

The Pointer

Soroptimist International of Grosse Pointe
September 2023



President-Elect's Message

We're back from DUBLIN, IRELAND!

The five of us have returned home from Ireland after attending the SI Convention and going on a tour. Please check out the feedback from those attending on pages 5-8.

"Your task is not to foresee the future, but to enable it!" — Antoine de Saint-Exupry

Think about how we Soroptimists reach out, enable, and provide women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. WE do it, YOU do it right now in our little corner of the world!



All the women pictured above (except one) are members of the Soroptimist USA's Midwestern Region. In the front standing at right is SI President Maureen Maguire. They stopped for a moment during the SI Convention in Dublin, Ireland, to have this photo taken.

Things of NOTE:

- Guest speaker Diane Thompson, chairwomen of the Dream Big campaign, told us the importance of fundraising initiatives. (See p. 3)
- Four of our members represented our club at the August 23, Ford Estate Nonprofit Fair, reaching out to the public and other nonprofits—20 in all! (See p. 10)
- SIGP's proposed budget will be presented to the membership after the board has approved it.
- SIGP's Internal Review Meeting (review of financial books) is scheduled for September 11.

A sincere thank you to the three Soroptimist members who have been asked by Karrie Blankenship to complete the Internal Review and have accepted the responsibility.

Looking forward to seeing you at our next Business Meeting at Fishbones on September 13!

— Bette Lepouttre, SIGP President-Elect

A very clean mini-fundraiser: Norwex

Shop online from September 17-19!

Would you like to have a healthier home and eliminate toxic and wasteful things from the environment?

Well, Soroptimist International of Grosse Pointe has a very clean fundraiser for you and your family! We are offering NORWEX products for sale with a 25% profit to SIGP. Profits will be deposited in our Service Project account to be used for our club's Awards and Programs that support women and girls.

SIGP members Kerri Green and Roseanne Horne love Norwex items because they are so environmentally friendly. The microfiber towels and washcloths require no soap or cleaning solutions to clean your windows, floors, even you and your family! Just water! And no waste! Just rinse and reuse!

The list of items goes on. There are sandwich bags and food storage bags that can be rinsed and reused to cut down on wasteful plastic bags.

Norwex has skin care products, laundry care products and more. Visit the Norwex website for details.



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 **SOROPTIMIST**®
Investing in Dreams

The SIGP sale will run online from September 17-19. Catalogs will also be available at the September 13, General Meeting at Fishbones. Be sure to tell your family and friends and share on Facebook. The more we sell the more money we will raise for our awards and programs. Products will be shipped directly to your home.

Contact Roseanne Horne with any questions you may have at 313-706-1801.

SIA “Dream Big” Chair speaks at our general meeting

At the August business meeting, Diane Thompson was our guest speaker. She is a 42-year Soroptimist member and chair of the **DREAM BIG Campaign**. This member-led, member-driven campaign was created to raise money so that Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) members and clubs can achieve the **2021-2031 Big Goal of reaching 500,000 girls and women by 2031!**

According to Diane, for Soroptimist to continue to be a dynamic global service organization dedicated to helping women through education, Soroptimist needs to grow its resources. And how to do that? Through updated technology that will enhance gathering information from member and award winner databases. This will enable Soroptimist clubs to apply for larger grants through corporations and other venues.

Even though the **DREAM BIG Campaign** officially ended on August 31, you can continue to donate online at soroptimist.org or you can mail your check to:

Soroptimist Headquarters/ Dream Big Campaign
1709 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-6103

P.S. If you are age 72 or older you can send a charity donation from your IRA thus reducing the taxes on your Required Minimum Distribution.

Our potluck picnic at Shores Park

Thank you to all 17 SIGP members who attended the very casual August 9, business meeting at Grosse Pointe Shores Park. We were not only impressed by our speaker Diane Thompson, pictured above, but also with all the Soroptimist pins she wore.

Special thanks to all who brought food to share—such a delicious variety and such a beautiful evening. We could not have asked for a more perfect get-together.



The green table decorations at left, along with a basket filled with things from Ireland, was brought to the potluck by Roseanne Horne. She and four other SIGP members had just returned from Ireland. See next pages for details.

2023 Soroptimist International Convention in Dublin, Ireland



SIGP members who represented our club are from left to right: Mary Ellen Burke, David and Mary Bryk, Karrie Blankenship, Roseanne Horne, and Bette Lepouttre. (Note: David is not a member but he'd be a good addition!)

See POSTCARDS from SI Convention on next pages!

September Business Meeting

Wednesday, September 13, at Fishbones, St. Clair Shores, 6:30 p.m.
Come around 6ish to get settled in and chat a bit.

Postcards from SI Convention in Ireland

KARRIE BLANKENSHIP:

As a first-time attendee at an international convention, I found it very enlightening and exciting to meet like-minded women from all over the world. With a network of 66,000 members in 120 countries, 1,700 Soroptimists attended the convention, representing 64 of the 120 countries.

As the ambassador for our club's poster, "2021: Insights on Human Trafficking," I made contacts with five women: two from Germany, two from Switzerland and one from Denmark,

all of whom were interested in our

fight against human trafficking. Most of the women who stopped to ask questions were surprised that the United States has a human trafficking problem and that our region is working to eradicate this horrific enterprise.

In addition, U.S. clubs have been working on other initiatives such as Kenton/Harding, Ohio's poster on "Dignity Bags for Improving the Lives of Girls by Reducing Period Poverty," and "Dream Casters" presented by Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



Hall of posters. Our club's poster is shown below.



As you can see from the front page of this newsletter, the Mid-western Region was well-represented at the convention.

Being in the company of women working toward the same goals of equality and empowerment was encouraging. I highly suggest attending a convention. The next convention is Soroptimist International of the America's Federation and is in Bellevue, WA, USA, July 24-27, 2024.

Whether you attend an international, federation, or a regional conference/convention, you will learn that the extent of the reach of Soroptimists goes well beyond our neighborhoods and communities. It is truly inspiring. The proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," rings true when you know 66,000 women from around the world are advocating for education, poverty prevention, and human rights for all women regardless of where they live.

P.S. Congratulations to Fond du Lac and Kenton/Harding County who also had posters displayed.

BETTE LEPOUTTRE:

This also was my first Soroptimist International Convention and WOW! I was truly impressed with the conference, the speakers, the overall fact that I AM part of this international entity.

This experience made me realize that although I belong to just a small component of change, I play a part in something much bigger!

If you read Mary Bryk's article (p. 8), I second the overall impact that our Soroptimist women are doing within the United Nations and their strong voice for women. I also admit I was a little emotional when the Federation Flags were carried in.

We should be proud of what SIGP does! As a club, never forget our impact making sure women and girls reach their potential and invest in dreams!



MARY ELLEN BURKE:

Women Leaders Must Step Up and Lead as Never Before

Mary Robinson,* President of Ireland (1990-1997), was the first keynote speaker at this year's SI Convention in Dublin. Her focus was on women taking the lead in handling this planet's current crisis—climate change. As you are aware, we are heading for a catastrophe which requires clean energy for a safe world. Cleaner, safer energy sources include solar, wind, water, and waves. We need to transition as quickly as possible to these sources instead of depending upon fossil fuels. We must live in harmony in nature and practice the following: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

A farming project, called Project Dandelion, is happening on all seven continents. Dandelions are resilient plants that regenerate the soil, and are an edible herb that provides protein, calcium, iron, potassium, and vitamins A and C. She called out to women to become a "Dandelioness" and take climate change personal to make a difference. Women must consider promoting climate change as their duty to their community. She ended her speech challenging us: "Don't Rock the Cradle, Rock the System."

**Mary Robinson also served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002) and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 from former President Barack Obama.*



MARY ELLEN BURKE:

Women, Peace and Cyber Security: Securing Our Future

Renata Dwan* gave an update on current conflicts in our world and how they affect women. Currently, violence against women has risen 28%. More women die in Mexico than Afghanistan. Major wars between countries have become common. Women leaders are subject to increased violence.

Women are being challenged to change the future by creating a WPS (Women, Peace, Security) action plan. New security risks for women, especially through the Internet, need to be addressed. Programs, including mentoring and internships, need to be increased to accelerate more women political leaders. Currently less than 1% of women live in a place with gender equity.

To curtail violence against women, both women and men leaders need to focus on providing protection for women and educating men to take women seriously. Countries must work on eliminating violence against women, not just fighting terrorism. Artificial Intelligence based on data needs women's perspectives. Soroptimists can engage in promoting change through the United Nations Gender Equity Forums. Renata Dwan ended her speech with the following quote by John Lennon, "Give Peace A Chance."

**Renata Dwan, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (2018-2020), served at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, EastWest Institute Security Program, and Special Advisor to the European Union Council Secretariat.*



Cliffs of Moher.
Photo by Roseanne Horne.

ROSEANNE HORNE:

Going to Ireland for the Soroptimist International Convention was the highlight of my summer.

I was able to do some sightseeing outside of Dublin with family prior to the convention and reconnect with family members we have living in Ireland. They were so warm and welcoming. We had a great time.

The convention was wonderful as well. It was so amazing to see women from all around the world gathered together to promote our mission, "Educate, Empower and Enable." I enjoyed listening to all the speakers, well maybe not the veterinarian so much, but the rest of the speakers gave very enlightening and interesting talks on key topics related to women's rights of equality, education, health and well-being to name a few.

My favorite speaker was Mary Robinson, the first woman President of Ireland. She was in office from 1990 to 1997. She was also a former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Chair for the Elders, and



Postcards (continued on next page)

Postcards from Ireland *(continued)*



is a passionate advocate for gender equality, women's participation in peace-building and human dignity as well as climate justice. What struck me most about this very educated and important individual (see photo at left) was that she had no bodyguard, secret service or even a driver. Mary Robinson left the convention center by herself after one of the Soroptimist from Dublin hailed her a cab! Seriously, I witnessed it myself and when I said I thought this was alarming, those around me from Ireland said, "Everyone loves her, no one would want to do her harm." Wow, we could learn something from that here in America!

Even if you cannot attend an international convention or even a Soroptimist of the Americas Convention, members should try to attend our Spring Conference. We can learn so much from each other and get inspired to do more when we see what a collective impact we can make together!

MARY BRYK:

For those of you who have never participated in Soroptimist District, Regional, or International conferences, I encourage you to try to attend. It will make you proud of what our club is doing locally and the impact we are making for women and children.

Attending the International Conference opened my eyes into how our organization is advocating for women around the world, both at a local level and by our representation internationally in the United Nations. Our voices matter as we push for women to have better opportunities, equal pay, and equal status.

In the opening ceremony, each of the 64 countries represented were announced to a round of applause. Surrounded by 1,700 women, I was overwhelmed and proud to be a Soroptimist.

One of the keynote speakers was Nicole Ameline, chair of the United Nations Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDW). Her presentation was titled "Stand Up for Human Rights." Nicole spoke about how women's rights are diminishing worldwide, especially in Afghanistan, where women are not allowed to appear in public without a male escort. Women who are widowed may not have any source of income and are unable to shop for food for their families. While this information is extremely disturbing, she spoke about the work being done to call out this oppression by speaking on the need for women in many sectors of society.

Our representatives at the seven United Nations around the world have the opportunity to speak with heads of state. They help form UN policies and Statement Papers. They are a strong voice for women. There are seven cities where nine women are serving: New York, Geneva, Paris, Vienna, Rome, Nairobi, and Bangkok.

To you, Soroptimist International of Grosse Pointe Members: Be proud of the work our club is doing and know it has a lasting ripple effect for women everywhere.



Mary's husband David also flew to Ireland.

INTRODUCING...

Seasonal Suppers

Let's 'break bread' together!!!

Inviting *all members* for a supper meal during each season of the coming year beginning this fall!

And to make it extra meaningful, members will be encouraged to bring an article or current information focused on women. It doesn't have to be lengthy—it might be something you read online, or a bill in the Michigan State Legislature or in Congress, or a book about a woman—something to share, etc., etc., etc.!

Let me know who is interested, and we will select a date and a place and announce it to the club! I will send around a sign-up at the business meeting this September 13, or you can text or email me now. Hop on board this initiative to enjoy a meal together, get to know new Soroptimist members and expand your awareness of women's issues and women in the world!

Diana Langlois, Membership Chair, 313-690-1515, diana.langlois67@comcast.net



Happy September Birthday to ...



Queen Anne's Lace

Maureen Anthony, September 3

Kathy DiCenzo, September 17

Geri Pleva, September 17

Hiromi Sano, September 17

Laurie Jost, September 20

Lillian Frazier, September 23



YES! SIGP CONTINUES TO RETURN BOTTLES AND CANS

Avoid the bottle-return line

Avoid the sticky-icky chore of returning bottles & cans

Donate your returnable cans and bottles to support Soroptimist International of Grosse Pointe

Proceeds go to Programs and Educational Awards for Women in need

Drop off donations at either address below:

Nancy Solak, 458 Cloverly, Grosse Pointe Farms

Roseanne Horne at 1247 Elford, Grosse Pointe Woods

To date, we've made \$11,229.10!

<https://www.grossepointesoroptimist.net/>

Ford Estate hosts its first Nonprofit Fair



Photo by Mark D. Cory, who was representing GP Rotary International at the Nonprofit Fair.

On August 23, the Edsel & Eleanor Ford Estate hosted its first Nonprofit Fair. Twenty organizations had tables set up to let people know what nonprofits do to enhance our community.

Four SIGP members represented our club. From left to right are Mary Ellen Burke, Mary Bryk, Nancy Solak and Diana Langlois.

They connected with people who might want to join SIGP, distributed handouts about our Live Your Dream and Virginia Wagner Educational awards, and met with one group who came specifically to consider who they might want to donate to!

Special thanks to Mary who brought all our club's paraphernalia into the Visitor's Center.

Living in Ghana

Yes, September is upon us and our seven girls at St. Anne in Damongo, northern Ghana, will soon be back to their studies. Some students come from small villages and settlements where life is simple, ever so simple.

At St. Anne they will enjoy clean uniforms and three square meals a day, which is not necessarily the case in their homes. Life here in Grosse Pointe and the neighboring area is a universe away from life in Damongo.



National flower of Ghana, the Impala Lily

It is not only the big things such as illiteracy and lack of electricity that make life challenging over there. It is a million little things. There may not be enough toilet paper—or even a toilet. Drinking water, even if clean, is warm, and it is 95 degrees outside. A family may have a cell phone. The father needs to call the market to see if the buyer for his produce will be there. He is out of minutes and has no money to buy more.

When I taught in Damongo, most of my students had never tasted chocolate. It was, and continues to be, too expensive. Ironically, cocoa is the number-one product of the country.

The girls may visit a market where a multitude of items call out to them. But new clothing, jewelry and household items are not meant for them. They have little money.

My godchild, 14, is getting a \$500 PlayStation for his birthday. He says all the other kids have one.

A recent visit with a priest from Damongo turned into an interesting conversation. He is doing mission appeals at local churches. One man came up and asked if there were pets in Damongo. The priest responded that people are hungry and a pet may end up in a soup pot. They do not understand why we pay \$130 for a visit to the vet for Fluffy, almost two months wages for a laborer in northern Ghana.

Life goes on. We at SIGP are giving a beautiful gift to our students in Damongo: Education offers a steppingstone to a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities. They are thankful to us, not just for our support but also for the fact that we are in some way walking with them on their journey. The support we offer is a blessing to us all. — *Carol Hofer, SIGP Liaison to Damongo, Ghana*

Dear Ones...

Last September a number of SIGP members attended the Siena Literacy Center Gala, and we enjoyed a beautiful evening.

The Gala is being repeated this year on Thursday, September 7, starting at 6 pm, and there is interest in attending again. You may remember that two years ago, our club awarded Siena Literacy Center our Ruby Award.

The evening includes a lovely buffet dinner, views of the water, a cash bar, raffle, and silent auction. Here are additional details if you would like to join us.

Siena Literacy Center 2023 Gala
Bayview Yacht Club, 100 Clairpointe, Detroit, MI 48215
<http://www.sienaliteracy.org/gala>

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The name Soroptimist was
coined from the Latin
soror, meaning sister, and
optimus, meaning best.
Soroptimist is perhaps best
interpreted as
“best for women.”

Infinity cruise was a **BIG SUCCESS!**

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IN-KIND DONATIONS

Grosse Pointe News
Infinity—Ovation Yacht Charter

HONORABLE MENTION

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Next SI Convention will be an Alaskan Cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean! <https://siconvention.org>

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We hope you are just as excited as we are about our [48th Biennial Convention](#) being held in Bellevue, Washington, USA, July 24-27, 2024! — SIA Board

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Soroptimist Websites

Grosse Pointe Soroptimist: <https://www.grossepointesoroptimist.org/>
Soroptimist International Midwestern Region <https://simwr.org>
Soroptimist International of the Americas <https://simwr.org>
Soroptimist International <https://soroptimistinternational.org>

Soroptimist Pledge

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,
and 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.



SIGP's PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEES

WEBSITE: grossepointesoroptimist.net Lori Schumann
or <https://www.grossepointesoroptimist.net/sigp-calendar-.html> for calendar

Submit photos, club information, news, upcoming events, and dates to this email
so the information can be accessed by all public awareness chairs:

EMAIL: grossepointesoroptimist@gmail.com Nancy Solak

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS:

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/soroptimistgrossepointe Geri Pleva
INSTAGRAM: soroptimistgp Geri Pleva

NEWSLETTER & MEDIA: *The Pointer*

is on the club's website and is emailed to each member.

Deadline for photos and articles is the 28th of each month Nancy Solak