projects, but who can also ensure the club’s relevance and vitality down the road.

### A Place to Start: Review Your Bylaws

A comprehensive club bylaws review may appear to be an overwhelming task, but the rewards are well worth it. By evaluating the document that governs the club and updating it as necessary, clubs can ensure that their requirements and practices are aligned with future goals.

Some general tips to remember as you conduct a bylaws review include:

- **Give all members the chance to participate.** Preparing for a bylaws review is the perfect opportunity to hold an open forum in which all members can give input on the types of women they feel the club should pursue as well as on the practices and programs that will attract these members. This forum allows all perspectives to be heard and often can be eye-opening in terms of identifying new sources of potential members.

- **Challenges are good.** When members raise questions that challenge current practices, assume they are doing so with good intentions and do not take things personally. Great ideas and suggestions can be lost when they are discounted simply because they seem so different than what has been done in the past. A healthy discussion about what works and what does not can generate invaluable, and often unexpected, opportunities for improvement.

- **Being flexible at meeting times is a recruitment tool.** Do not overlook the meetings section of your bylaws because it does not seem to relate to membership efforts. In fact, the amount of time a member is required to devote to the club can make or break her decision to join. Members should always be encouraged to

attend all meetings to achieve an optimal level of engagement and to ensure that clubs reach established goals. At the same time, clubs should have expectations for attendance that are realistic, practical, and attractive to both current and potential members. A new federation procedure prohibits clubs from having mandatory attendance policies.

- **Walk the talk.** A bylaws review and any resulting changes are just the start. Club leaders must consistently support all bylaws changes—not just the words, but the sentiment behind them—for them to become ingrained into both the club’s everyday activities and overall culture. Do not expect instant results. Meaningful change has a better chance of taking root if it is incremental. Small changes in club practices that are relatively easy to implement, such as trying various meeting times, are easier for members to adapt to and accept.

- **Change is not always necessary.** Conducting a review does not mean changes must be made. The review is simply an opportunity to do a “health check” of bylaws and the practices they promote to make sure they are aligned with membership recruitment efforts and overall club goals.

With the world of candidates opening wider, clubs have more potential members from which to choose. Evaluating these candidates outside of the traditional criteria can be challenging, but it is a challenge worth taking on. The result will be the recruitment of members who are right for your club—and who represent the future of our organization. ☺

By Wendy Metzgar  
Membership Director



# Public Awareness

## Keep Live Your Dream Alive!

Soroptimist's new Live Your Dream campaign is in full swing. Launched on March 8, 2006, Live Your Dream is a public awareness and fundraising campaign that encourages women from all walks of life to follow their dreams. Whether the dream is to get a college education, open a business, or travel the world, the purpose of this campaign is to not only give women the courage to follow their dreams but to let them know they are not alone. Many women the world-over are on a quest to live their dream, and thousands of Soroptimists provide support to women on their journeys to better their lives.

In addition to helping women and girls to achieve their goals, Soroptimist also celebrates the power and accomplishments of women everywhere. The Live Your Dream campaign is a great avenue to do that. The campaign was launched on International Women's Day, which is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on equal footing with men.

Since the very beginning of this century, women around the world have employed International Women's Day as a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights. It is a day to reflect on progress made, to call for change, and to celebrate acts of courage and determination in pursuit of women's rights.

How can clubs shed light on the many challenges women face, as well as celebrate their many accomplishments? One way is to hold a Live Your Dream event every year that addresses a different aspect of women's struggles and accomplishments.

Consider, for example, women in history, the arts, or politics—women have traditionally been under-represented in these areas, but continue to make progress. Below are ideas to help clubs shed light on women's issues, while keeping the Live Your Dream event new and exciting every year. Most importantly, these ideas will also give clubs the opportunity to increase awareness of Soroptimist by introducing the organization to a wide variety of audiences, including potential members and donors.

### Art

In the art world, women artists have struggled for centuries to be recognized as equals with their male counterparts. To address this issue, clubs can hold an event that recognizes and celebrates the work of women artists. Hold the event at a local art gallery, exhibit the work of female artists, and invite the community to attend.

As a part of the exhibit, display SIA's Live Your Dream posters, which feature the stories of past award recipients, and how they're living their dreams or helping other women to live

theirs. (A variety of poster designs is available on CD from SIA headquarters. Clubs can obtain the CD by contacting Public Relations Specialist Kamali Brooks at [kamali@soroptimist.org](mailto:kamali@soroptimist.org).) Donate a portion of the proceeds from the event to support women in the arts in the local community.

### Music

Historically, women in music have been unwelcome and under-represented. Names such as Mozart, Bach and Chopin are commonplace in the musical arena, but how many female composers are known throughout history? Female composers such as Caroline Boissier, Genovieffa Ravissa and Franziska Lebrun were well known during the time of Mozart, but their contributions to music were quickly forgotten.

Though more female musicians and composers are recognized now than in the past, the profession is still dominated by men. Clubs can address this by hosting a Live Your Dream concert at a local concert hall. Invite female musicians to perform or invite a group of musicians to perform the musical works of female composers, both past and present. Dedicate a portion of the proceeds to organizations benefiting women in music.

### Science

Many women have helped to revolutionize science, but few are recognized for their contributions. Despite what may be reported, women are mathematicians, physicists, biologists and astronomers. Hold a Live Your Dream event that honors the accomplishments of scientific women in your community, and encourages young girls to go into one of the science fields. Women who are already in these professions serve as role models to younger girls. Host a lecture series for young girls about women in nontraditional fields, and invite women in these fields to speak. Or host workshops to pique girls' interest in math, physics, chemistry, geological sciences and engineering.

### Politics

The feature article in the October 2006 issue of this magazine discussed women in government. Though women are filling more political positions, the numbers are still relatively low and not representative of the numbers of women in the world. When more women are involved in the political process, more of the issues that women face will be addressed.

The Taking Action section in that same feature article offered suggestions for what clubs can do to get more women elected and involved in politics. Clubs can use their Live Your Dream event to honor women in local government. Invite a female

politician to speak to girls to encourage them to vote and get involved in politics at an early age.

These are but a few of the areas in which women continue to struggle. Determine the areas your club would like to address when deciding on what to do for your next Live Your Dream event. Or take your cue from one of the feature articles in *Best for Women* magazine, which highlight different women's issues. At the very least, be sure to hold a Live Your Dream event in March to honor club Women's Opportunity, Violet Richardson and Making a Difference for Women award recipients, for these are women who are either living their dreams or working to help others live theirs.

Make sure every attendee receives a Live Your Dream pin. When distributing pins it is important to convey the correct message in order to ensure the campaign's success. When presenting a pin to someone, for example, say: "By wearing a Live Your Dream pin, you will help raise awareness of the challenges women face and what we can do to help them. It signifies your commitment to living your dream and empowering other women and girls to live theirs."

Also, give every attendee a Live Your Dream card (right). Encourage them to write their dream on this card, as well as a few strategies they can employ to achieve their dream. These cards are for event attendees to take away and keep in their wallets as a reminder to live their dreams. Clubs can download and print these cards from the Library of the members-only site: Public Awareness > Live Your Dream Campaign.

Participating in the Live Your Dream campaign does not stop at holding an event on International Women's Day, however. Live Your Dream is an ongoing campaign. Therefore, it is important that club members distribute pins to as many people as possible.



## Distributing Pins

There are many ideas for distributing Live Your Dream pins. The possibilities are endless! Give pins as gifts to special women in your life like mothers, grandmothers, daughters, aunts, sisters, friends and teachers for special occasions such as birthdays, promotions, graduations and Mother's Day.

Distribute pins throughout the local community:

- The workplace
- Places of worship
- Community fairs and other events
- Local businesses—especially those catering to women, such as hair salons, clothing boutiques, and nail salons
- Club fundraisers
- Women's shelters
- Media—include pins with the news release and/or media advisory that announces the Live Your Dream event

Don't forget to give pins to your club's Women's Opportunity, Violet Richardson and Making a Difference for Women award recipients!

By Kamali Brooks  
Public Relations Specialist

## Live Your Dream Tidbits

- To learn more about the Live Your Dream campaign, clubs should read the Live Your Dream publicity materials, which are available on the members-only site in the Library > Public Awareness > Live Your Dream Campaign. This packet contains materials that clubs can customize with their own information to ensure success of the campaign and encourage women from all walks of life to follow their dreams. These materials are now available in all languages.

- To purchase Live Your Dream pins from headquarters, visit the Soroptimist Store located in the members-only site. Or print and fax an order form to 215-893-5200. The forms are available in the Library of the members-only site in Public Awareness > Live Your Dream Campaign > Live Your Dream Order Form. The prices of the pins are: \$3 for one pin; \$25 for 10 pins; and \$100 for 50 pins. It is best to order pins in bulk so you have plenty to distribute at events and in your local community.

- SIA wants to hear from you! If you or a woman you know has an inspirational story, email it to <julieg@soroptimist.org>. Your story may be used for the new Live Your Dream website, coming soon (see the End Notes section on page 27).

Fatima da Ponte  
Executive Director for a Day Winner



**Editor's Note:** *This Headquarters Highlights was written by Fatima da Ponte. Fatima was the winner of an opportunity drawing to be Executive Director for a day. The headquarters staff very much enjoyed hosting Fatima and her friend Bonnie for the day, and thought readers would enjoy reading about the day from her perspective.*

**H**eadquarters at last! Move over Leigh, here I come! You may recall I won the raffle for a trip to headquarters in Philadelphia to be executive director for a day. After a long wait due to conflicting schedules between Executive Director Leigh Wintz and me, it was finally time to go to Philadelphia. Waking up in Vancouver, Canada, at 4:00 a.m. to arrive in Philadelphia at 5:47 p.m. has never been the start of my typical day, but the trip would soon prove to have no resemblance to anything typical. My friend Bonnie McLaren, also a Soroptimist from SI/North & West Vancouver, and I were made welcome by the very generous gift bag filled with goodies and a wonderful welcoming voice message on our hotel phone from Development Assistant Julie Bernard.

Before resting for the night in anticipation of the next day we wanted to walk to headquarters to see how far we would have to go in the morning. Arriving at 1709 Spruce Street and seeing the sign "Soroptimist International/Best for Women" on the exterior of the building gave me goose bumps and I felt so proud to stand in front of it.

After arriving at headquarters the next morning, Senior Director of Information Services Lisa Mangiafico gave us a wonderful tour as we moved from one office to the next—meeting everyone on staff. I thought I was well informed about our headquarters. Not

so! I was somewhat surprised to find the variety of warm smiles and the hospitable facilities. The premises are as unique and inspiring as are the many Soroptimists I've met in my short Soroptimist life of nine years.

Next, Membership Services Manager Donna Tomlinson and Executive Assistant Luz Aponte recruited Bonnie for her assistance with a club mailing, while I had the ultimate experience of attending a directors' meeting. The arduous job of filtering through the new database—the pros and cons and the do's and don'ts—was the main topic. I was intrigued by the amount of knowledge, thought process, experience and patience demonstrated around the table. The power of our website and its contents do not come by chance.

After the directors' meeting, I met briefly with Director of Finance/Administration Terri Meyers to discuss the integration of Quick Books (the accounting), and iMIS (the database). This was right up my alley! We keep growing ladies, and we are a huge business administered from headquarters.

We switched to Leigh's office where I was greeted with my own "Executive Director for a Day" desk sign. We worked through emails. Did you know

that Leigh can read emails in Portuguese from Brazil, and Spanish from our Latin American clubs?

We worked through lunch while comparing and sharing opinions about our mandate and mission focus. Then, we were off to sign purchase orders, expense reports and checks. I got to watch first-hand how the membership dues can become an accounting nightmare when not received on time or processed with the proper documentation.

Later in the day, two candidates came in for a new controller position. I was envious and wanted to apply for the position myself! The candidates were received graciously and welcomingly—no doubt they could feel the professionalism, camaraderie and integrity of this wonderful organization.

Time went by fast as I could hear and feel the wheels of deadlines and accomplishments turn with every minute of the clock. My day came to a quick end. Dinner was the final treat when Adrienne Horen, president of SI/Center City and SIA's investment advisor, joined us.

The next night we had tickets for "Menopause, the Musical," which we really enjoyed. We loved the music and could relate to the women on stage. Oh my God! They're talking about me!

Philadelphia was simply wonderful, and I hope everyone has a chance to visit our beautiful home there. Thank you to everyone at SIA headquarters for making Bonnie and me feel so welcome, and to Bonnie for accompanying me (I hate to fly alone). We've come a long way baby! 🌍

*For your chance to be the next Executive Director for a Day, contact your region fundraising chair or visit SIA's members-only website <[www.soroptimist.org](http://www.soroptimist.org)>.*



Fatima with Executive Director Leigh Wintz

**New Live Your Dream Website Coming Soon!**

SIA is about to launch an exciting new Live Your Dream website. The interactive site, which will be located at <www.liveyourdreamcampaign.org>, will encourage women from all walks of life to live their dreams. It will spotlight inspirational stories about women who are living their dreams, and will give visitors the opportunity to share their own stories. Special features will include virtual Live Your Dream pins, a blog by a past Women's Opportunity Award recipient, and a column by life coach, Phyllis Mufson.



The site will launch on March 8—International Women's Day and the one-year anniversary of the Live Your Dream campaign. Visit the site on this day and enter to win a dream prize! Stay tuned for more information and be sure to spread the word about this exciting new public awareness initiative!

**New Member Benefit!  
Member-2-Member Marketplace**

Interested in networking with more than 40,000 Soroptimists to develop new business relationships? The Member-2-Member Marketplace, a new benefit available only to Soroptimists, helps connect members with other members, creating a virtual marketplace of what is best for women.

The Member-2-Member Marketplace provides Soroptimist members with a unique, low-cost way to create an Internet presence by giving them an entry point from the Soroptimist website to their home page or email account. The \$99 fee entitles members to a 12-month listing that includes email and/or website address and a 25-word business description. Members who choose not to post a listing can support the marketplace—and other Soroptimists—by making it a frequent stop during their Internet visits.



For complete details on posting a listing, visit the Member-2-Member Marketplace in the members-only section of <www.soroptimist.org> today. If you have questions, please contact Wendy Metzgar, membership director, at wendy@soroptimist.org or at 215-893-9000 ext. 139.

Whether you are looking to expand your professional network or to increase traffic to your website, you can't afford to miss this opportunity to reach a targeted demographic of professional business women who are dedicated Soroptimists just like you!

**Don't be the last to know!**

SIA will be communicating with members more frequently through e-mail. Each week, members will receive information about what's going on in the organization, as well as how our work and programs positively affect woman all over the world. To guarantee you don't miss the latest news and information, make sure you have an up-to-date e-mail address in SIA's database. Updating your e-mail address is easy:

- Log into the members-only site using your six-digit member number and password (be sure to use your individual number, not your club number).
- Click on the "Member Update" button on the left to see your personal profile.
- To edit your contact information, hit the "Edit" button above the profile on the far right. Enter or correct any contact information (especially your e-mail address), then hit the "submit" button.

Contact SIA headquarters at 215-893-9000 or e-mail <siahq@soroptimist.org> for further assistance.

**Tellers Report  
Laws/Resolutions Ballot—October 10, 2006  
Returned December 12, 2006**

**Proposal #1** to hold a Governors Round Table annually and include Governors-elect in odd-numbered years

**Number of votes cast:** 778  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 519  
**Number of Yes:** 748  
**Number of No:** 30  
**Illegal:** 0

**Proposal #2** to have the federation solicit candidates and issue ballots for federation elections

**Number of votes cast:** 782  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 522  
**Number of Yes:** 767  
**Number of No:** 15  
**Illegal:** 0

**Proposal #3** to update the election, role, and term of the Fund Development Council

**Number of votes cast:** 780  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 520  
**Number of Yes:** 765  
**Number of No:** 15  
**Illegal:** 0

**Proposal #4** to increase federation dues

**Number of votes cast:** 764  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 510  
**Number of Yes:** 595  
**Number of No:** 169  
**Illegal:** 0

**Resolution #1** to amend resolution 1996:4 Domestic Violence

**Number of votes cast:** 781  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 521  
**Number of Yes:** 775  
**Number of No:** 6  
**Illegal:** 0

**Resolution #2** to substitute a new resolution for 1998:2 Restricted Reserve Fund

**Number of votes cast:** 776  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 518  
**Number of Yes:** 739  
**Number of No:** 37  
**Illegal:** 0

**Resolution #3** to adopted a new resolution to encourage heart health awareness in women

**Number of votes cast:** 778  
**Number of votes necessary for approval:** 519  
**Number of Yes:** 753  
**Number of No:** 25  
**Illegal:** 0

**Tellers:**

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Yvette Haefner   | Luz Aponte        |
| Babs Tennent     | Nancy Fusco       |
| Maura Stratton   | Donna Tomlinson   |
| Jill Groves      | Lori Blair        |
| Wendy Metzger    | Shawnette Fleming |
| Nancy Nardone    | Lisa Mangiafico   |
| Julie Bernard    | Leigh Wintz       |
| Kamali Brooks    | Melissa Rios      |
| Jessica Levinson | Susan Shisler     |

Please note: New prices are now in effect. For a complete list of sales items, pricing, and shipping information, or to make a purchase online using a credit card, visit the Sales section of the members-only website <www.soroptimist.org>. If assistance is needed logging in, please contact staff at <siahq@soroptimist.org> or call 215-893-9000.

**LIVE YOUR DREAM PIN #180**

Beautifully designed pin comes attached to card with inspirational message aimed at empowering women and girls to live their dreams. **\$3/1, \$25/10, \$100/50**



**NEW! LIVE YOUR DREAM T-SHIRT #493**

Raise awareness of the Live Your Dream campaign with this stylish new T-shirt. Cotton white shirt features Live Your Dream logo on front, with Soroptimist "S" logo and web address on the back neckline. Comes in ladies small, medium, large, x-large and xx-large. **\$16**

**NEW! LIVE YOUR DREAM TOTE BAG #492**

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**Magazine Matters:** All magazine-related information, including editorial guidelines and submission deadlines, is available on SIA's members-only website. Magazine submissions and letters to the editor should be sent to Editor Jessica Levinson at *Best for Women*, 1709 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-6103 or <jessica@soroptimist.org>. Mailing address changes should be sent to <siahq@soroptimist.org>. A subscription to the magazine is available for \$11 a year (U.S. and Canada; \$15 all other countries). Translated excerpts of the magazine--in Spanish, Portuguese, Korean and Taiwanese--are also available on the members-only website. For more information, go to: <www.soroptimist.org>.

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Soroptimist International of the Americas is a recipient of the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations' (PANO) Seal of Excellence in recognition of exemplary management and accountability within the nonprofit sector.

For more information on how Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls, how to join, or to make a donation, visit [www.soroptimist.org](http://www.soroptimist.org).



**In the next issue: Obstetric fistula**



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