

Soroptimist

The History of Soroptimist International of Long Beach



September, 2014



Soroptimist International of Long Beach

BEST
for Women

Our History

September, 2014

In the fall of 1923, Helena Gamble, an organizer for Stuart Morrow (Mr. Morrow began the very first Soroptimist club in 1921) came to Long Beach. With an eye to starting a club in Long Beach, Helena Gamble stressed, "It would be wise to follow the guidelines for selecting members, as this club is a wee bit different from other clubs." Soroptimist International of Long Beach (SILB) was chartered on March 24, 1924, with 48 members at the old Virginia Hotel. Helena Gamble was installing officer and Florence Wightman, took the gavel as the first president. It was the 7th club chartered in the world between London, England and Paris, France.

By 1925, the Long Beach club had their first service project: Rockhaven House. Known as a "preventorium," it provided a home and educational facility for girls aged 4 – 16, who had tuberculosis or were undernourished or ill and unable to attend regular school. The school board leased to the club a house for one dollar per year and provided a teacher. Later, the Exchange Club and the Sciots

Club became partners with SILB in the enterprise. When the American Federation of Soroptimists (the original name of Soroptimist of the Americas) held their convention in Philadelphia, our delegates were honored for the Rockhaven House project.

By 1933, the Depression resulted in withdrawal of support by the Exchange and Sciots Clubs and Soroptimist had to go it alone. As well, more bad luck came on March 10, 1933 when the major earthquake that hit Long Beach badly damaged Rockhaven, forcing its closure. As the news spread, our club received letters, telegrams and even money from Soroptimist clubs around the world, one from as far away as Milan, Italy. With Rockhaven closing, three girls were sent to a San Diego sanitarium with four girls being released to their families. When the "preventorium" closed, the Rockhaven Foundation was established to provide funds for medically needy children. The facility had given eight years of service to one hundred fourteen children at a cost of approximately \$45,000.

In the 1940s, Soroptimist International of Long Beach moved into real estate, buying a home in Bellflower for a mother with seven children. She eventually was able to purchase the home from the club. Another home was purchased for a family receiving state aid. When the children were grown, the house was sold with \$6,000 from the sale placed in the club's service fund. A club member gave the club a four-family flat in 1949 which was moved to a new location and remodeled. Families who were recommended by welfare agencies were able to use it. It was later sold for \$1,238.

Soroptimist International of Long Beach's next major project was to build and furnish a house to serve as a meeting place for students on the campus of Long Beach State College (now California State University, Long Beach). After its completion, the club presented it as an outright gift to the Associated Student Body. The original cost was about \$18,000. In 1961, the club added a 650 sq. ft. addition at a cost of \$9,000. It was named Soroptimist House and is still being actively used for receptions, meetings, teas, concerts and weddings. Soroptimist International of Long Beach continues to support and encourage its upgrading to this day.

The establishment of Meals on Wheels of Long Beach (MOW LB) was our next major goal, with it becoming a reality in 1971. The club supported MOW LB exclusively until it was incorporated in 1974 and became independent with its own board of directors and funding from grants and private donations. SILB invited an initial amount of \$19,000 in equipment for its first kitchen and continues to support MOW LB annually with the proceeds from its assorted fund raisers.

Women Helping Women

In 1981, SILB began recognizing women in the community who had made outstanding efforts to help other women with its “Women Helping Women Award”. The first of these awards was given to Beverly O’Neill, Ed.D. who went on to be one of ten women who were honored by Federation. She was later elected to serve three terms as Mayor of Long Beach.



This award program continued as an “in-house” activity until 1994, when SILB began inviting the community at large to attend its annual “Women Who Make a Difference” Awards Luncheons. It continues to be an exceptional community event, attended by hundreds of people, spotlighting the organization and raising money for the club’s projects.

The “Soroptimist Hall of Fame” began in 1984 to honor club members who have made significant contributions to SILB and who exemplify the ideals of Soroptimism.

“Shopping with Soroptimists” is a project of SILB for women who are entering or re-entering the workforce who need guidance and assistance with wardrobe, hair, and make-up. The club has worked with consignment shops and currently with Working Wardrobes to outfit women for work. The program has helped more than 150 women as of this writing (2014).

In addition, SILB provides scholarships and awards for

young people volunteering in the community, donates books to skilled nursing facilities and donates biographies of successful women to assorted agencies in Long Beach. The club supports other local charities and Soroptimist projects that are national and international in scope. In 2001 alone, SILB contributed over \$23,000 to community service projects.

Soroptimist International of Long Beach has chartered four Soroptimist clubs: Laguna Beach in 1948, Lakewood-Long Beach in 1955, Los Alamitos in 1971 and Westminster in 1977. A Venture Club was organized in 1944 but because of work schedules of the young women who were then very involved in the war effort, it was disbanded after one year. SILB has developed Friendship Links with SI of Ellsmere Port, England; SI Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines, and SI Mie-Iris in Japan.

Many of SILB’s outstanding members have served at District, Regional and Federation levels. Among the more prominent was Lola Stanley, who was club president in 1930, Southwestern Regional Director on 1939, and

Second Vice President of the Federation in 1944. The federation sent Ms. Stanley to the first United Nations Conference in San Francisco. She was chair of the “Sister Club Committee” which sent tons of food to clubs abroad after WWII and she also devised an installation service widely used throughout

the Federation. Frances King was the club’s president in 1968-69, District Director in 1976 and the first Governor of the newly created Camino Real Region the following year.

SILB celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2014. In 1998, the club, under the direction of Dr. Katherine White, gathered all the available records, photos, newspaper articles, minutes of meetings, treasurers’ reports and other memorabilia from our long history. These items were transferred to archival paper and placed in binders and boxes for storage in the Archival section of the California State University, Long Beach library to be updated annually.

As of 2014, ninety-one outstanding women have served as president of SILB with no repeats. Our membership includes working women as well as retired “Ex Pros” who continue to support the club with their time, money and creative energy.

Club History 2002 - 2013

Compiled by Renee Simon

Soroptimist International of Long Beach's next decade concluding with 2013, saw major shifts in direction both internal and external to the club. We adopted several major two-year community projects and a new approach to raising the funds to support them. We reorganized the club's committee structure, developed a strategic plan, and built a web site to improve our outreach to the community.

Freda Hinsche Otto, president in 2002, guided the club in accepting a major new direction in its community service not unlike its historical commitments had been to building the Soroptimist House for CSULB and the funding and establishment of Meals on Wheels. For the new 2002 community service project, SILB committed to a two-year program to raise and donate \$25,000 to Long Beach City College for the development of its Women in Trades and Technology Center to encourage women to train for what had been considered non-traditional careers and study technology, trades, math, and science.

Community service saw another creative outreach project intended to encourage young girls to broaden their views of opportunities for women. Known as the Biographies Project, club members collected and purchased books about successful women to be donated to various girls groups and classes. In total, we provided more than \$30,000 in community service projects and scholarships including a \$1000 membership in Women and Philanthropy at CSULB. The Holiday Boutique generated \$18,000, the highest amount to date.

In 2003, under Sally Lane's presidency, the club concluded the first step toward establishing contributions to SILB as eligible for deductions on federal income tax statements by amending its articles of incorporation to confirm with provisions required by SI of the Americas to include SILB under its group federal income tax exemption.

We also fulfilled our second year commitment of \$12,500 to the Women in Trades and Technology Center and participated in the opening of the Center on campus. This would be the first of several major two-year community service projects. Another project that year was to provide for lighted signage at the Soroptimist House on CSULB campus.

The club's award-winning web site, www.si-longbeach.org, created by Donna Skinner, came on-line this year and was honored as the best in the SI of the Americas domain.



In 2004, President Sabira Tejani took as her theme for the year and her focus for the club and its members an increased awareness of heart health for women. Many members joined her in walking for Heart Walks/LA. She kicked off a heart health awareness campaign, "Go Red for Women" at the Camino Real Spring Conference leading the region to support the program for 2004 – 2006 and each club would donate \$400 toward heart health for women. The club's gift of \$1000 funded a program for free mammograms for low-income women at St. Mary Medical Center. We also created a hands-on project for health screening events throughout the city focusing on the major ethnic communities of Cambodian, Laotian, Hispanic, and African American women.

The effort to involve the community on the issues of domestic violence and aging led to public panels discussing these subjects. The club participated in Project Independence concerning atrocities to women during the wars in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Afghanistan. Locally, our club chartered the S club at Poly High School.

Logos used by Soroptimists in years past.

Soroptimist

Pamela Seager became the 2005 president. This year saw the completion of our commitment to the Love Your Heart project. The club was able to provide 400 women from diverse underserved ethnic communities with health screenings to help reduce heart attacks and contributed \$15,000 to St. Mary Hospital's Women's Heart Health program. Overall, the club was able to distribute \$63,422 to scholarships and service programs.

The Shopping With Soroptimists program was revitalized with its new association with the Working Wardrobes organization in Orange County. The year also marked the publication of the first printed Annual Report for SILB. Its President's Message provided an overview of the year's accomplishments; it gave a brief club history; the year's highlights; and a summary of the grants and scholarships awarded.

Pamela presented to the membership a plan she developed with the advice of the past five presidents to simplify the committee structure and consolidate the functions of 25 committees under the umbrella of five major committees. It was adopted on a trial basis and to be brought back to the membership for final evaluation in one year.

The club celebrated the 25th annual Making a Difference for Women luncheon with 342 attendees.

As funds have been contributed in memory of a member or recognition of an achievement, the members agreed to create a special fund to receive and dispense fellowship and memorial contributions that would be maintained as a separate line item outside the general fund.

For the 2006 year Judy Pedneault led the club. The year started with a major event when President Judy and prior president Sabira Tejani attended the SIA convention in Philadelphia where they promoted Sabira's "Love Your Heart" resolution. It was overwhelmingly adopted to be a Soroptimists of the Americas educational and informational service initiative.

The major two-year philanthropy adopted was a commitment of \$20,000 to "Senior Links," which provided short-term case management in cooperation with Meals on Wheels to help 370 frail seniors receive needed services that allowed them to remain in their own homes.

Many club members were able to attend the dedication of the Soroptimist Women's Heart Health Resource Center at St. Mary Hospital.

Members inaugurated a new small fundraiser in cooperation with Chico's dress shop in Belmont Shore to benefit the Shopping With Soroptimists service program. Chico's contributed 10 percent of everything we bought during a special store opening just for us and members made the evening more festive with appetizers and wine.

After a two-year trial, members adopted the new committee organization. Members also adopted a by-law amendment designating a duty of the president-elect is to chair or co-chair the Holiday Boutique, which at that time was the major club fundraiser for scholarships and other philanthropies.

Judy Hess leads SILB in 2007. Service projects continued to draw the attention of the club. This year was the second of the two-year commitment in support of Senior Links with a contribution of \$10,000. Serving at-risk elderly, Senior Links provides a gate keeper strategy to alert designated social service workers to seniors needing case management thus allowing them to remain in their own homes.

In response to declining meeting attendance, the members adopted a new policy of three meetings per month: the first Wednesday is the business meeting, second and third Wednesdays are program meetings, and the fourth Wednesday is the board meeting.

For the Christmas holiday, the club "adopted" five needy families recommended by the Health Department staff. We bought gifts of clothing and toys for the children and a supermarket gift certificate, wrapped the gifts, and had them delivered to each family. It was a gratifying project that members agreed they wanted to continue.

The year marked the fourth for Poly High School S Club. Eight of their members graduated. SILB voted to select three seniors to receive S-Club scholarships.

SILB received two City Council proclamations: October is designated as Breast Cancer Awareness month and is also End Domestic Violence month.

2008 brought Margie Hersh to the club presidency. Part of this year focused on some institutional changes. The club had been contracting out projects related to data base management. However, members decided we had several members who had those skills and we would have greater efficiency and effectiveness to handle that work in house by reassigning it to one of our members.

This was also the year to revise our by-laws. The Institutional Affairs committee proposed we rename the Holiday Boutique to Annual Fund Raiser, reflecting a change in our fundraising strategy.

To encourage members to be present for at least one meeting per month, the club voted that members would be required to pay for one lunch each month.

SILB this year was the host of the Interservice Club luncheon.

In order to give more attention to the many scholarships the club awards, members decided to combine all scholarship awards at a single time and May, 2009 was the first annual scholarship and awards luncheon.

Denice Lanuti, president 2009, took as her theme “sincerity of friendship” citing particularly how the club extends a hand in friendship to women and girls through scholarships, community service and hands-on projects, and international projects protecting the rights of women.

The annual fundraiser, a costume Monster Bash, brought 250 guests to the event, which annually generates the bulk of the funds the club uses for its scholarships and service projects.

The holiday “adopt a family” program increased to six the number of needy

families who the club provided with wrapped holiday gifts of food, clothing, and holiday gifts tailored to each family’s needs.

To provide members and potential members with flexibility for attending meetings, this year the club designated the second Wednesday program meeting as an evening dinner meeting instead of the regular noon lunch meeting.

At the second annual Scholarship and Awards luncheon, SILB gave out \$26,000 in scholarships to women and girls.

The 2010 year was presided over by Lori Woodruff. The major commitment for the year was the development of a Strategic Plan. The process involved all members at several program meetings. Lori directed the plan development, gathered input from all, refocused the club vision and mission statement, and identified strategies. Local services included all service projects. Other program areas were mentoring and support for the S-Club; the major annual awards; support for one international project; and support for public awareness and community outreach. A restatement of our club mission is “Improve the lives of women and girls; help women achieve economic and political equality; serve as a global voice for women.”

As the club reconsidered its fundraising and fund development, the effort was to solicit donations and make donor envelopes available at events and in mailings. Two small fund raising events during the year were a pickle-making workshop under the guidance of Donna Skinner where attendees learned to prepare pickles and bought filled jars and a jewelry party where the sponsor

donated back to the club a percent of her sales.

The membership retention subcommittee organized an unusual and very successful SILB reunion meeting encouraging long-time members who rarely attend to come to this particular luncheon meeting.

2011 was led by Anne Miller and 2012 by Maggie Shapiro. In these last two years of our decade, among the club’s creative changes was the approach to fund raising. Members agreed to try direct mail solicitation. In 2011 it took the form of an “unevent.” The following year, an annual appeal letter laid out the services SILB provides and generated an increase in revenue.

Member recruitment events in the form of wine and hors d’oeuvres at an interesting venue continue to be a regular function with the president describing SILB’s mission and activities. We added five new members. In 2011 the recruitment event was at the Bembridge House.

Continued community recognition is an inspiration to members. In 2012 the City of Signal Hill named SILB Volunteer Organization of the Year for its participation in Let’s Walk Signal Hill, an event to encourage exercise and the benefits of healthy eating. With the 2012 event, the club generated \$2688.

This was the year the club joined the LIVEYOURDREAM.ORG campaign that is designed to help women and girls throughout the country change their lives.

Next year SILB will celebrate its 90th anniversary and much planning is on the mind of incoming President, Wendy Puzarne.

COMMITTEES

NOMINATING

FINANCE

MEMBER SERVICES

Arrangements
Ex-Pros
Program
Recruitment and Retention
Roster
Social
SOLT
Telephone/Email

PHILANTHROPY

Community Service
Health
Scholarships
Violet Richardson Award
Live Your Dream Awards
Shopping with Soroptimists

INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Archives & History
Club/Region/SIA Calendar/Website
Database Management
Friendship Links
Installation
Laurel Society
Laws & Parliamentary
Soroptimist Hall of Fame
Soroptimist House

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Annual Appeal
Fashion Show
Small Fundraisers
Memorial and Fellowship Fund
Raffles and Fines

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

International Goodwill & Understanding
and United Nations
Legislative
Publicity, Public Relations, Newsletter & Website
Women Who Make a Difference Awards

live
YOUR
dream
education & training awards for women

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