



Fundraising

Best Practices

Soroptimist clubs continue to improve the lives of women and girls in their local communities and around the world through projects funded by creative and successful fundraisers. Without these fundraisers, many projects simply would not happen.

Throughout the federation, clubs are not only raising money but are also engaging their local communities to raise awareness about issues facing women and girls, and using the money for projects that address these issues.

SI/Napa, California (Founder Region), put a new twist on a dinner event—a black tie lobster fest! Guests arrived appropriately attired for a gala and found dinner tables covered with white paper tablecloths only. Bibs and napkins were on the chairs. The room, however, was beautifully decorated, as were the tables showcasing live and silent auction items. After being seated and donning lobster bibs, the food arrived with great fanfare and was placed in the center of the table. With some initial hesitation, diners began cracking the lobsters and engaging in conversation. At the end of dinner, the paper tablecloths were rolled up, scraps and all, and disposed of—revealing fine linen tablecloths. The tables were then set with china and silver for guests to enjoy coffee and elegant desserts. Then the auctions began.

Club members and volunteers appealed to local businesses for spirits and auction items as well as coordinating food, decorating, set up and clean up of the event. The unique event received coverage in the local media and raised more than \$13,000. A portion of the proceeds supported two local Women's Opportunity Award recipients with ongoing support. The remainder of the

proceeds supported local education projects for girls and food for the homeless.

For eight years, **SI/Sequim, Washington** (Northwestern Region), has held its highly successful Gala Garden Show. The show is the club's main fundraiser, and the community anticipates the spring event, held each year in the third week of March. The club's goals for the fundraiser are to raise enough funds to support Soroptimist programs, and enhance the visibility of the Soroptimist organization.

Every member of the club participates in some way by selling tickets, obtaining vendors, and securing sponsors; advertising and writing press releases; selling raffle tickets; and helping with food concessions, setting up and cleaning up. Seventy garden-related businesses paid a fee to showcase their products and services to the community, and the club had several major sponsors. Twenty Soroptimist members who own businesses contributed to support the show. In-kind services were provided by a local nursery that designed a garden walk for the entrance; professionals gave their time for a speaker series on various gardening topics; and the local newspaper produced a 20-page insert that provided a layout of the show and information about Soroptimist. The pull-out section was included in the newspapers of seven neighboring communities. A local artist created a painting specially designed for advertising the show and the local radio station ran announcements and interviewed club members about the show and Soroptimist. Some tactics of the comprehensive marketing plan included ads that appeared on the side of buses, posters hung around town, tent cards placed on tables at restaurants, and information made available at local nurseries.

SI/Sequim's well-planned and organized event met the club's goals and raised more than \$18,500 to fund a local club project benefiting women and girls and the club's Women's Opportunity Award.

SI/Indianapolis, Indiana (Midwestern Region), puts the "fun" in fundraising with its annual Soroptimist Spelling Bee. The bee is held at a local theater and emceed by a local news broadcaster, which both donate their services. Spelling "teams" come from local businesses and other groups interested in supporting the Soroptimist mission. Each team of five pays a fee to enter the spelling bee. A silent auction with donated items adds to the proceeds.

A cocktail reception is held prior to the event to allow time for Soroptimist members to mingle with team members and for everyone to participate in the silent auction. The lighthearted competition begins and the fun increases as spellers fumble with challenging words.

Monies raised from the spelling bee support Soroptimist programs and local projects such as support services for women in recovery, and for victims of domestic violence moving from shelters into independent living situations.

The clubs profiled here support important projects in their communities as well as SIA programs by contributing generously to the Annual Club Campaign and Founders Pennies. Contributions to SIA come back to clubs in the form of Women's Opportunity Awards, Violet Richardson Awards, Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls and the Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence—and all support Soroptimist's mission of improving the lives of women and girls! ☺

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