



Governor's January Message

I usually try to have something interesting, informative, or fun in this space, but this month I must begin with sad news. Founder Region lost one of our sheroes last month-Colleen Ganaye. Colleen most recently served our region as the District III Fellowship Director. Before that, she was the Founder Region District III Director. She served as president of the SI/Sonoma Valley club as well as the old SI/Fremont club. Colleen was a Soroptimist through and through. She will be sorely missed. That said, Colleen was also a business-like person and would tell us all to get out there and continue to help women and girls live their dreams. So, let's do just that.

This is a busy time of year. Hopefully, those clubs that need assistance with SIA's Mandatory Convention Fee have submitted their requests to SIA. Remember, the fee must be paid, or your club is at risk of not being in good standing. That means your club will not have a vote at Founder Region Conference in May. There will be a registration launch party online on January 21 at 5:00 p.m. California time. Check the recent SIA Best for Women Newsletter for registration information for the launch.

Speaking of Conference, you will want to be in San Ramon May 1-3. We will conduct the region's business, learn new information, and connect with Soroptimists from all over Founder Region. The Call to Conference will go out in early March. Be on the lookout.

It is also awards season. Be sure to get your Live Your Dream and Violet Richardson Award recipients submitted on time. Let's have another wonderful demonstration of how Founder Region helps women and girls.

It is also time to be looking at your club officers and directors for the 2026-2027 club year. Take advantage of the opportunity to step up to leadership.

SIA will be hosting a webinar on February 18 on how clubs strengthen the Soroptimist mission. Also, coming from SIA on March 18, the Fifth Annual Virtual Women's Day Tea Party.

Lots to do. Carry on Soroptimists! *Governor Elise*

Important Dates

- January 15 – Early Live Your Dream submissions due for opportunity drawing ticket
- February 1 – Live Your Dream and Violet Richardson Awards due to District Representatives
- March 1 – “S” Club Outstanding Senior Award application due
- March – Call to Conference distributed
- March 15 – Mandatory Convention fee due
- March 24 – Call to Caucus (virtual)
- April 1 – Club Grant Applications due (note new deadline)
- May 1–3 – Region Conference, San Ramon Marriott
- June 6, 13, and 26/27 – Leadership Training (see flyer in this newsletter)
- June 14 – Memorial Grove Service

SOROPTIMISTS

**Uplift
HER**

**Soroptimists UpliftHER
Second Quarter Focus**

January 11 is recognized globally as the International Day of **Human Trafficking Awareness**, making January a meaningful time to learn more about this critical issue and how Soroptimists can help through the Soroptimists UpliftHER initiative. Learn more about this issue and how your club can support survivors on their path to empowerment.



PILLARS

Fundraising- Joy Swank, Chair

Rest in Peace, Colleen Ganaye.

I had the pleasure of working with Colleen on the Region board. She was kind, fun-loving, and a true Soroptimist, devoted to her family and to service.

In Colleen's honor, I encourage members to donate if they are able during this month's fundraising efforts. You can donate through the Fellowship website.

My deepest sympathy to SI/Sonoma Valley and to all who knew and loved her.

Membership-Angie Haramoto, Chair

Happy 2026 Founder Region,

We are pleased to report meaningful progress this year, with growth in both new member acquisition and the chartering of new clubs compared with the prior year. These achievements reflect your guidance, leadership, and continued commitment. Thank you for the vital role you play in our shared success.

How many clubs in our region have gone on SIA's website and checked out the membership tools? I hope most of you, please use the tools suggested, it does work.

Program- Jackie De Vries, Chair

As we wrap up this year's Live Your Dream program, it's time to look ahead at how we can increase applications. The power of personal connection was clearly demonstrated by **SI/Ukiah**, which received an impressive **24 applications**. Chair Rebecca shared that much of their success came from building strong relationships with teachers and counselors at **Mendocino College**. One instructor, in particular, encouraged all students with dependents to apply.

This highlights the importance of nurturing these kinds of relationships throughout the year to expand our reach and impact.

BIG Goal Accelerator projects. Please remember that to be acknowledged at conference you must submit your project to SIA by March 31, 2026. [LINK](#) to criteria.

Club Grants are now open. Deadline to apply has been extended to **April 1, 2026**. [Application Link](#) Note: the window for Grants has changed from January 1 to April 1. The application notes the new deadline, some of the tips documents may still reference the old deadline of March 1st, but that has been extended. There is a great video on [YouTube](#) about the process- it is a webinar recorded before the extension so ignore the due date information. They give some great examples about grants that can be used to fund BIG goal projects.

Public Awareness- Sue Pretzer, Chair

Hello and New Year Greetings to all Soroptimist!

It's 2026, and time for clubs in the Founder region to refresh, grow and learn. SIA is providing several opportunities to increase your impact, bring Club members together and learn all at the same time. These are great opportunities to invite guests and potential new members to learn more about the Soroptimist Mission. We bring a sense of belonging and accomplishment to and for the women in our communities.

Together in Giving: How Clubs Support the Soroptimist Mission

Mark your calendars for February 18 from 8-9 p.m. (ET) for an engaging webinar about the measurable difference clubs are making, how generosity fuels our mission, and ideas to celebrate and grow your club's impact. [Registration Link](#)



Fifth Annual Virtual Tea Party

SIA's will host its fifth annual virtual tea party for International Women's Day, March 18 at 8:30 p.m. (ET). The party will also serve as a virtual parallel event as part of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women's Non-Governmental Organization forum and will feature simultaneous interpretation in all our languages. [Registration Link](#)

Around the District

District I- District Director Laura Koehler

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday! I wanted to focus attention this month on upcoming fundraisers in District I.

Please join SI/24-680 for a sumptuous meal at their **Virtue and Vice** fundraiser in Danville on 1/21/26 (for reservations, please check <https://www.virtueandvicedanville.com/reservations>). Also, save the dates for upcoming events in March. SI/El Cerrito is having their **British Tea Time**. Enjoy a lovely tea and auction on 3/14/26 at the Berkeley City Club from 1:30-4:30pm. Also, one can join SI/Benicia for **“Party with a Purpose”** to enjoy wine, whiskey, beer and mocktails tastings with SI/Benicia on 3/14/26 from 6:30-10:00pm at the Benicia Clocktower.

District II- District Director Dana Holve

As we begin a new year, I extend my sincere appreciation to every club and member of District II for your dedication to Soroptimist and to the women and girls we serve. As we move forward together, we do so with reflection, resilience, and a renewed commitment to supporting one another.

The year ahead offers opportunities to strengthen connections, support emerging leaders, and advance our shared mission. Through collaboration, compassion, and purpose, District II will continue to create meaningful impact across our communities.

Thank you for your service and commitment.

Dana

District III- District Director Nancy Koski

District III is mourning the passing of one of our most vibrant leaders. Colleen Ganaye, current District III Fellowship Director and President of SI/Sonoma Valley, past District III Director, and dear friend, died on New Year's Eve of complications following her long-awaited hip replacement.

Colleen served Soroptimist for 45 years, pursuing the vision of enabling women and girls to become financially independent through education. She was generous with her time and advice and was the life of every party. She emanated joy no matter the task. She led by example and showed us the spirit of giving. It will take all of us to fill her shoes.

District IV- District Director Crystal Arbuthnot

Soroptimist of Humboldt Bay, one of the Eureka clubs, continues to champion programs that uplift women, girls, and the broader community. Their efforts include Backpacks for Kids, providing weekend meals for children in need; the Gnome Project benefiting local seniors; and purchasing pumpkins for families through the PACT program. They also host the annual High Heels for Healing fundraiser each spring and recently held a Taco Tuesday Birthday celebration to support the Alzheimer's Association.

The club is excited to welcome two new members, Kacy Tonkin and Kelly Giampalo, who joined in October. SIHB also promotes the Live Your Dream and other award programs through social media, working together to build a brighter future for those they serve.

District V- District Director Teri Lynn Sato

This past December was a season of holiday parties. District V Clubs had various ways of celebrating the holidays. I would like to highlight a couple of clubs. On Guam, SI/Marianas held their 20th Annual Christmas Sunday Lunch Fundraiser with amazing support from their membership, families, friends, fellow non-profits, and their community. They showcased Kristal Collections, silent auction items and more! It was a beautiful and sold-out event! Back in Hawaii, SI/Central Oahu held their "Jammies & Jingle". Attendees showed up in their PJs! Participants modeled their PJ, everyone played holiday games, sang holiday songs and of course a buffet of "onolicious" food, as we say in Hawaii.

Happy New Year!

A New Year, A Shared Promise

We welcome the year with open hearts,
Reflecting on service and brand-new starts.
We celebrate progress, the lives we touch,
The power of caring, giving so much.
Members united, purpose made clear,
Lifting one another year after year.
With hope as our guide and service our way,
Soroptimist welcomes a bright new day.

2026

Program Updates

Dream It, Be It- Jackie Arnold- Chair

Happy New Year, Founder Region! I hope you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. It's exciting to see so many clubs either working on their Dream It, Be It programs or having successfully completed one at the end of the year. What an amazing way to empower young women as we head into a new year!

A helpful reminder: finding a group that is already meeting-such as a class, club, or activity-and adding Dream It, Be It to their schedule can make organizing a program much easier. If you have questions or need support, I am always happy to help.

Let's get Dream It, Be It programs started for the clubs that haven't hosted one yet. Let's go, Founder Region!

Live Your Dream- Maïda Herbst- Chair

Happy New Year LYD clubs. Be sure to complete your #1 LYD winner, additional winners and no award categories in your Application System (formerly known as the portal). Also complete your Final Club Report by February 1. Use this [LINK](#)

If you do not report by the deadline, your club will not be counted as participating in the LYD program. Need help with anything? Reach out to your District Representative: Jennifer Chiarelli, Judy Lloyd, Nancy Giltner, Debbie Coles, Wendy McDonald or me at MaïdaRHIA@aol.com.

The LYD team at SI/El Cerrito hosted a brunch for their LYD judges to celebrate their hard work. As non-members, the judges were very interested in getting to know each other, and the Soroptimist team. LYD is clearly an inspiration to the SIEC club.

Thank you again for all you and your clubs do to improve the lives of head-of-household women who are choosing to better themselves through education and training.

"S" Clubs- Dawn Shepherd- Chair

Hello Founder Region, and Happy 2026!

Do you know which incredible award is still available for high school seniors? The "S" Club Outstanding Senior Award!

"S" Club Liaisons, please be sure to share this information with your "S" Clubs. Seniors who are members of an "S" club are eligible to apply for this \$500 award.

The application must be typed and submitted with the required form. [APPLICATION LINK](#)

The deadline to submit the application is March 1, 2026. Completed applications should be emailed to me (my contact information is listed at the bottom of the application form).

As a reminder, "S" Clubs should meet at least monthly, and project opportunities are endless. Please continue to guide and mentor your "S" Clubs and encourage eligible seniors to apply.

Here's hoping we receive a plethora of applications this year!

Wishing you all a very happy January

SIA Information

Leadership Round Table

Mark your calendars! Join us on June 23 for SIA's Leadership Round Table, a virtual event designed to strengthen your leadership skills and expand your impact. Stay tuned for more details—and get ready to grow, connect, and lead with confidence.

Technology Roadmap

We're making steady progress on two major initiatives—a centralized Member Resource Library and a more robust

marketing platform—each designed to improve access to resources and deliver more personalized communications. To learn more about our approach and next steps, please visit our [full update on the blog](#).

SI & United Nations Updates

SI Voices Blog

Check out the latest SI Voices Blog post, “[Preventing Harm Online: Building Safer Digital Spaces for All Women and Girls](#).”



UN International Day of Education

On December 3, 2018, the United Nations designated **January 24 as International Day of Education**, recognizing education's role in peace and development. SIA's Dream Programs and local projects increase access to education and help prevent the circumstances that make women and girls susceptible to gender-based violence. [Read more](#).



Save the Date

Founder Region 50th Conference
May 1st through 3rd in San Ramon.

Look for the Call to Conference being sent in early March.



Conference Highlights

- Friday – Legislative Advocacy Presentation on Women's Mental Health
- Friday Evening – Fellowship Awards
- Saturday – Voting for Founder Region and Fellowship Boards
- Saturday Evening – Installation Ceremony & 50's Dance Party
- Sunday – Memorial Service
- Sunday – Awards Presentation: Live Your Dream, Violet Richardson, and "S" Club Awardee

Conference Baskets

From Fundraising Chair Joy- Treasurers, you will receive opportunity drawing number logs in early February from your District Directors.

We are using number logs this year due to popular demand. All details will be sent to you with the logs.

The Theme is The Fabulous Fifties- Have fun with it!



Putting the Puzzle of Leadership Together



Save the Dates!

DISTRICT I & II- Saturday, June 6, 9 a.m. to 12 noon.
Concord Senior Center, Concord, CA

DISTRICT III & IV- Saturday, June 13, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Red Lion Hotel, Eureka, CA

(same weekend as Memorial Grove Service on June 14)

NEW* Zoom option for **DISTRICT V**, Friday, June 26 at 6:00 p.m. HST,
Saturday, June 27, 2:00 p.m. ChST

In-Person for **DISTRICT V** is October 18, Honolulu, HI, time and venue TBD.

Members may attend any of the trainings offered, even if not in your District.



FELLOWSHIP REPORT

“Solving Puzzles by Degrees”

Happy New Year Founder Region,

We are gearing up for our Conference puzzle games. Your Fellowship Director has puzzles and will be bringing them to your club meetings to sell, and hopefully some of you have already purchased some. Each puzzle holds 9 pieces for a chance to win a Fellow in nine different games. Puzzles are \$90 each for nine chances to win a Fellow. Participating in the Fellowship games is an easy way for members to win a Fellow or level up and it allows Fellowship to plan our budget for awarding our grants at Conference; donations from our membership are key to awarding grants. If you miss your director at a meeting, you can always contact her to purchase a puzzle directly from her.

Fellowship now has beautiful President's pins for sale. Similar to the SIA pin (which is no longer available), these pins include sparkly gems surrounding the Founder Region logo. The pins are \$35 and can be purchased by contacting Fellowship II Director Kay Kelley. We will also have these for sale at the 2026 Conference, but why wait when they are available now?

Fellowship still has beautiful T-shirts available; they come in purple or black, 3/4 length sleeves with the Fellowship logo on the front. You can order on our website or contact Fellowship Director Kay to purchase.

Again we ask you to please consider signing up for monthly giving. This is a relatively easy way to bring your donation to \$1,000 for a new Fellow or level up. Forms are available on our website or scan the QR code at the bottom of the page. Remember, that for Fellowship to continue to award our grants, we need continuing contributions. Your donations are truly appreciated.

Please contact your Fellowship Director with any questions you may have regarding our fundraisers or Fellowship in general. She is always ready and willing to help.

I hope you all have a very wonderful and prosperous 2026!

President Vicki



Fellowship Board

President—Vicki Ham

Treasurer—Danelle Tegarden

Fellowship Directors

District I—Amelia Benko

District II—Kay Kelley

District III—Laurie Gallian

District IV—Tess Albin-Smith

District V—Cindy Rasmussen

Website:

www.founderregionfellowship.org

Email:

vickiham01@gmail.com

Treasurer Email:

danelletegarden@gmail.com

Address:

3505 Pine Street, Eureka, CA
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OUR MISSION:

To advance the Soroptimist mission by awarding grants to outstanding women in the final phase of their doctoral program within Founder Region.



In Memory of Colleen Ganaye



It is with profound sadness and heavy hearts that the Founder Region Fellowship Board announces the passing of our cherished friend and colleague, Colleen Ganaye.

Colleen peacefully left us on December 31, 2025, due to complications following surgery. Her sudden departure has left an irreplaceable void in our organization and in the lives of all who knew her.

A devoted Soroptimist for over 40 years, Colleen's commitment to empowering women and girls was unwavering and truly inspiring. She began her journey with Soroptimist in Fremont, and eight years ago, after relocating to Glen Ellen, she transferred her membership to SI/Sonoma Valley, where she quickly became a beloved and influential member.

Colleen served with distinction as President of SI/Sonoma Valley, bringing her passion for education as the most powerful tool for helping women and girls reach their full potential. She was instrumental in the club's growth, community events, and fundraising efforts that supported local initiatives and scholarships.

Her leadership extended beyond her club. Colleen proudly served as District III Fellowship Director for the 2024-2026 biennium, championing the Founder Region Fellowship program. She was also a member of the Founder Region Board during the 2020-2022 and 2022-2024 biennium.

In light of Colleen's passing, Laurie Gallian will step up to serve as District III Fellowship Director for the remainder of the 2024-2026 biennium, ensuring the continued success of this important program that was so dear to Colleen's heart.

Colleen's warm smile, infectious enthusiasm, and tireless advocacy touched countless lives. She was not only a leader but a true friend—generous, compassionate, and always ready to uplift others. Her legacy lives on in the women and girls she helped empower, the programs she strengthened, and the deep bonds she forged within our sisterhood.

In lieu of flowers, Colleen's family kindly requests that donations be made to Soroptimist in her honor. Founder Region Fellowship is establishing a special fund in Colleen's name to award fellows to members of her club.

Go in peace, dear Colleen. You will forever be remembered, deeply loved, and greatly missed by all whose lives you touched.

Rest in eternal light, dear friend.

With love,
2024-2026 Founder Region Fellowship Board—Vicki, Danelle, Amelia, Kay, Laurie, Tess, & Cindy