



APRIL 2011



Improving the lives of women & girls in Whittier, CA, USA

**Soroptimist Int'l Desert Coast Region
Meet the Board**



L to R – Standing: District I Director Cheri Panzer, District III Director JoAnn Siudara, Governor Myra Lau, Treasurer Tibby Montgomery, District II Director Mary Erchul, Governor Elect Linda Cahill. Seated: Secretary Susan Gilbey and Parliamentarian Judi Dunnigan

Mark Your Calendars

Tues. April 5 th	Business Meeting
Tues. April 12 th	SIW Awards Luncheon
Tues. April 19 th	NO Lunch
Tues. April 19 th	SI/SIA Awards Dinner at Radisson 6:00pm <i>Good time to bring a guest.</i>
Tues. April 26 th	Lunch at Soroptimist Village 12:00pm <i>12757 Foster Road, Norwalk, CA 90650</i>
Fri.-Sun. May 13 th to 15 th DCR Spring Conference DCR = Desert Coast Region, 43 Soroptimist Clubs Sign up Deadline: April 12 th . Sign up with Wendy Kreider www.soroptimistdcr.com	
Sun.-Thurs. July 10 th to 14 th Soroptimist Int'l Convention in Montreal, Canada. Registration \$600.00 SI = 3,000 Soroptimist Clubs	

Mary Rawalt... president's note

As I sit thinking of all that Soroptimist do for so many in the community and around the world, I keep going back to the thoughts of all those affected by the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear problems in Japan. This area was so hard hit, and so many lives were lost. We know that Japan has many Soroptimist helping women and girls in their communities daily. We can only hope that everyone is okay and offer our prayers to them and their families as they struggle to rebuild their lives. At the April business meeting, led by a motion from Liz Camp, our club voted to donate \$500 from our service fund to disaster relief in Japan. This is a time for all of us to reflect on family, friends and communities and how much we need and appreciate them, as we know it only takes seconds to have it all taken away.

The highlight for March was definitely SIW's participation in the Women's History Month Conference on March 4 at Rio Hondo College. The theme for the event was *Inspiring Hope and Possibility*. What an honor it was to be a part of something that is so worthy. There were approximately 350 girls from all the high schools in Whittier Union High School District. Our partnering with Rio Hondo College and the Whittier Unified School District for this event helped us to *reach more girls in community*, which has been an integral part of our goals for the year.

Irma Rodriguez Moisa was the Keynote Speaker, and what a nice job she does by inspiring girls to be their best at whatever they do and reminding them that nothing is impossible for them to accomplish.

"Hats off" to Petra Schmischke, Ms. Zumba and Kathy Mischo for planning the SIW participation. It was a huge success. Cathy Butler, Director of Student Activities, Rio Hondo College is planning for SIW to be an annual participant. SIW contributed three other conference speakers: Lorraine Quiros spoke on *Sixteen and Pregnant*, Sandra Hahn held a workshop on *The Start-Up Kitchen Entrée* and Petra Schmischke held 3 workshops on *Zumba*. All of the workshops were filled to capacity. Our Club is so talented and has so much to offer the community.

Thanks to all for Serving in Style!
Mary Rawalt / SIW President



Soroptimist Int'l Women's Opportunity Awards

The Soroptimist Women's Opportunity Awards (WOA) program is one of SI's major projects created in 1972. The program provides women with cash grants to offset costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education and additional skills training. The ultimate goal of the program is to help women improve their economic status by preparing them to enter or re-enter the workplace. Unlike other award programs, the Women's Opportunity Awards can be used for books, child care, transportation or any other expense that will help a woman reach her educational goal.

The program begins on the club level, where award amounts vary. In addition, Soroptimist grants three \$10,000 finalist awards each year. Soroptimist disburses nearly \$1.5 million annually through this program to help women reclaim their dreams of a better life for themselves and their family. Since 1972, Soroptimist has disbursed about \$20 million and helped more than 25,000 women through the Women's Opportunity Awards program.

For more information about WOA go to www.soroptimist.org

Whittier's 2011 Women's Opportunity Awardees



AWARDS DINNER

Date: Tues. April 19th

Time: 6pm to 8:00pm

Location: Radisson Hotel
7320 Greenleaf Ave.
Whittier, CA 90602

Cost: \$25.00

RSVP: Diane Olson
at 714-719-9767

Honoring

Ruby Award Winner
Monica Abrego

&

Women's Opportunity
1st Place: Jenny Lee*
2nd Place: Natalie Swett

Jenny Lee* is SIW's first place Women's Opportunity awardee who will be granted \$4,000. She also won at the District I level and has been submitted to Desert Coast Region with the potential of winning another \$3,000 to \$5,000. To follow is a short biography:

"Jenny Lee* immigrated from Asia with her family. She recently moved from the East Coast to California to escape a domestic violence situation. Jenny's batterer continues to look for her and that is why she is very cautious of her surroundings. She tries hard to make sure that she and the baby are safe at all times. She currently lives in a shelter and is attending school to pursue a career in Accounting. Her goal is to eventually secure a job in her chosen field and be able to support her baby and live a normal life. Her longer term goal is to attend college and earn a degree. At this time her main concern is to live independently and for one day live where she does not have to look back over her shoulder."

(*Actual name kept confidential for safety reasons.)

Natalie Swett is our second place Women's Opportunity awardee who will be granted \$2,000. She wrote the following:



Natalie Swett grew up as an only child, raised by her grandmother after going thru the foster care system. At the age of 14 she started to mask her feelings with drugs and alcohol. She headed down a path of dereliction and destruction for twenty years, stuck in a vicious cycle of drugs, violence, and abuse. "I finally hit "rock bottom" in February of 2008, when I almost died in the hospital due to a self-inflicted consequence of my drug addiction. While pregnant, I had to have open heart surgery and was given a valve transplant and a pacemaker. It was the wake-up call that I needed." Natalie and her son are extremely fortunate to be alive. After getting out of the hospital, she made several life-changing decisions that she has followed to this day: "1) I immediately began treatment for my addiction; and 2) I have returned to finish school." Not knowing what she wanted to do with her life she was determined to be sober and attain a degree.

Natalie maintains a 3.5 GPA throughout her college career. She has earned her certificate in the Cerritos College Mental Worker Program, and is a few short credits away from her AA. She realizes that an AA is not sufficient for a single mother. She is currently pursuing her BA and will be graduating from Cerritos College in May 2011. She has been accepted to Cal State Dominguez Hills, but is hoping to attend Cal State Fullerton. Whichever school she attends in the fall, she will be satisfied because, "Today my life feels more complete and accomplished than it has ever been."

Congratulations to you both!! We are proud and honored for you to be our awardees!!!



**The Soroptimist Ruby Award:
For Women Helping Women**



Monica Abrego is our 2011 Ruby Awardee. In appreciation of her service to local Whittier girls, we are pleased to make a \$1,000 donation to the Whittier Redskins Cheer Organization.

The Soroptimist Ruby Award, formerly the Soroptimist Making a Difference for Women Award, is designed to honor women who are working to improve the lives of women and girls through their personal lives or volunteer efforts; or through their professional avenues.

Below is a portion of what Monica's son, Jesse Abrego, has to say about this mother's commitment to our girls in the community:

"My mother, Monica Abrego, has been the head coordinator for the Whittier Redskins Cheer Organization for 23 consecutive years. I have watched her spend well over four hundred hours per year. She brings paperwork home every night, and is involved in every aspect from designing uniforms to critiquing and refining routines. Her hard work & dedication to the Whittier Redskins program give over two hundred girls per year an avenue to focus on teamwork and improve their self esteem. Most importantly, she keeps these young girls out of trouble and off the streets. She is very humble and always extremely helpful, plus available night or day for any of her girls' problems. My mother would be overwhelmed to receive any recognition for her tireless work, and I believe it is beyond well-deserved!"

Jesse, we agree! Monica, thank you for improving the lives of girls in our local community!!!



DCR Spring Conference May 13th – May 15th

This year we (DCR) are teaming up with Camino Real Region (CRR) for our Spring Conference. This is a first.

This is a great opportunity for new & old (seasoned) members to learn more about Soroptimist. We are so much more than a local Whittier Club.

SIW is in District I. District I is made up sixteen clubs in Southern California. There are three Districts in our Desert Coast Region (DCR); District I, District II and District III. Our website is www.soroptimistdcr.com. On the cover of this newsletter is the board for our Desert Coast Region.

It can be overwhelming, but what it means is you are part of an international family. And we are family! Women helping Women! Women befriending Women! Women making a difference for a better world! Sign up Today!!

Location: Sheraton Carlsbad Resort & Spa
5480 Grand Pacific Drive,
Carlsbad, CA 920058

Cost: \$245.00 (plus hotel accommodations)
Includes: Registration Fee, dinner Friday, breakfast Sat., lunch Sat. & Sun. brunch.

Date: Friday May 13th - Sunday May 15th

Workshops: Saturday 2:30pm to 4:00pm

- 1) It's All About Connecting; Building New Partnerships for Women and Girls
- 2) Connecting With Your Community
- 3) Connecting Body and Mind for a Healthier You

RSVP: Wendy Kreider ASAP (4-12)
Cell 562-237-8607



This year's venue is beautiful. Be there or be square!! xoxoxo



Soroptimist International of Whittier
 P.O. BOX 468, Whittier, CA 90608-0468
www.soroptimistdcr.org www.soroptimist.org



Our Whittier Host Lions are never asleep at the wheel. Sat., April 2nd they were in the streets collecting donations for Japan's disaster relieve fund. It's rumored they raised over TEN thousand dollars. Great job Lions!! You make Whittier proud!

Mary L. Venegas

SIW Editor 2010-2011

marylvenegas@yahoo.com

Email me your newsletter suggestions.

SIW Board of Directors 2011-12 Nominees

- President:.....Wendy Kreider
- President Elect:.....Kathy Dowling
- Recording Secretary:.....Lorraine Quiros
- Corresponding Secretary:.....Susan Halliday
- Treasurer:.....Teresa Molina
- Director SI/SIA programs:.....Elizabeth Camp
- Direct SIW Programs:.....Cynthia Nickell
- Director of Fundraising:.....Petra Schmischke
- Director of Public Awareness:.....Bonnie Watje
- Direct of Membership:.....Yani Feliciano

*Thank you Ladies for stepping up to the call of duty!!
 We appreciate your service!!*



Birthdays

Sandy Gelmini	7-April
Kathy Mischo	14-April
Betsy Angevine	25-April
Elizabeth Camp	30-April

Wedding Anniversary

Suzie Mohler	21-April	33 years
Carolyn Reggio	5-April	25 years

Congrats Ladies!

Soroptimist of the Year
Petra Schmischke
Thank you Petra for everything you do.
WE LOVE YOU!!!