



SOROPTIMIST®

Investing in Dreams

# Founder Region Conference

San Ramon Marriott

May 1-3, 2026



*Elise Balgley,  
Governor*

**Putting the Puzzle Together!**

Official Program



**Meyers Financial Services Inc.**  
Wealth Management

## **Celebrating 41 Years of Trusted Financial Guidance!**

As part of our 41st-anniversary celebration, we are offering a **complimentary Financial Roadmap** to individuals and couples.

This exclusive service is designed to help you:

- Plan for a secure retirement
- Optimize your investment strategy
- Navigate complex financial decisions with confidence

### **Who Qualifies:**

This special offer is available to Soroptimist individuals and couples.

### **Limited Time Offer:**

Contact us by **June 5, 2026** to take advantage of this unique opportunity.

**Discover the difference 41 years of expertise can make.**



☎ Call us at 707-935-1124

✉ Email us at [info@meyersfinancial.com](mailto:info@meyersfinancial.com)

🌐 Visit [www.meyersfinancial.com](http://www.meyersfinancial.com)



Thank you for trusting us to guide your financial future for the past 41 years. Let's build an even brighter tomorrow-together.

# Governor's Message



Welcome, Aloha, and Hafa Adai to all Conference attendees.

I have the privilege, on behalf of the Founder Region Board and the wonderful Conference Leadership Team [Conference Coordinator Kris, Treasurer Cara, and the Host Clubs] of welcoming you to Founder Region's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. That is an amazing milestone, and we should all be proud.

Help me extend a warm welcome to some special guests, Official Visitor SIA Secretary/Treasurer Gail Dekreon and SIA CEO Michelle Burnett. Secretary/Treasurer Gail will be making two presentations on Saturday:

“Transformation Through Leadership, Stories That Connect Us” and “Building a Culture of Transformational Leadership: Inspiring Impact.” CEO Michelle will speak to us over lunch on Saturday. Take time this weekend to speak with them. They are a wealth of knowledge, and I know they want to hear from you as well. Also take the time to meet the candidates for our 2026–2028 Region and Fellowship Boards. Thank them for stepping up to seek those positions.

To our first-time attendees, we are so pleased to have you here. Use these opportunities to learn and grow your Soroptimist knowledge as well as to make new friends. To our “repeaters,” thank you for being here and for enjoying all that Conference has to offer. Please do share your stories and how they connect us.

On Friday, we will take time to consider Empowerment & Women's Mental Health, Supporting Women Through Stress, Loss, and Life's Challenges. There will be an opportunity to learn more about the four pillars of Soroptimist and how progress can be made on each. We will also hear about how Soroptimist fits into our larger global community.

Of course, we will also hear from our amazing Fellowship grant recipients, Live Your Dream Award winners, and Violet Richardson Award recipients. Their presentations are sure to inspire and make us all determined to go back to our communities and work to build the dreams of women and girls.

Thank you for being here. It has been a privilege and an honor serving as your Governor this biennium. You inspire me. Please continue to put the puzzle together!

In Soroptimist Friendship,

*Governor Elise*

*"Fight for the things that you care about but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."— Ruth Bader Ginsberg*

# Welcome, Soroptimist Friends!



We are so excited to celebrate this milestone with you, our **50th Annual Founder Region Conference!** Fifty years of supporting women, investing in dreams, and making a real difference. What a journey!

On **Friday**, we kick things off with a Legislative Advocacy presentation on women's mental health, followed by our festive **Fellowship Gala**, where we celebrate, connect, and honor women who will change the world!

**Saturday** is all about business: electing our new Founder Region and Fellowship Boards. Then grab your poodle skirts for our **'50s Sock Hop** installation celebration!

On **Sunday**, we welcome keynote speaker Jaclyn, a former Live Your Dream Award recipient truly living her best life — a beautiful reminder of why we do what we do. We'll close with our **Awards Ceremony**, the reason we're all here!

Jackie



## Our Fabulous Host Clubs:

Soroptimist International of Eel River Valley  
Soroptimist International of Humboldt Bay  
Soroptimist International of Noyo Sunrise  
Soroptimist International of The Redwoods



Our Amazing Conference Coordinator  
Kris Chorbi, SI/Eureka

## Our Outstanding Conference Committee

Registration Chair  
Credentials Chair \*  
Floor Committee Chair  
Trade Fair Chair  
Nominating Committee/Elections  
Audio/Visual Chair  
Conference Treasurer  
Governor's Steward  
Governor-elect's & Fellowship President's Steward  
SIA Official Visitor's & SIA CEO's Steward

A.B. Priceman, SI/Noyo Sunrise  
Shirley Lipa, SI/Eel River Valley  
Lisa Dallam, SI/Humboldt Bay  
Corrine Stromstad, SI/The Redwoods  
Barbara Lanier, SI/El Cerrito  
Kris Wiley, SI/Novato  
Cara Begley, SI/Antioch  
Sheila Bearden, SI/Humboldt Bay  
Patti Dutton, SI/Humboldt Bay  
Leigh Pierre-Oetker, SI/Humboldt Bay

\* Special thanks to Debbie Scaife, SI/Eel River Valley, co-chair of credentials prior to conference.

# Founder Region Board

Putting the Puzzle Together



Governor, Elise Balgley



Governor-elect, Jackie De Vries



Secretary, Kristal Koga



District I Director, Laura Koehler



Treasurer, Holly Hayashi



District II Director, Dana Holve



District III Director, Nancy Koski



District IV Director, Crystal Arbuthnot



District V Director, Teri Lynn Sato

Leadership-We each hold a piece of the puzzle...

# Fellowship Board

“Solving Puzzles by Degrees!”



**President Vicki Ham**

**Treasurer Danelle Tegarden**

**District I Fellowship Director Amelia Benko**

**District II Fellowship Director Kay Kelley**

**District III Fellowship Director Laurie Gallian**

**District IV Fellowship Director Tess Albin-Smith**

**District V Fellowship Director Cindy Rasmussen**



*"Knowledge is love and light and vision." — Helen Keller*



SOROPTIMIST®

Investing in Dreams

## Welcome Message from Official Visitor SIA Secretary/Treasurer Gail Dekreon

Greetings Founder Region Soroptimists, Awardees, Guests and Friends,

I am so honored to be invited to join you for your Annual Conference!

I am impressed with Governor Elise's theme for this conference: "*Together We Connect-One Piece at a Time*". Did you know that is the title of a song recorded by Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Three in 1976? I looked it up, just to be sure, and it is hysterically funny. But what it brought home to me was that despite of all our differences-age, race, professions, single, married, divorced, widowed, raising children, no children, home owner, renter, having pets, no pets—we are all connected in our love of the mission of Soroptimist to provide women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

This is the wonder of our annual conferences, to share the results of our hard work and fundraising by getting acquainted with and hearing from the women and girls we have helped and are helping with grants, scholarships and mentoring.

I am looking forward to meeting all of you. The last time I had the opportunity to attend your Conference was in 2017, so I am sure there are many new Soroptimists for me to meet and get to know and it will be wonderful to run into the ones I met before.

With Gratitude

**Gail Dekreon**

Board Secretary/Treasurer

SecTreas-Gail@soroptimist.org





## Welcome Message from SIA President and CEO

Dear Soroptimists,

It is with deep joy and gratitude that we welcome you to your Region Conference — a time to reconnect with friends, celebrate your accomplishments, and look toward the future we are building together. Our theme this year, Transformation Through Leadership, reminds us that leadership is not about titles or hierarchy. It is about courage, curiosity, and compassion. It is the choice to see possibilities where others see limitations and to believe in someone's potential, sometimes before they believe in it themselves.

Every time a Soroptimist helps a woman return to school, mentors a girl who is still finding her voice, or welcomes a new member into her club, she is leading transformation. She is creating a ripple that will reach far beyond what she can see.

Across our Federation, those ripples are forming waves of change. In every community, Soroptimists are helping women and girls access education, rebuild their confidence, and discover their power. Each of those stories is proof that when women support women, transformation becomes unstoppable.

And while we celebrate these visible successes, we also honor the quiet, steady leadership that sustains our movement — the members who mentor behind the scenes, the club officers who give their time freely, and the teams who persist with grace and determination. You are the heart of Soroptimist. Your commitment keeps our mission vibrant and our future bright.

This year calls us to lead not only within our clubs, but within our communities and beyond, to listen to new voices, welcome new ideas, and create space for every woman who believes in a better tomorrow. Together, we are strengthening our organization, expanding our impact, and showing the world what collective leadership looks like.

As you gather this weekend, we invite you to pause and celebrate how far you've come, as individuals, as regions, and as one Federation. May you leave this conference renewed in spirit, connected in purpose, and reminded that you are a leader, transforming lives every day through your service, your compassion, and your example.

With heartfelt gratitude and admiration,

**Sue Riney**

2025-2026 SIA President

**Michelle Burnett**

Executive Director & CEO



# Appointed Leadership



## Conference Coordinator — Kris Chorbi

Kris is a 35-year member of SI/Eureka and served as Founder Region Governor for 2020–2022. She has also served as Fellowship President, Public Awareness Chair, and now as Conference Coordinator and Webmaster/Tech Support. Kris has worked at College of the Redwoods for the past 10 years and runs Foster & Kinship Care Education Program. She creates handmade jewelry for KC Creations on ETSY and attends many craft shows/events to grow her small business.

## Parliamentarian — Sylvia Crafton

Sylvia joined Soroptimist International of the Marianas after moving to Guam in 1990. She twice held the office of President, was elected as District Director, and served on the Founder Region board for two consecutive terms (2008–2010 + 2010–2012). She served as the Region Public Awareness Chair before being elected to the Governor-elect position for the 2016–2018 biennium. Sylvia served as Governor for the 2018–2020 biennium and, with the help of her talented board, led the transition to virtual meeting formats necessitated by the COVID pandemic. Additionally, Sylvia served as her club's parliamentarian for several terms and served as delegate to conferences and conventions at region, federation, and international levels. She served on the organizing committee when the region conference was held on Guam in 2004, and she was the Conference Coordinator for the 2016 Founder Region Conference held in Honolulu, Hawaii. Sylvia was honored to accept Governor Elise's invitation to continue to serve as the Founder Region Parliamentarian for this biennium.

## Conference Treasurer — Cara Begley

Cara began her professional career in banking. She started as a teller and worked her way up to branch manager. She was then offered a position in regional management as Operations Coordinator and oversaw operations in 15 branches. After being in regional management for two years, the bank was sold. She opted to resign rather than accept a position in the new bank. She worked as a bookkeeper for a few small firms, which led her to accounting and tax preparation for a CPA firm. She retired in October 2022, after 25 years with the firm. Cara joined Soroptimist International of Antioch in early 1985. She has held all board positions except secretary. She's been vice president, president twice, director, delegate several times, and treasurer too many times to count.

*"I feel good about making a difference for women in helping to organize and develop the Soroptimist organization" — Violet Richardson*

# Conference Registration Chair



## **A.B. Priceman**

Ann-Beth "A.B." Priceman was born and raised in Rochester, NY. After earning her AAS in Animal Science from S.U.N.Y., she moved to San Francisco and built a 20-year career as a veterinary technician. In 1998, she earned her real estate license, launching a thriving second career. In 2004, she followed her heart to the charming coastal community of Fort Bragg, where she has planted deep roots ever since.

A dedicated community member, A.B. has been an active member of SI/Noyo Sunrise since 2007 and currently serves as president. Her hobbies include reading, walking, mah-jong, and pickleball. She loves volunteering at local plays and symphony performances, caring for her real estate clients, and spending time at home with her wife Connie.

# Community Welcome



## **Candace Andersen, District 2 Supervisor**

Supervisor Candace Andersen serves as Chair of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. First elected in June 2012, she ran unopposed and was re-elected in 2016, 2020, and 2024. She previously served on the Danville Town Council from 2003 to 2012, including two terms as Mayor, and on the Morgan Hill City Council in the early 1990s.

As County Supervisor, Candace sits on 28 local and regional boards and commissions covering planning, transportation, mental health, healthcare, economic development, and public safety.

A licensed attorney in California and Hawaii, Candace began her legal career as a Prosecuting Attorney in Honolulu before stepping back to serve her community and raise her family. She earned her B.A. in Public Policy (1982) and Juris Doctorate (1985) from Brigham Young University and attended Punahou School in Honolulu.

Candace remains an active church and community volunteer. She and her husband, retired attorney Philip M. Andersen, have been married 41 years and have six children and twelve grandchildren.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has." —Margaret Mead*

# Founder Region Pillar Chairs



## **Fundraising Chair — Joy Swank**

Joy joined Soroptimist International of Vacaville in 2011 after retiring from a 30-year career teaching middle school. She quickly became involved, serving as the club's Live Your Dream Chair before becoming Club President in 2014. Inspired by the mission and friendship of Soroptimist, Joy went on to serve four years as District Director, followed by two years as Region Secretary. She has also served as Region "S" Club Chair and currently serves as the Founder Region Fundraising Chair. Joy is a proud member of the Laurel Society, and a Fellow.



## **Membership Chair — Angie Haramoto**

Angie joined Soroptimist Int. of Maui in 1992. She has served in various offices of her club and on committees of the Founder Region as well as District V Director. For many years she was a member of Legislative Advocacy. Angie finds her recent move to Membership Chair challenging, but she enjoys the opportunity to grow and mentor:

"I remember how I felt when I first was asked to join Soroptimist and I wanted to share that feeling. Recently she has been a nominee for "Outstanding Older American" and was awarded Maui County 2025 Woman of Excellence Award —"Unsung Hero."



## **Program Chair — Jackie De Vries**

Jackie is a proud member of Soroptimist International of Vacaville and currently serves as Founder Region Governor-elect and Program Chair. She finds deep fulfillment in supporting Soroptimist's signature programs, including Live Your Dream Awards, Violet Richardson Awards, Dream It, Be It, and the Big Goal Accelerator. These programs hold a special place in her heart, as each one reflects Soroptimist's mission to transform the lives of women and girls. She is continually inspired by the dedication, leadership, and heart of Soroptimists throughout Founder Region and across Soroptimist International of the Americas.



## **Public Awareness Chair — Sue Pretzer**

Sue joined Soroptimist International of The Delta in June 2019 with a passion for helping women and girls and making a meaningful difference in her new community of Brentwood. She stepped immediately into leadership within the club, serving as Vice President and then President from 2022–2024. In her current role as Public Awareness Chair, she is learning many new skills. She retired from the Magdalena Ecke YMCA Adventure Clubs program in 2017. Sue and Myles, her husband of over 40 years have 3 grown children and enjoy visiting them when they can. "Life is good."

# Legislative Advocacy

## Empowerment in Women’s Mental Health: Supporting Women Through Stress, Loss, and Life’s Changes

### Practitioners



#### **Singing Bowls — Amy Martinez**

Amy Martinez is a musician, educator, and sound healing practitioner blending artistry, mindfulness, and community connection. A bilingual singer-songwriter with two studio albums and international performances, she leads sound healing ceremonies for gatherings such as Ecstatic Dance in Berkeley. She currently serves as Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator for Davis Joint Unified School District.



#### **Morning Stretch — Andrea (Andy) Gaudet**

Andrea Gaudet is Principal of Diablo Ballet School, a Dance for Parkinson's Core Teacher, and PEEK (Performing Arts Education & Enrichment for Kids) Associate. With 30+ years of teaching experience, she performed as a soloist with Ballet Idaho and Sacramento Ballet, dancing in classic ballets and works by George Balanchine. She previously served as Artistic Director of Berkeley City Ballet.



#### **Tapping — Stephanie Helberg**

Stephanie Helberg, CHT, QHHT, is a shamanic practitioner, certified consulting hypnotist, and Reiki and crystal healing practitioner. Trained in the Amazon, Portugal, India, and Turkey, she specializes in Soul Retrieval and Quantum Healing Hypnosis. A teacher with The Great Mysteries Society, Stephanie helps clients access their true self through shamanic tools and heart wisdom. Stephanie is a member of SI/Antioch.

### **Diablo Taiko — Arlene Kikkawa-Nielsen, Michelle Flood, Kathleen Hagino-Davidson, Cherise Khaund, and Chris Steiger**



Diablo Taiko is a community-based Northern California taiko ensemble located in Concord, California where classes have been held since early 1990 at the Diablo Japanese American Religious & Cultural Center. Their mission, “*Dentou, Keisho*”, translated as tradition and succession, honors the resilience of those before us by carrying forth cultural traditions for future generations to come. Diablo Taiko’s tailored performances and workshops aspire to continue generational legacies by sharing both traditional Japanese Taiko “heartbeat” rhythms and contemporary arrangements. Diablo Taiko hopes to interactively engage, inspire, connect, and build community through taiko drumming,

additional instrumentals, song, and dance.

## Morning Panzlists



### **La Krisha Dillard, MS**

La Krisha Dillard is a mental health consultant and trainer with 30 years of experience specializing in Peer Coaching, Mindfulness, Trauma-Informed Care, ACEs, and Early Childhood Trauma and Parenting. She has spent 24 years as Lead Mental Health Consultant at Lynn Center Children and Family Services, supporting the 0–5 community through ECE coaching, Wraparound, and Intensive Care Coordination services.

La Krisha is Co-Director and Co-Founder of the Black Women in Early Childhood Collective (BWECC), a corporation focused on Trans-Generational Trauma with BIPOC communities, Adverse Child Experiences, and Cultural Competencies in ECE. BWECC recently relaunched The Center for Equity in Early Childhood Education (CEECE), advancing racial equity and intersectional justice through relationship-centered training and consultation. Her organizational partnerships include First 5 Contra Costa, First 5 Alameda, City of Oakland, West Ed, Aspiranet, Solano and San Mateo Counties, and many others.



### **Chandra Lynn, MBA**

Chandra Lynn, MBA, is a certified transformation coach, speaker, and author of the Amazon #1 bestselling book *Root-to-Rise: How to Love Life*. She is the founder of Glow Living, a platform dedicated to helping people build emotional resilience, clarity, and balance so they can love life more fully.

Drawing from human needs psychology, coaching, and nature-based philosophy, Chandra created the Root-to-Rise Framework, which helps individuals understand how unmet emotional needs influence stress, relationships, and major life transitions. Her work guides people to reconnect with purpose, navigate change with resilience, and create more aligned lives across key areas including health, family, relationships, career, and community.

Her book has been praised by *Kirkus Reviews* as “inspiring guidance for personal transformation,” and by Dr. Deepak Chopra, who wrote, “If you want a simple step-by-step guide for a fulfilled life, this is the book.”



### **Natasha Paddock, MSW**

CEO/Executive Director, C.O.P.E. Family Support Center

Natasha Paddock is a Social Worker and nonprofit CEO with over 20 years of executive leadership experience, holding a B.A. in Psychology from the University of the Pacific and an MSW from California State University, East Bay. In 2023, she was appointed CEO of C.O.P.E. Family Support Center, Inc., a Bay Area nonprofit strengthening families through integrated services, and elected California Director to the National Board of NASW, where she advocates for social justice and equity.

Previously, she served as Deputy Director of the Housing and Community Development Agency in Alameda County, combating homelessness alongside federal, state, and local partners. With 17 years in government integrating social services for vulnerable communities, and as an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Natasha is a passionate advocate for building resilient, equitable communities throughout the Bay Area.



## **Anna M. Sabio, MSW, LCSW**

Anna M. Sabio is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Director of Therapeutic Services at John Muir Behavioral Health Center in Concord, California. With advanced training in clinical practice, she brings a deep commitment to accessible, compassionate mental health care to the communities she serves. In her leadership role, Ms. Sabio oversees therapeutic programs supporting individuals navigating a wide range of behavioral and mental health challenges, grounded in a holistic, patient-centered approach that emphasizes empowerment, dignity, and evidence-based treatment. Her expertise makes her a vital voice in conversations about women's mental health, stress management, and the intersection of behavioral health and community wellness. A recognized advocate within the Bay Area healthcare community, Ms. Sabio is dedicated to strengthening the systems that support long-term mental and emotional well-being for women and families across all stages of life.

## **Afternoon Panellists**

*Please note: the afternoon session will explore themes of loss and life's changes. We encourage you to honor your own needs — stepping out or taking a moment for yourself is always welcome.*



## **Mary Doane, Zen Caregiving Project**

Mary Doane is Supervising Instructor of Education Programs at Zen Caregiving Project. Her responsibilities include developing curriculum and producing course content, teaching public courses, and training and mentoring other instructors. With more than two decades of service and leadership in contemplative education and end-of-life care, Mary is heart-centered in all she does. She is dual-certified to teach the *Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT™)* program by Compassion Institute and by the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at the Stanford

University School of Medicine. She is also certified to teach the *Cultivating Emotional Balance* program and to serve as a *Mindfulness Mentor*.

Mary is a graduate of Mills College and of the Buddhist Chaplaincy Training program at Sati Center for Buddhist Studies.



## **Lorie Gehrke, Certified Grief Educator**

Lorie Gehrke is a Certified Grief Educator, statewide SIDS advocate, and Vice Chair of California's SIDS Advisory Council. Following the sudden loss of her firstborn daughter, Lauren, she committed herself to supporting grieving families and partnering with public health leaders to strengthen bereavement support, safe sleep education, and SIDS awareness. She is the founder of Mariposa Living, where she explores how grief, life transitions, and archetypal patterns shape who we become over time. Her work helps individuals make meaning of their experiences, understand the patterns shaping their lives and navigate profound change.

Lorie's work centers on identity shifts, emotional resilience, and creating space for reflection, insight, and renewal. She designs and delivers workshops for community, healthcare, and professional audiences. With over 30 years of executive leadership experience, including her work as a law firm administrator, Lorie brings a unique ability to bridge professional expertise with compassionate, real-world insight. She holds an A.B. from UC Berkeley, is a Certified Nutrition Consultant through Bauman College, and received her Grief Educator certification through David Kessler.



## **Barbara Hockett, RN, MS Ed.**

Barbara D. Hockett, RN, MS Ed., holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Master of Science in Education, with a distinguished background spanning nursing, public health, education, and healthcare management. She teaches Community Health Nursing at California State University, East Bay, bringing decades of real-world experience into the classroom. Ms. Hockett served on the Central San Board of Directors for 20 years, spearheading a regional educational partnership with 18 Water/Wastewater Districts and expanding operator training programs throughout the region. A recognized public health innovator, she convened the City of Walnut Creek, the DEA, local law enforcement, and the Solid Waste Authority to launch the first pharmaceutical drop-off pilot program, which has since collected over 154,000 lbs. of pharmaceuticals at 11 sites — protecting public safety and local water quality. She is a member of the East Bay Leadership Council and a proud Contra Costa County resident since 1960.

## **Support During Sessions**

*This program explores many meaningful and sometimes sensitive topics that may bring up personal feelings or experiences. We want every participant to feel seen, supported, and cared for throughout our time together. Catherine will be on hand during our Friday sessions to offer a compassionate, confidential space to process anything that arises. Whether you need a moment to pause, someone to listen, or guidance toward additional resources, please don't hesitate to approach Catherine during the morning session or after the afternoon session. You are not alone, and your well-being matters deeply to us.*



## **Catherine Cheyette, PhD, LCSW**

Catherine Cheyette, PhD, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker with over three decades of experience in psychotherapy and clinical supervision. Based in Berkeley, California, she has maintained a private practice since 1994, providing weekly individual and couples therapy grounded in psychodynamic and psychoanalytic approaches.

Throughout her career, Catherine has worked across a wide range of clinical settings — from inpatient and outpatient psychiatry in New York to therapeutic school environments and child welfare programs in the Bay Area. She has supervised interns at several respected institutions, including the Psychotherapy Institute, the Women's Therapy Center, and the Wright Institute in Berkeley.

Catherine holds a PhD in Clinical Social Work from the Chicago Institute of Clinical Social Work, a Master of Social Work from Columbia University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Maryland. She is affiliated with the Psychotherapy Institute and the Wright Institute.

## **Resources**



We care about each and every one of you, and our hope is that today's conversation was just the beginning. The committee has gathered some resources to support you beyond this program — because you deserve to have the right tools at your fingertips whenever you need them. Please use this QR code to access support, guidance, and resources for everything we explored together today. You matter. Your well-being matters!

*Thank you to the incredible panelists and practitioners of the Legislative Advocacy Program — your voices and leadership are what make advocacy in Founder Region so powerful.*

## Friday Lunch Keynote Speaker



### **Linda Witong, SI Advocacy Advisor: Research & Violence**

Linda Witong is a retired prosecutor and a distinguished advocate for women's rights, human trafficking prevention, and international justice. She currently serves as an **SI Advocacy Advisor for Research and Violence** with Soroptimist International, and as a **Board Member of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice** in Vienna, Austria.

Linda has been appointed SI Advocacy Consultant by five Presidents of Soroptimist International, reflecting the depth and breadth of her contributions on a global scale.

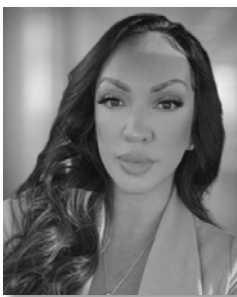
She has served as a Research Consultant for the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York and has participated in UN advocacy on issues including torture by non-state actors, the climate crisis's impact on human trafficking, gender-related violence, and early and forced child marriage.

A member of **Soroptimist International of Novato**, Linda has chaired the Founder Region Legislative Advocacy Committee, organized community forums on human trafficking in Marin County, and moderated panels at region conferences. In 2022, she received Soroptimist International of Novato's **Women of Vision Award** in recognition of her enduring commitment to women and girls.

In February 2024, Linda was inducted into the **Marin County Women's Hall of Fame** and received special recognition from the U.S. Congress, the California State Senate, and the Marin County Board of Supervisors. Earlier career honors include the Outstanding Prosecutor of Marin County Award (1996) and the Excellence in Service Award from the Marin County District Attorney's Office (2003).

## Sunday Program Speaker

This year we are thrilled to welcome Jaclyn Pledger, a former Live Your Dream winner, who will join us Sunday at the Awards Celebration to share how she is living proof that dreams come true.



### **Jaclyn Pledger, MA, MS, LCSW**

Jaclyn is a dedicated mental health professional committed to providing compassionate care to diverse and marginalized populations. She holds a master's in forensic psychology from Arizona State University and a master's in clinical psychology from Alliant International University. Her career spans the federal government, state service, and nonprofits.

Jaclyn is currently an Associate Professional Clinical Counselor at her local county jail and works with justice-impacted individuals to heal trauma, promote harm reduction, and support reintegration into the community. She collaborates with local agencies and resources to serve this population.

Jaclyn advocates on social justice issues at homeless round tables, city meetings, and with local officials. In her free time, she enjoys weightlifting, church, true crime and self-help books, and time with her family.

# 2024-2026 Legislative Advocacy Committee

Thank you to the Legislative Advocacy Chair and committee for your tireless efforts to present such an empowering and impactful program.



Photo credit: Natalia Perez

Shantee Baker–SI/El Cerrito, Jennifer Barton–SI/Central Solano County  
Susan Boreliz–SI/24-680 (Walnut Creek), Angie Haramoto–SI/Maui,  
Dana Holve–SI/Vacaville Twilight, Sandra Simms–SI/Waikiki Foundation, Inc.

## Legislative Advocacy Chair



Phyllis Gordon has been a member of Soroptimist since June 1999. She has spent most of her adult life advocating for the protection and equal rights of women and girls. As current Region Chair of the Legislative Advocacy Committee, she brings more than two decades of civic leadership and unwavering dedication to the organization's mission. Phyllis is the former chair of Community Advisory Commission, City of Pittsburg, former Chair and Commissioner of Contra Costa Women's Hall of Fame, former Board Member of NACW serving as National Conference Chair 2014, 2020, and 2021. She was the former Vice President of

Association of California Commissions for Women, a Chair and Board Member for Community Violence Solutions and past Chair STS Academy, and a founding Board Member of Fem Truth Youth.

### Notes:

*“Empowering women’s mental health is essential to building resilient leaders, strong communities, and a more equitable world.” — Anonymous*

# Conference Agenda

## THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026

9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	<b>Region Board Meeting</b>	<i>Mt. Diablo Room</i>
12:00 p.m.–1:15 p.m.	<b>Region/Fellowship Board Lunch</b>	<i>Pleasanton/Danville Room</i>
1:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m.	<b>Region Board Discussion with Official Visitor</b>	<i>Mt. Diablo Room</i>
1:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m.	<b>Fellowship Board Meeting</b>	<i>Tri Valley 1 Room</i>
3:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	<b>Early Registration Open</b>	<i>Contra Costa Foyer</i>
4:30 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	<b>Meet and Greet; Meet the Candidates</b>	<i>Hotel Lobby / Bishop Grill</i>

## FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026

6:30 a.m.–8:00 a.m.	<b>Trade Fair Set Up</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	<b>Trade Fair Open</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	<b>Registration Open</b>	<i>Contra Costa Foyer</i>
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	<b>Legislative Advocacy Program</b> <i>Empowerment &amp; Women's Mental Health: Supporting Women Through Stress, Loss and Life's Challenges</i> Morning Session – Panel on Cognitive Health and Stress *Welcome – Governor Elise Balgley Legislative Advocacy Committee: Chair Phyllis Gordon Shantee Baker · Jennifer Barton · Susan Boreliz Angie Haramoto · Dana Holve · Sandra Simms	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
12:00 p.m.–12:15 p.m.	<b>Break</b>	
12:15 p.m.–1:30 p.m.	<b>Legislative Advocacy Luncheon</b> *Introductions – Governor Elise *Inspiration – A.B. Priceman, SI/Noyo Sunrise *Welcome – Laurie Garrison, SI/Eel River Valley *Speaker – Linda Witong, Soroptimist International Advocacy Advisor	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
1:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m.	<b>Legislative Advocacy Program (continued)</b> *Afternoon Session – Panel on Loss, Grief, and Transitions *Announcements – Conference Coordinator Kris Chorbi	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
3:00 p.m.–3:15 p.m.	<b>Break</b>	
3:15 p.m.–3:30 p.m.	<b>Delegates Briefing</b> *Parliamentarian Sylvia Crafton	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
3:30 p.m.–3:45 p.m.	<b>Timekeepers/Microphone Monitors Briefing</b> *Parliamentarian Sylvia	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
5:30 p.m.–6:30 p.m.	<b>"Invitation Only" Fellows Reception</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Patio</i>
6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.	<b>All Member Social – No Host</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Foyer</i>

	<b>FRIDAY</b> <i>(continued)</i>	
<b>7:00 p.m.–9:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Fellowship Awards Gala &amp; Dinner</b> *Call to Order – Governor Elise *Presentation of Colors & Pledge of Allegiance – Girl Scouts of San Ramon Troop #30491 *Community Welcome – Candace Andersen, District 2 Supervisor *Official Response – Governor-elect Jackie DeVries *Presentation of Platform Party – Governor Elise *Inspiration – Kay Kelley, Fellowship Director, District II *Welcome – Cindy Rasmussen, Fellowship Director, District V <b>Dinner</b> *Recognition of Past Fellowship Presidents – President Vicki Ham Fellowship Awards *Presentation of Fellowship Recipients – Fellowship Board *Closing Remarks – President Vicki *Announcements/Recess – Conference Coordinator Kris	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2026</b>		
<b>7:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Registration Open</b>	<i>Contra Costa Foyer</i>
<b>7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Trade Fair Open</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>8:30 a.m.–9:15 a.m.</b>	<b>Fellowship Business Meeting</b> (Delegates Bring Voting Cards) *Call to Order – President Vicki *Adoption of Credentials Report – Credentials Chair Shirley Lipa *Minutes of Previous Business Meeting *Treasurer’s Report – Treasurer Danelle Tegarden *Director Reports – Fellowship Directors *President’s Report – President Vicki *Adjournment *Announcements – Conference Coordinator Kris	
<b>9:15 a.m.–9:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Region Business Meeting</b> (Delegates Bring Voting Cards) *Call to Order – Governor Elise Balgley *Presentation of Platform Party – Governor Elise *Adoption of Credentials Report – Credentials Chair Shirley *Adoption of Standing Rules – Secretary Kristal Koga *Adoption of Official Conference Program – Secretary Kristal	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>

	<b>SATURDAY</b> <i>(continued)</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*First Time Attendee Recognition – Governor Elise</li> <li>*Introduction of Pages and Stewards – Governor Elise</li> <li>*Greetings and Correspondence – Secretary Kristal</li> <li>*Invitation to Host Conferences 2028 and 2029 – Secretary Kristal</li> <li>*Nominations – Nominating Committee Chair Barbara Lanier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Nominating Committee Report</li> <li>– Nominations from the Floor</li> <li>– Presentation of Candidates – Governor Elise/President Vicki</li> <li>– Voice Vote for Unopposed Candidates – Governor Elise/President Vicki</li> </ul> </li> <li>*Official Visitor Report – "Transformation Through Leadership, Stories That Connect Us" – SIA Secretary/Treasurer Gail Dekreon</li> <li>*Founder Region Proposed Bylaw Amendments – Laws &amp; Resolutions Chair Lillian Meyers</li> <li>*Treasurer's Report – Treasurer Holly Hayashi</li> <li>*Laurel Society Honors and Recognition – Fundraising Chair Joy Swank</li> <li>*Credentials Report – Credentials Chair Shirley</li> <li>*Appointment of Tellers – Governor Elise</li> <li>*Announcements – Conference Coordinator Kris</li> </ul>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>12:00 p.m.–12:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Election Voting for Region/Fellowship Offices</b>	<i>Pleasanton/Danville Room</i>
<b>12:30 p.m.–1:45 p.m.</b>	<b>District Directors' Luncheon</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Introductions – Governor Elise</li> <li>*Directors and Club Presidents' Processional</li> <li>*Inspiration – Dana Holve, District II Director</li> <li>*Welcome – Laura Koehler, District I Director</li> <li>*Director Reports and Club Drawing</li> <li>*Presentation by SIA CEO Michelle Burnett</li> <li>*Announcement of Election Results – Governor Elise/President Vicki</li> </ul>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>1:45 p.m.–2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Break / Run-off Voting if needed</b>	<i>Pleasanton/Danville Room</i>
<b>2:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Region Business Meeting (continued)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Philanthropy Pillar Session – "<i>Evolving Trends: How to Tap into New Fundraising Tactics</i>" – Chair Joy</li> <li>*Engagement Pillar Presentation – "<i>Infusing JOY into Membership</i>" – Chair Angie Haramato</li> <li>*Recognition Pillar Presentation – "<i>Club Identity &amp; Global Brand: How They Work Together</i>" – Governor-elect Jackie</li> <li>*Impact Pillar Presentation – "<i>Big Goal Accelerator Projects: Eligibility Deep Dive</i>" – Chair Jackie DeVries</li> </ul>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>

	<b>SATURDAY</b> <i>(continued)</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Official Visitor Presentation – <i>"Building a Culture of Transformational Leadership: Inspiring Impact"</i> – SIA Secretary/Treasurer Gail</li> <li>*New Member Sponsor Drawing – Treasurer Holly</li> <li>*Julia 'Bess' Combs Membership Increase Award – Treasurer Holly</li> <li>*Fellow Presentations – Fellowship Board</li> <li>*Announcement of new Region and Fellowship Boards – Governor Elise/President Vicki</li> <li>*Announcements – Conference Coordinator Kris</li> <li>*Business Meeting Recess – Governor Elise</li> </ul>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>All Member Social – No Host</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Foyer</i>
<b>7:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Dinner Honoring Our Past Governors &amp; Fabulous '50s Party</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Inspiration – Crystal Arbuthnot, District IV Director</li> <li>*Welcome – Nancy Koski, District III Director</li> <li>*Recognition of Past Governors</li> </ul> <b>Dinner</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Outgoing Governor's Remarks – Governor Elise</li> <li>*Installation of 2026–2028 Fellowship Board</li> <li>*Installation of 2026–2028 Region Board</li> <li>*Incoming Governor's Address – Governor-elect Jackie</li> </ul>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2026</b>		
<b>7:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Registration Open</b>	<i>Contra Costa Foyer</i>
<b>7:00 a.m.–7:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Deliver Dream Baskets</b>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>
<b>8:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Memorial Service &amp; Region Awards Program</b> (Please be seated by 8:15 a.m.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Call to Order – Governor Elise</li> <li>*"Wind Beneath My Wings" – Laura Middlemiss</li> <li>*Celebration of Service Memorial – Governor Elise &amp; Clubs</li> </ul> <b>Breakfast</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Inspiration – Teri Lynn Sato, District V Director</li> <li>*Welcome &amp; Presentation of Platform Party – Governor Elise</li> </ul> <b>Dream Program Awards Presentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*"S" Club Outstanding Senior Award – "S" Club Chair Dawn Shepherd</li> <li>*Violet Richardson Awards – Governor-elect Jackie</li> <li>*Live Your Dream Awards – Live Your Dream Chair Maida Herbst</li> <li>*Speaker – Past Live Your Dream Award Recipient – Jaelyn Pledger</li> <li>*Dream It, Be It Report – Governor-elect Jackie</li> </ul>	<i>Bishop Ranch Ballroom</i>



# Conference Standing Rules

## 1. Registration

- a) All members must be registered before being admitted to Conference meetings.

## 2. Credentials

- a) The Credentials Committee shall provide identification badges for voting delegates, Soroptimist members, and guests at the time of registration.
- b) Identification badges shall be worn at all times and are not transferable.
- c) Should a delegate be absent or unable to serve, the alternate shall assume the duties of the delegate AFTER qualifying at the registration and credentials desks. These duties shall be retained throughout the Conference.

## 3. Seating

- a) There shall be a designated seating area for delegates.
- b) Attendees shall be seated five minutes before each session convenes.
- c) The doors shall be closed when each session convenes; those awaiting admittance during a session shall be admitted at the discretion of the pages.

## 4. Communications

All communications for those seated at the platform and members of the assembly shall be delivered by an official page.

## 5. Motions

Main motions and amendments shall be written on the official form provided, signed, and sent to the chair by an official page.

## 6. Debate

Debate shall be limited to two minutes for each speaker, five minutes per question, and ten minutes for each article, except when permitted otherwise by the voting assembly by a two-thirds vote. No member may speak more than twice to the same question, except by consent of the voting assembly.

## 7. Decorum

- a) All meetings will be called to order on time.
- b) The Chair shall at all times be addressed as Governor Elise.
- c) A delegate or other member shall rise, address the Chair, and having been recognized, shall state their name and the name of their club distinctly, making use of the microphone provided.
- d) No delegate or officer shall leave the meeting room unless excused by the Chair.
- e) The Chair shall recognize each member desiring the floor in proper order.
- f) Both delegates and non-delegates shall be allowed the privilege of the floor. Precedence shall be accorded to delegates.
- g) Region committee chairs shall be accorded precedence of the floor at the discretion of the Chair, with the consent of the delegates, if they are speaking to an issue affecting their committee, or to an issue proposed by their committee and which was sent with the Call to Conference.
- h) Members should be respectful of those around them and turn off or silence any equipment that would distract from the meeting, including setting cell phones to vibrate and computers to silent during conference sessions.

## 8. Publicity

No discussion or action shall be released for publicity without the approval of the Region Governor.

## 9. Recording Devices

Recording devices (e.g., smartphones, video cameras, audio recorders) shall not be used during the Conference without the written consent of the Region Governor.

Corrections to Standing Rules



# Founder Region Election

## 2026-2028 Nominees



### *Governor-elect*

**Kristal Koga**  
SI/The Marianas



### *Secretary*

**Jan Schults**  
SI/The Delta



### *Treasurer*

**Holly Hayashi**  
SI/Honolulu



### *District I*

**Jennifer Chiarelli**  
SI/Martinez



### *District II*

**Dana Holve**  
SI/Vacaville Twilight



### *District III*

**Nancy Koski**  
SI/Santa Rosa



### *District IV*

**Crystal Arbuthnot**  
SI/The Redwoods



### *District V*

**Lisa Ma**  
SI/Honolulu



### *District V*

**Paulette Williams**  
SI/Waikiki  
Foundation, Inc.



Nominations can still be made from the floor for all Founder Region and Fellowship offices.

Voting will take place during the lunch break on Saturday. Take your delegate credentials to cast your vote in the Pleasanton/Danville Room.

*“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.” — Helen Keller*



# Fellowship Election

2026-2028 Nominees

## *President*

**Tess Albin-Smith**  
SI/Noyo Sunrise



## *President*

**Elise Balgley**  
SI/The Tri-Valley



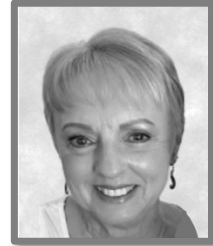
## *President*

**Kay Kelley**  
SI/Rio Vista



## *Treasurer*

**Cara Begley**  
SI/Antioch



## *District I*

**Kenya Broadnax**  
SI/Oakland-The  
Founder Club



## *District I*

**Sue Yeazel**  
SI/El Cerrito



## *District II*

**Debi Schrader**  
SI/Vacaville



## *District III*

**Nancy Weber**  
SI/Novato



## *District IV*

**Loretta Tognoli**  
SI/Ukiah



## *District V*

**Teri Lynn Sato**  
SI/Waikiki  
Foundation, Inc.



*“To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.” — Eleanor Roosevelt*

# Election Results

## FOUNDER REGION BOARD

*Officers & Directors elected for the upcoming 2026-2028 Biennium*

POSITION	NAME
Governor-elect	
Secretary	
Treasurer	
District I Director	
District II Director	
District III Director	
District IV Director	
District V Director	

## FELLOWSHIP BOARD

*Officers & Directors elected for the upcoming 2026-2028 Biennium*

POSITION	NAME
President	
Treasurer	
District I Fellowship Director	
District II Fellowship Director	
District III Fellowship Director	
District IV Fellowship Director	
District V Fellowship Director	

*Thank you, Nominating Committee*

**Chair:** Barbara Lanier **District I:** Bev Gomer **District II:** Karen Jameson  
**District III:** Madalienne Peters **District IV:** Sue Finch  
**District V:** Carmela Rapadas

---

MANDATORY MEETINGS FOR INCOMING BOARDS

Sunday, May 3, 2026 | 12:30 p.m.  
Region Board-Mount Diablo Room, Fellowship Board-Tri-Valley 1

## Fellowship Credentials Reports

Fellowship Credentials Report #1	Fellowship Credentials Report #2
Clubs in Founder Region _____	Clubs in Founder Region _____
Clubs Eligible to Vote _____	Clubs Eligible to Vote _____
Clubs Not in Good Standing _____	Clubs Not in Good Standing _____
Clubs Registered _____	Clubs Registered _____
Total Voting Clubs _____	Total Voting Clubs _____
<b>Delegates Registered:</b>	
Fellowship Officers _____	Fellowship Officers _____
Fellowship Directors _____	Fellowship Directors _____
Region Board Delegates _____	Region Board Delegates _____
Club Delegates _____	Club Delegates _____
Total Delegates _____	Total Delegates _____
Quorum for Opening Session _____	Quorum for Opening Session _____

## Founder Region Credentials Reports

Founder Region Credentials Report #1	Founder Region Credentials Report #2
Clubs in Founder Region _____	Clubs in Founder Region _____
Clubs Eligible to Vote _____	Clubs Eligible to Vote _____
Clubs Not in Good Standing _____	Clubs Not in Good Standing _____
Clubs Registered _____	Clubs Registered _____
Total Voting Clubs _____	Total Voting Clubs _____
<b>Delegates Registered:</b>	
Region Officers _____	Region Officers _____
District Directors _____	District Directors _____
Club Delegates _____	Club Delegates _____
Total Delegates _____	Total Delegates _____
Quorum for Opening Session _____	Quorum for Opening Session _____

Founder Region Credentials Report #3	Founder Region Credentials Report #4
Clubs in Founder Region _____	Clubs in Founder Region _____
Clubs Eligible to Vote _____	Clubs Eligible to Vote _____
Clubs Not in Good Standing _____	Clubs Not in Good Standing _____
Clubs Registered _____	Clubs Registered _____
Total Voting Clubs _____	Total Voting Clubs _____
<b>Delegates Registered:</b>	
Region Officers _____	Region Officers _____
District Directors _____	District Directors _____
Club Delegates _____	Club Delegates _____
Total Delegates _____	Total Delegates _____
Quorum for Opening Session _____	Quorum for Opening Session _____

# Soroptimist Dream Programs

Soroptimist's **Live Your Dream : Education & Training Awards for Women** is a distinctive educational award for women who serve as the primary financial providers for their families. Awards begin at the club level with local recognitions. The clubs then forward their winners for district-level judging. Once district winners are chosen, they are evaluated again to select a Region winner.

On Sunday, four district winners will each receive \$5,000, while the Region winner will receive \$7,000. The awarded funds are provided by the Founder Region and SIA: \$2,000 from the Founder Region and \$3,000 from SIA. The overall Founder Region winner receives \$5,000 funded by Soroptimist International of the Americas and \$2,000 from Founder Region.

The Region winner's application is sent to Soroptimist International of the Americas for consideration at the Federation level, making her eligible for one of three additional \$10,000 awards. Judges for this level are members of the community who are not Soroptimist members.

**Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls** gives girls the tools they need to achieve their education and career goals, empowering them to break cycles of poverty, violence, and abuse. Girls in secondary school are targeted by Dream It, Be It to help them overcome obstacles that may hamper their success. Program topics include achieving goals, overcoming obstacles, moving forward after setbacks, and career opportunities. Program is administered by Soroptimist members in conference-type settings or small groups.

**BIG Goal Accelerator Project** accounts for women and girls being helped at the club level who face obstacles but do not fall under a Live Your Dream Award or served by a Dream It, Be It program. To help reach our goal of empowering 500,000 women and girls by 2031 the women and girls that fall under a BIG Goal Accelerator project can now be counted. This gives a true and accurate representation of the women and girls who Soroptimist has empowered.



## Violet Richardson

**Award** recognizes young women 14 through 18 years old who make the community and world a better place through volunteer efforts. The award was named in honor of Violet Richardson, the first president of the first Soroptimist Club in 1921. The program begins at the club level, with club recipients becoming eligible for district awards. This year Founder Region is presenting a \$500 award to each district winner.



*"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."— Maya Angelou*

# Founder Region Annual Awards

## Julia “Bess” Combs Membership Increase Award



This award is given to the club having the largest net growth in membership during the period from July 1st through March 31st. This net growth is not to include that of a newly chartered Soroptimist club sponsored by a club or region. Net growth is understood to mean increase above and beyond current regular membership minus those who resign or whose membership is terminated for other reasons. This award is presented annually at conference. The winner is determined by the records of the Founder Region Treasurer. The original award was donated by Past Governor, Southwestern Region, Julia “Bess” Combs.

## “S” Club Outstanding Senior Award



This award is used for the sole purpose of honoring outstanding high school senior members of “S” Clubs in Founder Region. Applications for this award are submitted by “S” Club members with the selection of the winners to be made by the “S” Club committee. The region board determines the dollar amount and number of awards given. All contributions to this fund received by the region treasurer shall be added to the principal. The chair of the region “S” Club committee announces the winner(s) at region conference.

## Founder Region Fellowship – Fellowship/Grants in Aid



Founder Region Fellowship is a non-profit, incorporated entity within Founder Region Soroptimist International of the Americas. The board consists of an elected President, Treasurer & Directors, one from each district in the region. Fellowships and grants in aid, (totaling not less than \$20,000) are awarded each year to graduate women in the last phase of their studies at a university offering a doctoral degree, within the boundaries of Founder Region. This program is the Founder Region's identifying project and is administered through Founder Region Fellowship, Inc.



In Founder Region where the dream took root,  
Where we gathered, voices resolute,  
Soroptimist answered duty's call,  
Best for Women the heart of all.  
The rewards of membership run deep and true,  
A network of Soroptimists to see you through,  
Mentors who guide you, champions by your side,  
A community of leaders, purpose wide.



# 2026 Fellowship Recipients Congratulations!



<p><b>Brzanna Bullard</b> UC Berkeley Clinical Psychology</p>	<p><b>Arianna Bunnell</b> UH Mānoa Computer Science</p>
<p>SI/East Bay, Cathy Jastram Award <b>Sara Stone</b> UC Berkeley Educational Leadership</p>	<p><b>Kuulzianuhēa Awo-Chun</b> UH Mānoa Education</p>
<p><b>Johanna Reyes Ortega</b> UC Berkeley Political Science</p>	<p><b>Allie Hall</b> UH Mānoa Fungal Ecology</p>
<p><b>Lezi (Joy) Zhou</b> UC Berkeley Social Work/Social Welfare</p>	<p><b>Josefa (Sefa) Muñoz</b> UH Mānoa Marine Biology</p>








“Solving Puzzles by Degrees!”

*“The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just, and peaceful life for all.” – Aung San Suu Kyi*



# Live Your Dream Awards

<p>District I 24-680 (Walnut Creek)</p>		<p><b>Erica Harris</b></p> <p>Erica has been accepted into an accelerated LPN program, with plans to continue on to a BSN program, and become a Registered Nurse. She ultimately wants to earn an MSN specializing in women's health and neonatal care.</p>
<p>District II SI/Vallejo</p>		<p><b>Dallas</b> (last name withheld)</p> <p>Dallas' goal is to become a Diagnostic Sonographer who leads with both skill and compassion. Having witnessed how vulnerable patients and families feel during medical uncertainty, she is committed to being a practitioner who communicates openly, listens carefully, and ensures no one ever feels alone.</p>
<p>District III SI/Napa</p>		<p><b>Ashley Hall</b></p> <p>Ashley is pursuing a degree in Sociology. Her goal is to become an LCSW serving underserved families affected by addiction and trauma. Having witnessed both the devastation these challenges cause and the power of empathy and long-term support she is driven to help others find their path to healing.</p>
<p>District IV SI/Noyo Sunrise</p>		<p><b>Rosella Moon</b></p> <p>Rosella recently completed both her A.A. and A.S. degrees and will continue her education at Cal Poly Humboldt in fall 2026, majoring in Social Work. A proud member of the Hoopa Valley Tribe, she is committed to giving back to her community by pursuing a career as a Tribal Indian Child Welfare worker.</p>
<p>District V SI/Waikiki Foundation, Inc.</p>		<p><b>Juana</b> (last name withheld)</p> <p>Juana is in her second year of an associate's degree program, building a strong foundation in accounting that she plans to expand upon at an affiliated university where she'll complete her bachelor's degree. These skills will be instrumental in growing her business.</p>

*“The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just, and peaceful life for all.” — Aung San Suu Kyi*

# Violet Richardson Awards

**District I  
SI/Oakland-The  
Founder Club**



**Emily Ng**

Emily volunteered her time with Scientific Adventures for Girls and pursued a \$4000 grant from the city entitled “STEM the Gap” to extend STEM for girls outside of classes, creating take-home science kits so every girl, regardless of if they could attend classes or not, was able to partake in STEM.

**District II  
SI/The Delta**



**Hansini Tirumalashetty**

Hansini helped build a tutoring program called Project Diksuchi for rural and low-income students in Telangana. She learned how education can shape a girl’s future.

**District III  
SI/Napa**



**Gracianna DeFina**

Gracie first heard of Shoes For Orphan Souls in kindergarten, and even at that young age wanted to help. What began as a simple idea quickly turned into a project that would shape the next twelve years of her life. She created the Annual Shoe Drive & Cocoa Stand, which has now donated 2,679 pairs of new shoes.

**District IV  
SI/Crescent City**



**Bliss Blackburn**

A Girl Scout since first grade, Bliss has achieved the highest level-Ambassador. She created a National Girl and Women in Sports Day as her Gold project. Her goal was to educate the young women on the benefits of sports and to encourage them to participate for a healthy lifestyle, among other benefits.

**District V  
SI/Maui**



**Alizay Rose Angel**

Volunteers for the Maui High School Girls Can STEM program. She has learned when girls pursue STEM careers and become the mentors the next generation needs, that chain of empowerment will transform the community far beyond what any single science experiment could achieve.

## “S” Club Outstanding Senior Award



**Alyssa Boham - SI/Humboldt Bay**

Alyssa is a senior at St. Bernard’s Academy. She plans to attend Oregon State Institute of technology and get a degree in Diagnostic Medical Sonography.

# 50 Years of Amazing Leadership Celebrating our Past Governors



Vicki Ham, 2022-2024, *"BEE the Dream!"*

Kris Chorbi, 2020-2022, *"Dream BIG for the Future!"*

Sylvia Crafton, 2018-2020, *"Empowering Change"*

Pam Parker, 2016-2018, *"Soroptimists Are Shining Stars"*

Bobbi Enderlin, 2014-2016, *"Share the JOY of Soroptimist"*

Dona Gaddis Wolf, 2012-2014, *"Share the Light of Soroptimist Service"*

Linda Sue Hansen\*, 2010-2012, *"Just Imagine..."*

Amelia Benko, 2008-2010, *"Making a Difference Matters"*

Sue Finch, 2006-2008, *"Creating Magic Through Soroptimist Service"*

Cathy Mitchell, 2004-2006, *"Together We Can"*

Mary Ann Redden, 2002-2004, *"Achieve Growth By Sharing"*

Carol Rose, 2000-2002, *"Soroptimists Soar Into The New Century"*

Linda McDoniels, 1998-2000, *"Making a Difference Together"*

Nancy Walker, 1996-1998, *"Inward Journey-Outward Paths"*

Patti Cross\*, 1994-1996, *"Reach for Soroptimist Rainbows"*

Dorothy L. Avilla\*, 1992-1994, *"Leading the Way"*

Lorraine Komor\*, 1990-1992, *"Celebration of Soroptimist"*

Susan Joyce\*, 1988-1990, *"We Are One in Service Spirit"*

Carol Steele, 1986-1988, *"Dreams of Soroptimism"*

Del Nickerson, 1984-1986, *"Images of Soroptimism"*

Patricia D. Daniels\*, 1982-1984, *"Gifts of Soroptimism"*

Marjorie T. Conley\*, 1980-1982, *"Windows"*

Catherine M. Burns\*, 1978-1980, *"Let Us Grow"*

Violet B. Unland\*, 1976-1978, *"Beat of the Drum Calls Us to Service"*

Margaret "Maggie" Knott\*, 1974-1976, *"Onward and Upward"* Southwestern Region, SIA

\*deceased

*"Leadership is about turning challenges into opportunities."*— Carly Fiorina



# *A Rich History of Leadership*

The first Soroptimist Club in the world was chartered on the evening of October 3, 1921, in the West room of the Hotel Oakland. The club was initially called the Soroptimist Club of Alameda County, with Violet Richardson as the charter president. However, the name was later changed to the Soroptimist Club of Oakland. Later the club was renamed again to recognize its role as the first club of Soroptimist and was renamed in 1928 **Soroptimist International of Oakland-The Founder Club**.

Since the very beginning Founder Region has had a rich legacy of leadership. Past Governors listed in our Conference Program have gone on to serve in elected Federation and International offices.

## **Mary Gianotti**

Federation Vice President 1972–1974

## **Catherine M. Burns**

Federation Vice President 1980–1982

## **Marjorie T. Conley**

Foundation (Fundraising Council) Director,  
1982–1984

Federation Treasurer, 1984–1988

Foundation (Fundraising Council) Treasurer,  
1988–1992

## **Patricia D. Daniels\***

Federation Vice President, 1984–1986

Federation President-elect, 1986–1988

Federation President, 1988–1990

Federation Past President, 1990–1992

International President-elect, 1993–1995

International President, 1995–1997

International Past President, 1997–1998

## **Del Nickerson\***

Foundation (Fundraising Council) Director,  
1990–1992

Foundation (Fundraising Council) President,  
1992–1994

Federation Director, 1994–1996

Federation President, 1996–1997

## **Nancy Walker**

Federation Director, 1999–2000

Federation Secretary/Treasurer, 2000–2001

Federation President-elect, 2001–2002

Federation President, 2002–2003

## **Carol Rose**

Federation Director 2003–2005

## **Linda McDoniels**

Fund Development Council (Fundraising Council)  
Member, 2004–2006

Fund Development Council (Fundraising Council)  
Chair, 2006–2007 & 2007–2008

## **Cathy Mitchell**

Federation Director 2007–2009

## **Dona Gaddis Wolf**

Federation Director, 2015–2017

Fundraising Council Member, 2018–2020

Dream Big Campaign Ambassador

Fundraising Council Nominating Chairperson,  
2022–2023

## **Bobbi Enderlin**

Federation Secretary/Treasurer, 2021–2022

Federation President-elect, 2022–2023

Federation President, 2023–2024

SIA Voting Representative (SI Director) on the  
Soroptimist International Board 2025-2026

---

\*In 1996, as Soroptimist celebrated its 75th Anniversary, Founder Region was proudly represented with Patsy Daniels serving as the Soroptimist International President and Del Nickerson serving as the Soroptimist International of the Americas President. We encourage you to learn more by visiting the region website, where valuable information compiled by Past Governor Susan Joyce awaits.

# “Celebration of Service” Memorial



**Judi Parent-Smith**  
**SI/Antioch**  
**33 Year Member**



**Brooke Bovo**  
**SI/Benicia**  
**10 Year Member**



**Patricia A. Butler**  
**SI/Benicia**  
**15 Year Member**



**Carla Gallagher Schaefer**  
**SI/Benicia**  
**32 Year Member**



**Beverly Hood**  
**SI/Eureka**  
**34 Year Member**



**Colleen Ganage**  
**SI/Sonoma Valley**  
**42 Year Member**



**Alice Strand**  
**SI/Sonoma Valley**  
**30 Year Member**



**Janet Lockhart**  
**SI/The Tri-Valley**  
**20 Year Member**

*“What we have once enjoyed, we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.” —Helen Keller*

# “Celebration of Service” Memorial



**Rose Foster**  
**SI/Ukiah**  
**57 Year Member**



**Buff Fleming**  
**SI/Vacaville**  
**34 Year Member**



**Priscilla Andrzejew**  
**SI/Vallejo**  
**1 Year Member**



**Belva Gibson**  
**SI/Vallejo**  
**57 Year Member**



**Honor Melhatten**  
**SI/Vallejo**  
**28 Year Member**

*in  
loving  
memory*

## A Legacy of Service

They came together under the Soroptimist name and found something they didn't expect friendships as lasting as the work itself.

Through countless fundraisers and years of hard-won effort, they made dreams come true, turning a woman's hope into something she could hold.

They showed up season after season, touching lives they may never have known they changed, leaving fingerprints of kindness on futures they would never see.

Their legacy is not behind us, it is the ground beneath our feet, and the friends still standing beside us.

# Redwood Memorial Grove



You are invited to join the Founder Region Board,  
**SI/Arcata, SI/Crescent City, and SI/Eureka** for brunch on  
**Sunday, June 14, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.**  
at Elk Prairie Picnic Area, Prairie Creek State Park.  
Following the brunch, we will convene for a Memorial Service  
at the Campfire Center at noon.

After the service be sure and drive to the Soroptimist Grove to see the  
Redwood tree dedicated to **Violet Richardson Ward** and the Granite Marker.  
Prairie Creek State Park is north of Orick, California on the Newton B. Drury Scenic Highway.

## Convenient Hotels

Holiday Inn Express & Casino 797-482-1777

Requa Inn Bed & Breakfast 707-482-1425

The Board will be staying at the

Red Lion Hotel in Eureka 707-445-0844

*The grove is only 45 minutes away from Eureka.*



No marble arch was carved in Violet's honor, no gilded hall engraved with her name, but in the deep shade of Prairie Creek's old forest, a tall, stately redwood rose to her fame.

Dedicated almost fifty years after that Oakland charter night, the tree stood witness as Soroptimists gathered beneath the filtered green and amber light.

And at its base, a granite marker resting, cool and solid, flecked with ancient stone, holding names who have passed on, a testament that no one stands alone.

The granite does not yield to fog or rainfall. It keeps its vigil through the turning years, as Violet's tree grows taller in the canopy, far above the ferns and morning tears.

# Leadership Training

## **Saturday, June 6, 2026**

Registration 8:30 a.m.

Meeting 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

Concord Senior Center

2727 Parkside Circle

Concord, CA

## **Saturday, June 13, 2026**

Registration 1:00 p.m.

Meeting 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Red Lion Hotel

1929 4<sup>th</sup> Street

Eureka, CA

## **Friday, June 26**

6:00 p.m. HST

Saturday, June 27

2:00 p.m. ChST

## **Zoom**

District V members will also have an in-person option in October after District Meeting

## **Sunday, Oct 18, 2026**

Registration 8:30 a.m.

Meeting 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon

Sacred Hearts Academy

3253 Waiialae Ave.

Honolulu, HI

# District Meetings

## **District I & District II**

Saturday, October 3, 2026

Host Clubs:

SI/Benicia & SI/Antioch

Concord Senior Center

2727 Parkside Circle

Concord, CA

## **District III & IV**

Saturday, October 10, 2026

Host Clubs:

SI/Oakmont Wine Country &

SI/Crescent City

Wyndham Garden

101 Coyote Valley Blvd.

Redwood Valley, CA

## **District V**

Saturday, October 17, 2026

Host Clubs:

SI/Central Oahu & SI/Honolulu

Sacred Hearts Academy

3253 Waiialae Ave.

Honolulu, HI

Registration Forms can be found on the Resource Page of the Founder Region Website

# Thank You, Sponsors!



HAPPY 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
FOUNDERS REGION OF THE  
SROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL  
OF THE AMERICAS FEDERATION

WITH BEST WISHES FROM YOUR SECRETARY/  
TREASURER OF THE SIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
2025-2026

*Congratulations on 50 years!*

“EDUCATION IS NOT PREPARATION  
FOR LIFE; EDUCATION IS LIFE ITSELF.”

– JOHN DEWEY

*2026-2028*

*Empowering Through Education*

*Joy Swank & Jackie De Vries*



Thank you for joining  
us as we celebrated our  
50th



I pledge allegiance to Soroptimist  
and to the ideals for which it stands.

The Sincerity of Friendship,  
The Joy of Achievement,  
The Dignity of Service,  
The Integrity of Profession,  
The Love of Country.

I will put forth my greatest effort  
to Promote, Uphold, and Defend these  
Ideals, for a Larger Fellowship in Home,  
in Society, In Business,  
for Country and for God.