

BEST *for Women*

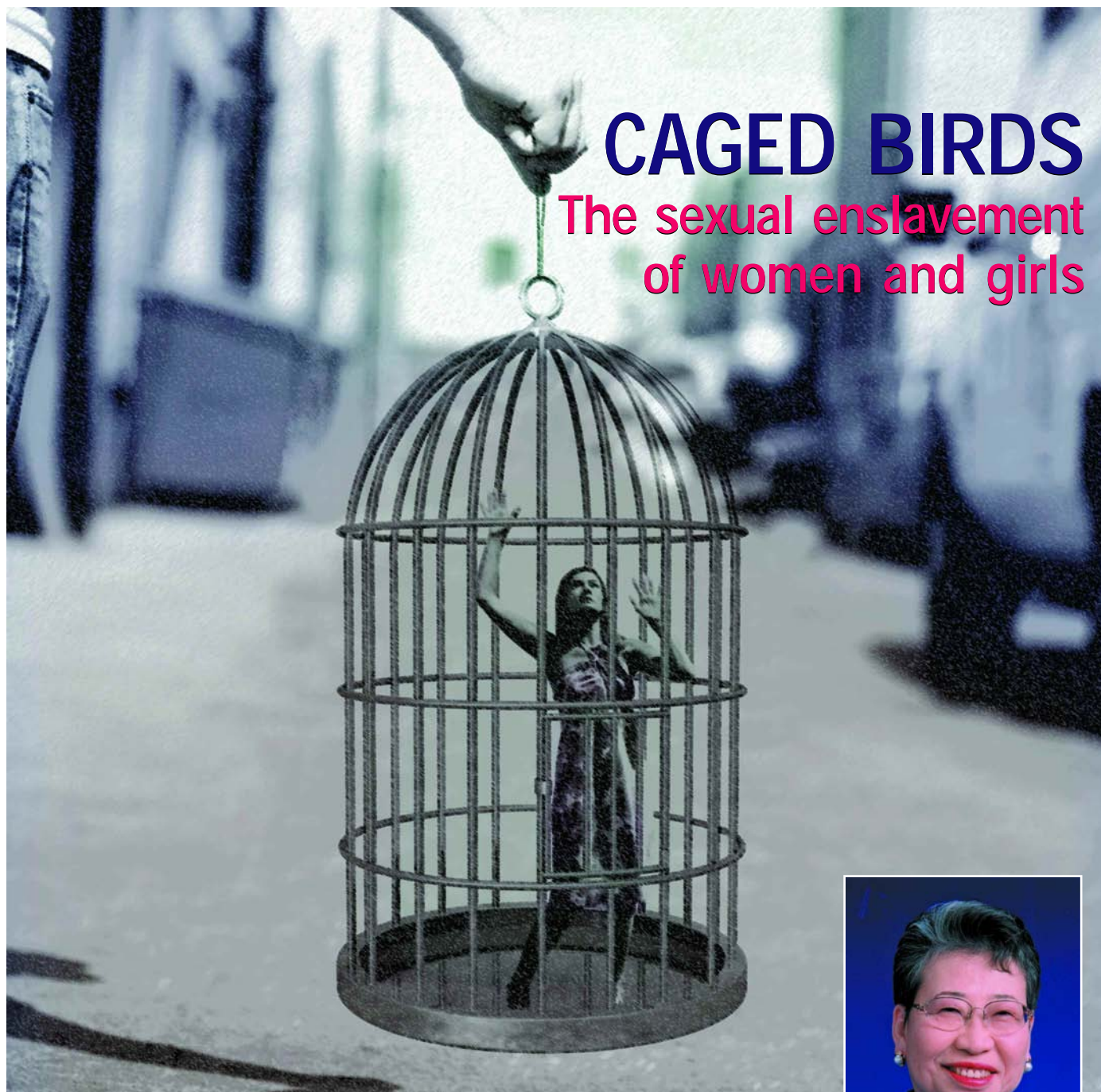
Membership Issue

**Best Practices
in Membership**

**2007-2008 Board
of Directors**

**Reclaiming the Dream:
2007 Finalists**

**Making a Difference
for Women: Mardge Cohen**



CAGED BIRDS

The sexual enslavement
of women and girls



Meet President Machiko Yamada



12

COVER STORY

12 Caged Birds
How demand creates sexual slaves

On the cover: Hundreds of thousands of women and girls are the victims of sexual trafficking, fueled by poverty, greed and demand.

Photo Illustration by Ann Cutting

FEATURES

- 1 **President's Message**
- 6 **Meet President Machiko Yamada**
- 8 **2007 Board of Directors**
- 10 **Reclaiming the Dream: 2007 Finalists**
- 23 **Membership: Best Practices**
- 24 **Membership: Developing a Mentor Program**
- 26 **Program: 2007 Making a Difference for Women Award Recipient Mardge Cohen**
- 27 **Fundraising: Leaving a Legacy: Looking toward the future**
- 28 **PRofile: SIA's New Website**

23



DEPARTMENTS

- 2 **Best For Women**
- 18 **Headquarters Highlights**
- 20 **Program Notes**
- 21 **Projects**
- 32 **Sales Items**
- 33 **Officers**



2



11

6



33



Like the annual transition from one season to the next, SIA is constantly changing and evolving. I am proud to be a part of these exciting changes as I begin my term as 2007-2008 SIA president, picking up where Immediate Past President Tes Choa left off. I look forward to engaging in new opportunities that improve the lives of women and girls, and I encourage all of you to strive to do the same.

SIA's changes resonate in this fourth year of our five-year Renaissance Campaign, aimed at renewing and revitalizing the organization through four interrelated areas: public awareness, membership, program and fundraising. The campaign combines the skills and energies of all four branches to propel the organization into the future. As those of you who attended our recent Soroptimist Professional Development Seminar in Philadelphia learned first-hand, SIA has experienced growth and success in each of these four areas.

Within the fundraising branch, SIA recently became the beneficiary of several very generous donations. One gift of \$25,000 from SI/Glendale, California, was the largest amount ever donated to the organization by a single club. The other was a \$250,000 check given by SI/Grosse Pointe, Michigan, member Mary Parsigian in honor of her late mother, Joyce Mullane. This was the largest single donation from an individual member. Thank you, SI/Glendale and thank you, Mary. And thank you to the many clubs and members who help SIA thrive through your contributions! We couldn't further our mission without you. We encourage you to continue donating because there are always women and girls who can benefit from our valuable programs.

As a testament to the quality and success of these programs, the Women's Opportunity Awards program recently received the prestigious ASAE & The

Center for Association Leadership's Associations Advance America Summit Award. The Summit Award is ASAE's highest honor for associations that implement innovative community-based programs, and it symbolizes the very best efforts engineered by associations across the United States. President-elect Alice and Executive Director Leigh accepted the award in person at a gala event in Washington, D.C. We are very proud the Women's Opportunity Awards program was recognized, and hope this will bolster support and awareness of the program in the upcoming year.

In addition, Soroptimist won two other ASAE awards for its Women's Opportunity Awards and Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls programs, and a journalistic excellence award from APEX for SIA's *Best for Women* magazine. These awards acknowledge our hard work and professionalism in support of our mission. It's great to receive recognition from those in the professional sector for a job well done!

We are soon adding a new program to our impressive list that will aim to raise awareness about the sexual trafficking of women and girls. The project will officially launch on December 2, 2007, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. Many of us may think of sexual trafficking as something that occurs in low-income, rural countries. Unfortunately, the trafficking of women and girls occurs every day in every country throughout the world. More information about this new project is included on page 15 of this magazine.

Please read this issue's feature article, starting on page 12, which focuses on sexual trafficking and provides insight into this widespread problem that most know little about. I hope you will join us in the fight to prevent and end this horrible social ill that devastates so many lives.

In terms of public awareness, we are proud to announce another new development: a fresh, modern website with a fun, attractive look and feel. The easy-to-navigate site features interactive components, including an opportunity for visitors and members to read magazine feature articles and blog on their content. You can read more about the new site in the PProfile article, beginning on page 28. Have you visited our new site yet at <www.soroptimist.org>?

In addition, our Live Your Dream Campaign is in its second year, and growing by the day. The website, <www.liveyourdreamcampaign.org>, boasts a blog by former Women's Opportunity Award recipient Tamanika Ferguson, advice from life coach Phyllis Mufson, inspiring stories, and a monthly contest that encourages women—Soroptimists and non-Soroptimists alike—to share their dreams. This site and campaign reminds us to live our dreams and inspires others to do the same. It is a wonderful way to introduce potential members to the power of Soroptimist!

In other exciting news, 421 clubs met Past President Tes' Renaissance Membership Challenge of recruiting at least four new members, which helped bring 4,005 members into the organization in the 2006-2007 club year. Paired with our impressive retention rate of 88 percent, we have been able to sustain our membership numbers in a competitive volunteer environment. Recruitment and retention are always our top priorities, and we are constantly exploring innovative strategies to increase our membership. I look forward to playing an integral role in SIA's progress as we continue to move forward and make a lasting, positive impact on the lives of women and girls. ☺

The Best for Women section recognizes club activities that support SIA's mission to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. This can include women/girl-focused projects, membership drives and leadership activities. This section also honors members for special achievements, as these are women at their best contributing to the world in meaningful ways. To learn more about SIA's mission, visit <www.soroptimist.org>.

DESERT COAST REGION

As part of the **Desert Coast Region** conference, **SI/Garden Grove, California**, member **Cathy Standiford** gave a presentation about genocide in Darfur, Sudan. Cathy and several volunteers read poems and short plays written by women from Darfur and collected more than \$2,000 in donations toward the cause. The event was part of "Global Days for Darfur," a week of rallies, marches and vigils to raise awareness about the continued violence and strife in the region. Cathy is a past SI public relations liaison, and a 2007-2009 SIA board member.

Several **SI/La Mesa, California**, members—**Linda Newell, Dolores Kelly** and **Kathy Blair**—conducted the first in a series of workshops for female detainees at the Naval Consolidated Brig at MCAS Miramar. Nine female detainees, who are scheduled to be released in the next several months, participated in a resume and job preparedness workshop. The biggest hurdle for the women when seeking post-military jobs, according to Kathy, is addressing their incarceration and dishonorable discharge with prospective employers. The women were receptive to the suggestion that they deal with the issue honestly, explaining that they had made some bad choices, paid their penalty and were eager to move forward with better choices in the future. "We left feeling that we had really connected with the women and that we could make a real difference with this project," said Kathy. "Mentoring opportunities are also being explored."

MIDWESTERN REGION

Members of **SI/Fond du Lac, Wisconsin**, recently held a conference to teach young girls about economic empowerment. During the event, girls had the opportunity to interview Soroptimists who were entrepreneurs or owned their own business. The girls watched a video entitled "What is Economic Power for

Teen Women?" and then had the chance to invent and market their own products. The activities were designed to encourage teamwork and cooperation, two skills necessary in the workplace.

NORTH ATLANTIC REGION

Recently, **SI/Fayette County, Pennsylvania**, raised more than \$17,000 in donations after sponsoring a 5K walk and health fair to raise awareness about the effects of osteoporosis. Of the 10 million Americans estimated to have the disease, eight million are women, and one in two women over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her lifetime. The walk drew more than 200 people. At the health fair, club members offered free bone density tests and goody bags with information on osteoporosis, pedometers, as well as Soroptimist brochures. Of the donations received, \$4,000 will go to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, \$5,000 will pay for bone scans for patients who cannot afford them, and \$5,000 will be used throughout the community on educational programs and bone density screenings. The remainder of the funds will go toward next year's fundraiser.

NORTHWESTERN REGION

As part of the Project Independence: Women Survivors of War endeavor, **SI/Everett, Washington**, donated about 30 goats to Rwandan women who are struggling to feed their families. The gift was funded by donations collected at Soroptimist club meetings and events. The goats were purchased through The Hunger Site, a website that allows people to donate money and goods to those in need. In addition, club members raffled off the rights to name each pair of goats, raising more than \$4,000 for the cause, said **Past President Carolyn Ableman**. "Not only were we helping real families, we were also spreading the good work of Soroptimists around the world," Carolyn said. **SI/Marysville, Washington**,

donated an additional 14 goats to the cause. **SI/Everett** hopes to continue the project in the future.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

As part of its "All Things Are Possible" community program, **SI/Boise, Idaho**, planned a weeklong summer day camp for several girls from local elementary schools. The camp was held at the Discovery Center of Idaho, an interactive science center that aims to teach kids math and science through tangible educational exhibits. Club members arranged bus transportation and funding for the girls.

SI/Jackson, Wyoming, recently raised more than \$17,000 with its Bras for a Cause live auction and fashion show. The money will go to benefit the St. John's Medical Center Women's Fund and Wyoming's Susan G. Komen for the Cure Breast Cancer Foundation. One of the models in the fashion show was Anita Jackson, a single mom whose own mother was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. Club members plan to make this an annual event.

The **Rocky Mountain Region** honored **Wendy Cohen** as its 2007 Making a Difference for Women recipient. Wendy was devastated when her 20-year old daughter, Lacy Jo Miller, was abducted and murdered by a man using red and blue police lights while impersonating a police officer. Wendy turned her grief into hope for women and girls by working to pass Colorado's Lacy's Law, which makes it a felony to possess or use red or blue police lights to impersonate police officers. In addition, Wendy opened Lacy's Place, a public outreach center for victims of domestic violence and their children. Recently, Wendy also started The Lacy Jo Miller Foundation, which provides violence prevention education, safety awareness, and support for survivors on both sides of violent crimes.

In other news, the region held its 67th annual conference in Fort Collins, Colorado, and encouraged members to “dress red” for heart health awareness. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, heart disease is the leading cause of death among women over 65, and American women are four to six times more likely to die of heart disease than of breast cancer.

SIERRA NEVADA REGION

SI/Truckee Donner, California, recently hosted an event to collect baby clothes and toys for pregnant mothers who participate in The Teen Closet, a prenatal services program that provides health and nutrition education, parenting classes, and support to low-income families and teens during and post-pregnancy. The donated items are given to the new mothers as incentives for participating in parenting classes and child development workshops. They are also used for mothers who lack resources immediately following their baby’s birth. The Teen Closet is part of the program at Tahoe Forest Hospital. Colleen Williams, coordinator of the Special Delivery program, told club members, “Each year it seems we have one young mom who, for various reasons, might have concealed a pregnancy from family or friends and may have delayed seeking prenatal care. She may arrive in the emergency room for labor and delivery with no clothes or diapers for the newborn.” Due to the club’s generous support, the hospital has clothing and diapers available for mothers who need them.

MEDIA MENTIONS

DESERT COAST REGION

SI/Poway, California, recently donated money to the Transitional Housing Program, which guides battered women and children through an 18-month program that teaches them to live a self-sustaining lifestyle. Members raised money

by selling \$5 matted photo cards (with shots of the San Diego area) at the 44th Design Automation Conference in the San Diego Convention Center. Since 1997, SI/Poway and **SI/Rancho Bernardo** have helped 26 families by coordinating and managing the program, paying rent subsidies, and furnishing each living unit, according to SI/Poway club member **April Mitchell**. The project was featured in a *Business Wire* article.

EASTERN CANADA REGION

SI/Hamilton-Burlington, Canada, held a ceremony earlier this year to celebrate the recipients of several awards, who were subsequently featured in “The Talk”—a column in *The Hamilton Spectator* newspaper’s Arts and Entertainment section. The club’s Women’s Opportunity Award recipient was **Mahrukh Mahrukh**, a full-time security officer who is studying to become a cardiology technologist. **Carol Wiggins**, the Making a Difference for Women Award winner, is a counselor at a local shelter for abused women and their children. Carol was nominated by one of the women she assisted at the shelter. The club also honored its Violet Richardson Award winner, **Krystle Botermans**, who has multiple achievements under her belt. Krystle has visited the Dominican Republic twice to deliver hot meals to the poor, played with children in an orphanage, helped set up a medical clinic, and assisted with building projects.



SI/Hamilton-Burlington's awards recipients proudly accept their certificates (left to right: Krystle Botermans, Mahrukh Mahrukh, and Carol Wiggins).

FOUNDER REGION

SI/Healdsburg, California, member **Lisa Wittke Schaffner** was honored in two local publications for her community leadership. Lisa was named a “mover and shaker” by the *North Bay Business Journal*, and part of the next generation of “40 leaders under 40” in the *Bay Area Home Builder*, a local newspaper. Lisa is vice-mayor for the Healdsburg city council; a director of the county Transportation Authority, and heads the Sonoma County Alliance, which provides advocacy and education for a wide range of industries.

GOLDEN WEST REGION

SI/Big Bear Valley, California, and its president-elect, **Helen Walsh**, were featured in a recent *San Bernadino County Sun* newspaper article, “Soroptimists host home tour,” about a fundraiser for the local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. The tour, now in its 28th year, features four unique homes that provide visitors with a variety of style and decorating ideas. Helen told the paper, “What really makes this home tour special is that all of our proceeds are going to help a program that really fits our mission.” WIC is a supplemental food program for mothers and their children. The mothers are required to attend classes in food and nutrition to help ensure healthy eating habits for themselves and their children. In addition to her work with Soroptimist, Helen is also a chairwoman on the local hospital foundation board, and board member of Doves—a domestic violence outreach center and shelter.

The La Quinta Chamber of Commerce named **SI/La Quinta-Coachella Valley, California**, as Community Service Organization of the Year at a recent awards luncheon. The club is being recognized for its support of several Coachella Valley organizations, and for its scholarships for women and girls. The club received proclamations from local

Best for Women continued on page 4

elected officials. A selection committee chose the recipients from nominations submitted by community members. Of Soroptimist and the other category winners, chamber President/CEO Louise Lambly said, "They're outstanding contributors to the quality of life in La Quinta. They make La Quinta a great place to live." A brief mention of the event was included in the *La Quinta Sun* newspaper.

NORTH ATLANTIC REGION

SI/Hammonton, New Jersey, member **Rita Benedetto**, was recently named Hammonton Lions Club's "Citizen of the Year" at an awards ceremony presided by Hammonton's mayor, John DiDonato. Rita was honored for her 48 years of service as a Soroptimist, as well as her involvement in Kessler Memorial Hospital in Hammonton. Rita was nominated by her friend, Kathy Ewer, who said, "Volunteers are not easily found in today's world, but just ask Rita and she'll help you!" The article about Rita's accomplishment appeared in both the *Hammonton News* and *Hammonton Gazette* newspapers.



SI/Hammonton's Rita Benedetto (center).

NORTHEASTERN REGION

At a recent awards ceremony, **SI/Greater Waterbury, Connecticut**, honored teacher **Sharon Charde** as its Making a Difference for Women winner. Sharon teaches a creative writing program at Touchstone, a residential treatment center for female adolescent criminal offenders from

around the state. Sharon holds weekly classes and guides the girls, ages 14-18, as they write and read their own poetry. Sharon and the girls read from an anthology of poems that Sharon edited and published, entitled "I Am Not a Juvenile Delinquent," written by former Touchstone residents. Proceeds from sales of the book help fund a scholarship fund for girls who graduate from the program. The club's Women's Opportunity and Violet Richardson award recipients were also honored at the event. An article about the awards ceremony was featured in *Voices News*, a weekly newspaper read in several Connecticut cities.



Creative writing instructor Sharon Charde (standing third from left) with residents of Touchstone.

NORTHWESTERN REGION

SI/Albany, Oregon, recently gave \$43,700 in grants to the Albany and Lebanon hospital foundations to help address health issues for women and their families, as reported in the *Albany Democrat-Herald* newspaper. Of the total grants, the club gave \$6,000 to the Albany General Hospital Foundation's InReach Clinic, which provides services to low-income families, and \$4,000 for a portable osteoporosis screening device. The club also granted \$15,000 to the imaging department for new digital mammography equipment and a water feature to provide a comforting, serene environment for patients. The remainder of the money will be used for hospice services and a new cancer resource center.

A feature article entitled "Decades of Dedication" highlighted clubs in the **Northwestern Region** in a recent issue of the *Peninsula Daily News*. Two clubs in the region, **SI/Port Townsend, Washington**, and **SI/Sequim, Washington**, are celebrating their 60th anniversaries, and **SI/Port Angeles Jet Set, Washington**, will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The article highlighted several of the projects the clubs have undertaken. Among them, **SI/Sequim, Washington**, raised \$2,000 selling handmade scarves and fabric gift bags and donated the proceeds to Project Independence, the recently ended SI project that provides aid to women in war-torn countries to help them meet basic needs for themselves and their families.

Five Soroptimist clubs in the Portland, Oregon, area of **Northwestern Region** joined together to form "Soroptimists Against Violent Environments" (SAVE). The clubs, which included **SI/Gresham**, **SI/Hillsboro**, **SI/Portland**, **SI/Portland East**, and **SI/Portland North**, worked in teams at seven locations to sell homemade strawberry shortcake. Together, the clubs netted a \$12,000 profit, which they donated to domestic abuse shelters in the Portland area. These included the Bradley-Angel House, Clackamas Women and Children's Services, Domestic Violence Resource Center, Listen To Kids, Raphael House of Portland, The Salvation Army West Women's and Children's Shelter, and the YMCA Yolanda House. A feature article on the event appeared in *The Bee* newspaper.

SIERRA NEVADA REGION

At its recent awards ceremony, **SI/Chico, California**, awarded two women with "Positive Parenting" awards for \$750 each. The award is given each year to two community women for their efforts toward achieving economic independence, improving parenting skills, building self-esteem and eliminating negative

coping skills. The club also awarded four “Imagining Possibilities” awards, which support adult women who have been released from the foster care system, and two “Hand-Up” awards, which recognize women over 40 who are re-entering the workforce. An article about the award-winners was published in the *Chico Enterprise Record*.

SI/Auburn, California, members donated more than 50 items to PEACE for Families, an Auburn shelter that helps area women survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children transition from shelters to apartments. Among the items Soroptimist donated were an oven, office chairs, lamps, rugs, and shelves—and use of a room in a storage facility for one year. “This is really going to help women and children make the transition from the safe house to a permanent house,” said Ann Engelbrecht, Executive Director of PEACE. An article about the program, “Auburn Soroptimists spread PEACE,” appeared in the *Auburn Journal*.

SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION

SI/Greenville, South Carolina, member **LouAnne Hunnicutt** was featured in an article in *The Greenville News*. LouAnne, a member for more than 29 years, has turned volunteering into a family affair. She says she first learned about volunteering from her mother, who joined the club in 1969, and also recruited her own daughter, Christie Ohlroge. During her stint as a Soroptimist, she has served in many leadership positions, including SIA board director, South Atlantic Region Governor, and club president.

The Best for Women editors regret the following errors:

In the December/January/February 2007 issue, Governor Margaret McRae was incorrectly identified as Governor of Western Canada Region instead of Eastern Canada Region.

In the same issue, SI/Stoney Creek-Niagara, Ontario, was incorrectly listed as SI/Stoney Brook, Niagara.

In the June/July/August 2007 issue, SI/Muskogee, Oklahoma, was incorrectly listed as SI/Muskogee, Arizona.

Headquarters wants to hear what your club is doing to improve the lives of women and girls!

Send Best for Women submissions and photos to Communications Assistant Ellen Slattery at <ellen@soroptimist.org> or 1709 Spruce St., Philadelphia, PA 19103.

SOROPTIMIST CLUB GRANTS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

SIA funded \$175,000 in Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls for the 2007-2008 club year. The grants are for Soroptimist clubs that are initiating or continuing innovative projects benefiting women and girls. A task force of Soroptimist leadership rated the submitted applications. The 25 grant-winning projects will be highlighted in each issue of the magazine. Information about the Soroptimist Club Grants can be found on the SIA website, <www.soroptimist.org>.

SI/Araguari, Brazil, received \$10,000 for its Educa Vida project, which provides after-school training and activities for at-risk girls living in low-income neighborhoods. The grant will be used to purchase musical instruments, furniture, craft supplies, art materials and hygiene items.

SI/Auburn, Washington, received \$10,000 for its Initiative for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. The project will support the building of a new domestic violence shelter by implementing a compre-

hensive public relations campaign and providing free legal assistance for domestic violence victims. Funds will be used to pay for seven months of rent, utilities and insurance for the shelter.

SI/Brasilia Norte, Brazil, was granted \$8,500 for its ongoing economic development project, Profiting From Recycled Tabs, which trains women to construct clothing and accessories out of aluminum can pull-tabs, and offers advanced training to women already in the program. Funds will go toward sewing and crochet equipment, fabric accessories, educational materials, instructor salaries and publicity.

SI/Caloocan, Philippines, was granted \$10,000 for its Soroptimist Break Poverty Cycle project. The grant will be used to support the growth of an ongoing project that teaches marketable skills to low-income and unemployed women. The money will be used to purchase sewing equipment and materials, pay teacher salaries and fund machine maintenance.

SI/Cape May County, New Jersey, received \$2,000 for its Girl Power Conference, a day-long program for middle school girls that aims to foster good decision-making and leadership skills and build self-esteem. The money will pay for meeting space usage, educational materials, publicity, food and transportation.

SI/Coronado, California, was granted \$1,000 to fund its Live Your Dream: Helping Women Stay in School project, which awards emergency gift cards to low-income women who are struggling to stay in school. Gift cards can be used to purchase food, gas, books, supplies or child care. Club members will also offer free online tutoring. 🌐

Meet SIA President Machiko Yamada

President Machiko Yamada was born in Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, and moved to Wakayama City when her father transferred for work during World War II. Her father, who was in a position of trust, did not return home—not even when he was sick. He passed away when Machiko was 3 and her brother was a year old. The family then evacuated to her aunt's house in Gotenba City, Shizuoka Prefecture. The war ended when Machiko was 6, and she and her family returned to Nishinomiya City—where Machiko's mother worked as a high school teacher—when she was 9. As her grandfather had passed away, Machiko's paternal grandmother lived with and took care of the family. Machiko credits her grandmother, Masa Washio, with having a very great influence on her.

Masa was born in 1873 into a samurai family in Kyoto and raised as a Christian. She met and married Dr. William, who was associated with Rikkyo University. She told her grandchildren about him at every opportunity, always with great respect. In Yamaguchi and Kyoto, where her grandfather was transferred, Masa had worked for Kyofu-kai, an organization created for women beyond the borders of Christian sects. This organization was engaged in various activities for promoting women in a society that retained old customs. These activities were to abolish the public prostitution system, to establish a home for women who were cast out from society, to implement temperance and anti-smoking movements, and to work for the suffragette movement. While Masa was taking care of the family, she still worked for the benefit of others, even though she barely had time to read the newsletters from Kyofu-kai. Masa often spoke to Machiko about women's rights, but Machiko was too young to understand the wisdom of her grandmother's words.

Machiko and her husband, Hiroshi, met through their grandfathers. Hiroshi was raised in Tokyo. After their marriage, they moved back to Yamaguchi Prefecture because Machiko's husband was taking over his grandfather's business. They began living with Hiroshi's grandparents. Although Machiko was a graduate of Doshisha University, the beginning of her marriage was spent in the home and taking care of Hiroshi's grandparents. "I knew little about how society worked," she says.

All of that has changed, since for the past 27 years Machiko has been a busy working woman. She currently works with her husband at four locations in three different jobs—one of which is running more than 20 gas stations in the prefecture. In 1981, the company started a department dealing in jewelry and women's items, and Machiko worked as a store manager in the two stores. Machiko and her husband hold annual exhibitions at 11 locations in the prefecture. They also run a golf course with nine holes near the Seto Inland Sea near their house. The property includes leisure facilities with six types of baths, 10 types of saunas, and restaurants on the premises. Machiko serves as executive director of the leisure facilities.

Additionally, she works two or three days a week as a part-time administrative director of Yamaguchi Prefecture Workers' Insurance Cooperative Society. The present chairman of the society, an acquaintance of Hiroshi's, coincidentally heard Machiko talking on a radio show about Soroptimist, and later asked her to work for this cooperative, which offers low premium rates to its members and today has 180,000 members.

As the wife of a past-governor of the Rotary Club, Machiko has attended world conventions since 1995. She currently lives with Hiroshi, her daughter, Asako, and her husband, Masatoshi, and their two children, Yujiro, 14, and Shotaro, 16. Her other daughter, Noriko, and her husband, Hisayoshi, live in Hiroshima City and have two children, Yasuyuki, 6, and Risa, 8.

In addition to attending church every Sunday (both Machiko and her husband come from third generation Christian families), Machiko enjoys traveling and watching plays. Five years ago Machiko broke her leg, which caused her to have invasive surgery in which 16 pieces of nail-like hardware were inserted into her ankle. She had originally been planning to climb up to Machu Picchu, and after a difficult rehabilitation program is proud to report that she accomplished her goal this past June.

Meet Machiko Yamada, SIA's 2007-2008 federation president.



What first attracted you to the Soroptimist organization?

I was asked to join SI/Tokuyama after my grandparents-in-law passed away. SI/Tokuyama was a very new club. I was hoping to make some friends through taking part in activities, as I did not have any in the area. Then, 12 years ago, I transferred to SI/Kudamatsu when it was sponsored by SI/Tokuyama.

Why has your involvement with Soroptimist continued, and how has Soroptimist membership affected your life?

The biggest reason for my continued involvement with Soroptimist are the friends I have made through club activities. Although those friends and I occasionally disagree about how we should develop Soroptimist activities, club administration and the services we provide—I am grateful to them as I learn through their opinions. Services vary from those we provide to our immediate families and neighbors, to international services. My involvement with my club has helped me foster a broader view of the world. I do what I can while maintaining a balance between club activities and my jobs.

What part does Soroptimist play in the life of a busy working woman?

Sharing the happiness and burdens of the people I am helping through volunteer service is very important to me. As working women, our volunteer time is quite limited so it's important that our time be spent in meaningful ways.

What are some of the challenges of being a non-English speaking president when most of the federation's business is conducted in English?

I have been struggling with lots of e-mail written in English since I took up the role of president. Because I have difficulty understanding English, I have some documents translated into Japanese. It stresses me that I cannot respond to the mail immediately. As I usually start receiving e-mail from the States at midnight, I go to bed at 1 or 2 a.m. For a couple of hours in the morning, I read and respond to email. I give my schedule to my three workplaces and try to juggle the many demands on my time. Luckily, I am supported by the members of my club, which is a big help.

What are younger women in Japan looking for from an organization like Soroptimist?

I would like to know the answer!

Including myself, members of great clubs with long histories tend to think in terms of "Well we've always done it this way." I think it's important that older members accept the fresh ideas of younger women and that both groups develop mutual understanding and respect. I believe that if we succeed in operating the clubs based on the principles of the Renaissance Campaign, younger and seasoned members will find a way to work together in a way that benefits the club, as well as the people we're serving. I think it will build a bridge between the generations, which is important because we are seeing less and less communication between the young and the old in Japanese society. Those of us who are older wish to learn from the younger people, while imparting wisdom to them at the same time.

How are women in Japan being helped by Soroptimist programs, particularly with regard to issues like domestic violence that until recently weren't widely discussed in Japanese society?

At first when we began learning about domestic violence and other sensitive issues, most Japanese members were not open to the idea. A lot of us thought, "There is little domestic violence in Japan.

And even if there is, no women will want to discuss their painful personal experiences in public. Most of the women must want to be left alone because these experiences are something to be ashamed of." Thanks to the brave clubs that started to work on these issues—even though it was not easy—the other clubs gradually deepened their understanding toward these problems. As they began listening to women at region conferences telling their stories, club members started realizing that these problems are, in fact, widespread. I believe that through

education and seeing first-hand the women we can help, support for these issues in Japan will continue to grow.

What are the most pressing organizational issues facing SIA, and what are your ideas to address them?

I think that SIA's most pressing organizational issue is membership. Fortunately, SIA has solid programs that are attractive to prospective members and help to retain existing members. But still, it is difficult to lead women to join our clubs. I take attracting members as a serious issue as we enter the final stage of the Renaissance Campaign.

What are your specific goals for your year as SIA president and how will the Renaissance Campaign affect your focus?

My main goal is to continue generating participation in the Renaissance Campaign, which I believe is key to our future. Taking into account all that happened at the SI board meeting and our recent Soroptimist Professional Development Seminar, we will be making changes in our direction and policies as necessary. But we must always remember that the world's women and girls need our help as they disproportionately suffer from society's ills. And, we cannot help these women if we do not have a strong and growing membership (one of my goals is to see the recruitment of more members in South America). Those concepts must be at the forefront of everything we do. I'd like to thank, in advance, the members of the clubs, Board and staff at headquarters for supporting me when I cannot easily make myself understood in English. ☺



President Machiko in traditional dress with SI/Kudamatsu members.

2007-2008 SIA Board of Directors

President Machiko Yamada has been a member of SI/Tokuyama, Japan (Japan Nishi Region), since 1976 and chartered SI/Kudamatsu, Japan, in 1993.

Machiko has held several leadership positions, including region governor and treasurer, and president of both her Tokuyama and Kudamatsu clubs. She is the director of Crescent Vert Yamada, Yamada Oil Co., Ltd and serves as the chair of the board of the Yamaguchi Mutual Cooperative Society.



other volunteer activities include serving as the counselor of the Hirakata Foundation for Culture and International Exchange, and director of the Hirakata Environment Network Conference.

Hyunsook Lee is an English instructor at the Korea National Police College. A member of SI/Seoseoul, Korea (Korea Region), since 1986, Hyunsook has served as club president, and region lieutenant governor and secretary.



President-elect Alice Wells, is a charter member of SI/The Kachinas, Phoenix, Arizona, USA (Golden West Region). A member since 1980, Alice has held various Soroptimist leadership positions including club president, Golden West Region governor, secretary, district director, and Fund Development Council chair.

Alice also holds memberships in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the International Reading Association, and the West Valley YMCA.



Fannie Louie of SI/Boise, Idaho, USA (Rocky Mountain Region), is a lead information system engineer for Boise Cascade Corporation. A member since 1988, she has held several leadership positions, including club president, vice president and treasurer, and region treasurer and governor.



Secretary/Treasurer Sharon Fisher is a charter member of SI/The Langleys, British Columbia, Canada (Western Canada Region). A Soroptimist since 1986, Sharon has held several leadership positions, including region treasurer, club president and newsletter editor, as well as having served on various committees. She is a self-employed entrepreneur who works as director and chief financial officer of a crime-prevention software company.



Junko Matono has been a member of SI/Fukuoka, Japan (Japan Minami Region), since 1979. She has held several leadership positions including region governor and treasurer, and club president, vice president, treasurer and secretary. A dentist, Junko is also a member of the Japan and Korea Women's Goodwill Association, Japan-America Society of Fukuoka, and the UN Association of Japan Fukuoka Branch.



Dulce Gozon is a charter member of SI/Caloocan City, Philippines (Philippines Region). A Soroptimist since 1987, Dulce has held several leadership positions, including region governor and secretary, district director and charter club president. Dulce is CEO and chairperson of the National Onion Growers Cooperative Marketing Association, and she also works in onion farming and agri-business. In addition to her Soroptimist activities, Dulce is a member of the Foundation for Resource Linkage and Development, as well as the National Agricultural and Forestry Council's Committee on Fruits and Vegetables.



Cathy Mitchell has been a member of SI/Cloverdale, California, (Founder Region), since 1989. During her tenure, Cathy has held several leadership positions at all levels of the organization, including Founder Region governor, district director, and club president and treasurer. She currently works as an accountant at Priority Lending Group. She has also volunteered with the Cloverdale Little League and Cloverdale Eagle Boosters Club.



Irmeli Melz Nardes, a public municipal lawyer, has been a member of SI/Rio Negro, Paraná, Brazil (Brazil Region), since 1987. She has served as club president, secretary, and public relations chair. In addition to her Soroptimist involvement, Irmeli is a member of the Lions Club.



Sachiko Inoue is a member of SI/Hirakata-Chuo, Osaka, Japan (Japan Chuo Region). A Soroptimist since 1985, Sachiko has served the organization in several capacities, including club president, region public awareness chair and region program council member. Sachiko currently works as director of the Inoue Obstetrician/Gynecology Clinic. In addition to Soroptimist,



Pina Pileggi first joined SI/Miranda, Baruta, Venezuela (América del Sur Region), in 1991. Eleven years later, she chartered SI/El Hatillo. As a member of Soroptimist, Pina has held several leadership positions, including 1999-2001 SIA board member, Soroptimist International Extension Committee



member, region governor and club president. Pina is vice president of Budget Rent-A-Car in Venezuela. In 2002, she received the Woman of Distinction Award from the Instituto Nacional del la Muser.

Joan Stallard is a member SI/Mount Vernon and Knox County, Ohio, USA (Midwestern Region). A Soroptimist since 1978, Joan has held several leadership positions, including region governor, district director, newsletter chair, club president and convention delegate. A consultant, Joan volunteers as a chair of Project DELTA, a program to prevent intimate partner violence, funded by the Centers for Disease Control. She also volunteers for the Knox County Regional Planning Commission's Land Use Committee.



Cathy Standiford is a member of SI/Garden Grove, in Garden Grove, California, USA (Desert Coast Region). A Soroptimist since 1989, Cathy has held several leadership positions at various levels of the organization, including club president; region governor and parliamentarian; federation Program Council member; and SI public relations liaison. She currently works as an assistant manager for the City of Santa Ana. In addition to her Soroptimist involvement, Cathy is also a member of the Preparing the Next Generation Task Force for the League of California Cities and the St. Anselm of Canterbury Episcopal Church.



Kaneko Tomiyama has been a member of SI/Sapporo in Sapporo, Japan (Japan Kita Region) since 1980. During her tenure, Kaneko has held several leadership positions at all levels of the organization, including Japan Kita Region governor and secretary, and club president. She currently works as a dietician and cooking instructor. In addition to her Soroptimist involvement, Kaneko is a member of the Hokkaido International Women's Association and the Hokkaido UNESCO Association.



Sylvia Winterling has been a member of SI/Alexandria, Virginia, USA (South Atlantic Region), since 1987. She has held several leadership positions, including region governor, secretary, board member, club president and secretary. She is the owner and vice president of IMPACT, Inc., a company producing medical education programs via distance learning. 🌐



In Memoriam

Past SIA board member, **Betty Jane "B.J." Lackey Thomas-Cartwright**, passed away in August. A 53-year member of SI/Lima, Ohio, B.J. served Soroptimist in many ways. She held the offices of SIA vice president, secretary, Midwestern Region governor, and Venture advisor, and chaired various committees at the federation, club and region levels.

B.J. worked as the director of court services for the Allen County Juvenile and Probate courts for 36 years. She was also a member of the Trinity United Methodist Church.

Said Past SIA President Jean Barth in remembrance of B.J., "She was a delightful lady who worked very hard for Soroptimist and gave much. ... I will miss her with all my heart."

A six-year breast cancer survivor, B.J. will be dearly missed.

Memorial donations can be made in B.J.'s name to Susan G. Komen for the Cure at <cms.komen.org/komen/donations/waystodonate>.

Soroptimist Foundation of Canada member **Flora Grant** ("Flo") died in office this past May at the age of 68. For the past four years, Flo served as chair of the Soroptimist Foundation of Canada. A member of SI/White Rock, Western Canada, for 16 years, Flo was club president from 1995-1997 and secretary for Western Canada Region from 2000-2002. During her various tenures, she was passionate about the Foundation and its continuing effort to reach the \$1 million endowment plateau. After two final generous donations, the Foundation reached its goal, and Flo was proud to announce the good news at the Western Canada Region conference this past spring.

Flo was trained as a nurse, and worked on a mobile nursing unit in Northern Alberta for several years. Flo was then hired at the Department of National Revenue, Customs and Excise, where she faced challenges as one of the first women inspectors in a field previously dominated by men.

In addition to her work with Soroptimist, Flo, a 12-year breast cancer survivor, also volunteered for the Catholic Women's League and the Cancer Society.

Flo will be remembered with fondness and pride by her friends and family.

Reclaiming the Dream:

2007 Finalists

Women overcoming obstacles to live their dreams: that's what the Women's Opportunity Awards program makes possible. Since 1972, Soroptimist has helped thousands of women triumph over domestic violence, poverty, drug abuse and other challenges to reclaim their dreams. This year, Soroptimist awarded \$10,000 federation-level awards to three remarkable women who have made great strides to make a better future for themselves and their children. Kazuko Kojima, Maria del Carmen Flores Colque and Dawn Zolman are Soroptimist's 2007 Women's Opportunity Awards finalists.

Kazuko Kojima

Kazuko Kojima, of Morioka City, Japan, suffered from crippling depression from a very young age, brought on in part by her abusive parents. "Among my four siblings, I was always treated differently," she says. When Kazuko was a teen, her alcoholic father was desperate for money, so he sold his daughter to a wealthy man. "He needed money, but I could not believe that he could even think of selling my body for money." The experience left Kazuko deeply scarred and unable to trust anyone.

At 14, she tried to commit suicide. "I jumped into the rough sea of Tsushima Current. But the waves were rough only on the surface. I swam beneath the rough waves and was washed ashore alive." It was the first of three attempts Kazuko made on her own life.

"I try to be as optimistic as I can. I believe I can be an example, not only for my children, but also for women who have lost all hope."

Kazuko left home after junior high school. She worked days in a spinning factory and went to school at nights. Her estranged parents demanded that she send money home to them each month.

Kazuko was eventually summoned home by her parents, who then forced her into marriage with an abusive man. She stayed married to him for more than 15 years, enduring years of physical abuse. It was only when he started abusing her children that Kazuko finally found the strength to leave. She and her husband eventually divorced and Kazuko worked around the clock to support herself and her two children, spending her days as a home healthcare worker and her nights tending bar.

Kazuko now dreams of pursuing a career as a counselor, and is taking courses in psychology. "I want to help people with psychological pain. But I also found that I, too, am able to heal through these studies," she said.

She is using her \$10,000 federation-level Women's Opportunity Award to attend the Total Counseling

School. Kazuko also received awards from SI/Morioka, Japan, and Japan Kita region.

Maria del Carmen Flores Colque

Maria del Carmen Flores Colque, of Oruro, Bolivia, became a single mother at the age of 15. Later, she married a man who she believed would make her happy, but her marriage quickly spiraled into a nightmare.

"I suffered psychological and physical abuse, and sexual violence. It made my children's life and my own life sad and painful. [My husband] would hit me in front of the children. He would come home drunk and would demand food and sexual attention. He would not give me money and I did not have anything to feed my children." Even though her husband left her for another woman, he continued to abuse her. "When he wanted, he would come to our room, he would hurt my children and would hit me."

Maria was eventually beaten so badly that she was hospitalized. The experience made her swear that she would not allow the abuse to continue. Maria now works tirelessly to provide for her family. "I want to give them the best I can, although it is very difficult because I do not have any kind of help," says Maria.

In order to support her family, Maria works in the morning and night making cakes and pastries for a local bakery. She also washes and irons clothes twice a week. In the afternoon she attends classes, and

often brings her children with her to school.

Said Maria Veronica Mendoza Montenegro, one of Maria's teachers, "Maria is an enterprising person who sets her goals and achieves them."

Her greatest goal is to become a nurse's assistant. Maria is using her \$10,000 federation-level Women's Opportunity Award to attend the Funcacion Infocal and study nursing. She also received awards from SI/Oruro, Bolivia, and América del Sur Region. Maria would like to focus on reproductive healthcare. "Women suffer because of lack of information about our health," she says."

Through her struggles, Maria has focused on remaining positive and looking toward the future. "I try to be as optimistic as I can. I believe I can be an example not only for my children but also for women who have lost all hope."



SIA Program Director Lori Blair with Dawn Zolman (right), as she accepted her Women's Opportunity Award at the Camino Real Region conference this past spring.

Receiving the Women's Opportunity Awards gave Maria the ability to "achieve what was always my dream, complete my studies, be a professional, be able to improve my children's and my community's standard of living, and show all women that it is never too late."

Dawn Zolman

Dawn Zolman, of Oxnard, California, grew up in a dysfunctional home, with an alcoholic father who abused her physically, emotionally and sexually. Dawn's mother was abusive, too. "Even though teachers and other adults must have seen what was happening to me, no one ever came forward to help," says Dawn. The experience made her feel isolated and alone, and drove her to run away from home at 16.

By 17, she was a single mother, living on her own. Her daughter's father provided little financial support and Dawn struggled to make ends meet. She often suffered from crippling anxiety attacks. At one point, she and her daughter were homeless. "I couldn't seem to figure out how to have a better life," she says.

Dawn realized that her struggles with anxiety, self-esteem and depression were having a detrimental effect on her daughter, and knew she needed to make a change. "My daughter asked, 'Am I one of the poor kids,' and I knew if our life was

ever going to improve, I would have to make some major changes."

Dawn obtained an associate teaching certificate and an associate of arts degree, and is in the process of pursuing a degree in teaching. She currently works as a substitute teacher and hopes to one day work as a full-time elementary school teacher. She is using her \$10,000 federation-level Women's Opportunity Award to pursue an education degree from Channel Islands University. She also received awards from SI/Ventura, California, and Camino Real Region.

"Completing my education and becoming a teacher will make me feel like a productive member of society while doing something I love. It will also provide the means to build a secure future for my daughter and myself," said Dawn. ☺

By Julie Gerstein
Staff Writer

By participating in the Women's Opportunity Awards program, clubs can make a profound difference in the lives of women just like Kazuko, Maria and Dawn. Without generous donations from clubs and individuals, it would be impossible to continue the Women's Opportunity Awards program. To make a donation or to download program materials, visit <www.soroptimist.org>.