



Bunny Tales Spring Edition 2024

Soroptimist International of Conejo Valley



President Suzanne Walker Message

Hello SI Conejo Valley Members and Friends,

Since our last issue of "BunnyTales" a lot has been happening.

On Tuesday, February 20th we held our Live Your Dream Awards (LYDA) Program at Los Robles Greens, where we honored three very worthy and personable women. The LYDA recipients attended with their children. Some counselors from Moorpark College and other family members were in attendance to show additional support.

Camino Real Region representatives in attendance were Governor Lola Abrahamian, Governor-Elect Cynthia Jarvis and Brooke Grayson, CRR Public Awareness. Also attending was the Conejo Free Clinic Director of Development, Sue Murphy, who presented a gift bag to each recipient.

In March we held an informal Margarita MixOff planning meeting. Restaurants were assigned and Donation Request Letters will be printed and mailed. We discussed what we will do the same as last year and what improvements, if any, need to be made for this year. This event is our Major Fundraiser and we need the participation of all members to make it more successful than last year.

Our Camino Real Region Spring Conference was held on April 19 - 21 at the Marriott in Woodland Hills. We had six of our members in attendance and our club received several awards. The Spring Conference theme was "Empowered Women Empower Women" and some very informative and interesting topics were presented.

A panel discussion was presented on Human Trafficking, a real issue for our youth. The panel consisted of CA Senator Shannon Grove, Judge Debra Archuleta and Odessa Perkins, Survivor, Advocate, Author.

Katarzyna Piszczako-Palasz (Kasia) SI Union of Poland was a Keynote Speaker on Women in War Zones. She spoke of what the women of Poland are doing to help the women and families migrating from the war zone of Ukraine.

We learned about the Leadership Summit for girls in Lugari, Kenya and SI Conejo Valley made a \$500 donation to be used for training and guidance. The annual event for girls aged 14-18, offers leadership skills, empowering young women to become catalysts of positive change within their communities. (See picture and information below)

On May 7th we presented our \$1,500 Soroptimist Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship to a student in the Exotic Animal and Training Program at Moorpark College. This award information has also been submitted to Soroptimist International of the Americas as our 2024 club's project to support the Big Goal Accelerator Project. Please learn more details in the newsletter below.

We believe all women can embrace who they are, can define their future and can change the world. We work to achieve this through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. Wishing you all good health and much happiness.

President Suzanne Walker



10 DECEMBER - LUGARI YOUTH TRAINING ON THE ROAD TO EQUALITY

10 December is traditionally the day Soroptimists join together in support of the SI President's Appeal; a tradition established by SI President Catharine Salt in 1981. This year has proved a challenging time for all, and as we attempt to make plans for 2021, one thing is evident, and that is that our work providing safety, justice, and opportunity for women and girls around the world, is as important as it ever was.

Since 2019, and throughout these testing times, the Road to Equality President's Appeal has built and maintained partnerships; working with the Global Media Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the Free A Girl Movement, on the 'Voice of Justice' campaign. Recent months have seen the launch of the highly popular SI Voices series of webinars, where over 2,000 people have registered to hear the thoughts and experiences of expert panelists, together with inspiring stories, which has increased awareness of the Appeal's six key themes: FGM, Human Trafficking, Rights for Older Persons, Migration, Domestic Violence, and Child Marriage.

The Appeal is gathering donations and plans to support the Youth Leadership and Mentoring Training held at the Lugari Community Resource Centre, led by Khayanga Wasike, CEO and President of the Willing Hearts International Society Canada. The annual event for girls aged 14-18, offers leadership skills, empowering young women to become catalysts of positive change within their communities. *Strong voices standing against harmful gender discriminatory practices*, the training programme affords girls with the knowledge and education on FGM, child marriage, and domestic violence, key themes of the Road to Equality Appeal.



live
YOUR
dream
education & training awards for women®

Soroptimist International of Conejo Valley celebrated our Live Your Dream Awards with our 2024 winners on February 20th. It was a wonderful evening and gave us an opportunity to meet the women who were the recipients of this year's LYD Awards



1st Place Winner- Gianna

Gianna was a single teen mother who graduated high school ten years ago. She is now raising her 9-year-old daughter and working part time while

pursuing her education. Gianna is currently attending Moorpark College where she is a peer mentor in the EOPS Office. After she earns an Associates Degree in Business Administration, she plans to transfer to a 4-year college to continue her education, with the eventual goal to become a Pediatric Oncologist.

"Continuing my education will create a difference in my daughter's life. I will be able to gain a career and to provide a stable and safe home for her."



Runner Up - Cynthia

Cynthia is attending the Nursing program at Santa Barbara City College with plans to complete her Associate's Degree in December 2024 while also working part time. In Fall of 2023, she was accepted into an LVN-RN bridge program. "I have been an LVN since February 2019 and my dream has always been to become an RN."

She is raising her 4-year-old son on her own, since the sudden passing away of her fiancé in July 2022. "Going back to school and obtaining my RN degree will provide me with some stability and a better future for my son and me. I want my son to have a better life than what I had growing up"



Runner Up - Dakota

Dakota is a single mother raising her sons, age 3 and 5, on her own after receiving sole custody. She received her GED and had minimal job experience, before becoming a mother at 19 years old.

When she discovered the Welfare to Work program, she began attending both Ventura College and Moorpark College full time, with the goal to receive her Associates Degree in Marketing by June 2028.

"Hopefully this degree will help me obtain job offers in the future. With a career in Marketing, I could have a chance at providing a life for them where they will never need to worry, and they can enjoy being kids"



Meet Claire Chang, one of our newest Members who joined in January. Claire learned about Soroptimist when she read an advertisement for our Annual Margarita Mix Off. She researched what Soroptimist Mission is and decided to attend the Mix Off. After having a great time, Claire inquired about membership.

Claire is a Tax Accountant and has two grown children, Jesselyn 29 years old, and Eric 27 years old. Jesselyn is in Digital Marketing and Eric works for Amazon as a software developer.

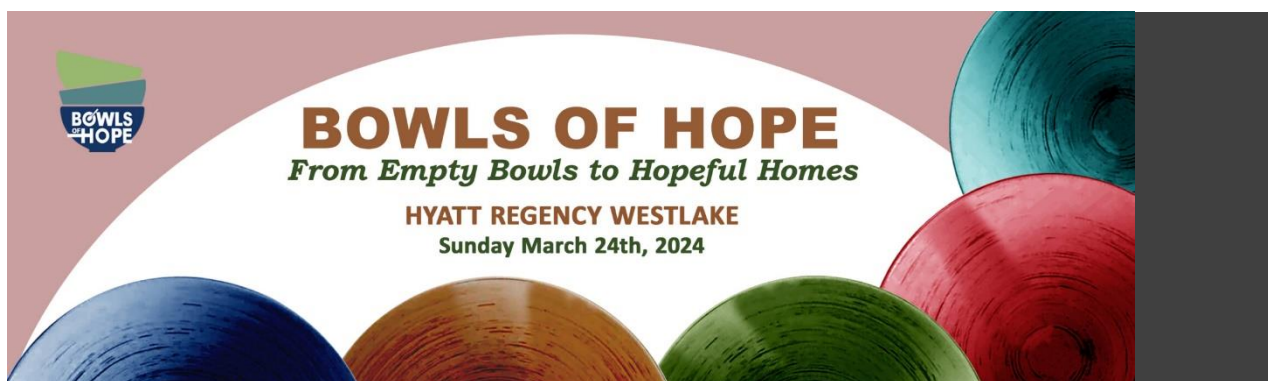
Claire was out of the country dealing with family issues at the time when the Special Edition of Bunny Tales introduced the new members. We are pleased to have Claire join our very busy organization.

Service Projects and Activities

In February we hosted our Live Your Dream Banquet where the 3 women above were given monetary grants to assist women who provide the primary source of financial support for their families by giving them resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects.



Sandy McDougall volunteered at the
Senior Concerns Fund Raiser
at the Westlake Hyatt on March 23rd.



March 24th also at the Hyatt Regency Westlake,
Many Mansions hosted their fund raiser called
"Bowls of Hope" Suzanne Walker volunteered at
that event..



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Investing in Dreams

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF CONEJO VALLEY

Spring Conference 2024 held April 19th thru April 21 was another fun and fulfilling bonding event for many Soroptimist Clubs Camino Real Region. April Service Project for Soroptimist International of Conejo Valley was volunteering at the Registration Desk (thanks to Dixie and all her hard work!)

Below on the left are the volunteers at the Registration Desk,
and on the right Soroptimist International of Conejo Valley shows off their
many awards.






Photo Entertainment by
FunTimeCaptured.com

SOROPTIMIST
Canino Real Region
Spring Conference

Empowered Women
Empower Women

SOROPTIMIST
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Above left the gals are getting ready for Friday Night Fun.

And right Suzanne Walker shows her 5 Years of Service,
and Jacque Turner proudly displays her 25 Years of Service.

Below left are Suzanne and Susanne and on the right is
Jacque and GEM Linda Haines both celebrating 25 Years.



Photo Entertainment by
FunTimeCaptured.com





First Big Goal and Scholarship Honoring Carole Blake

Pictured below is Hennessy Munoz during the interview meeting on April 27, 2024. Hennessy is our recipient of the Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship. Pictured with Hennessy are the committee members Susanne White, Jacque Turner, Suzanne Walker, and Dixie DiCeglie.



Soroptimist Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship and Soroptimist Big Goal Accelerator Project

We are proud to announce that Hennessy Munoz is the deserving recipient of the Soroptimist Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship. She attended our May 7th business meeting where we presented her with a \$1,500 award check. (Read more about her educational pursuits below).

In March 2023, we lost a special club member, Carole Blake. Several of her friends and acquaintances made donations in her honor and our club added funds to establish the Soroptimist Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship.

Carole had a passion for the Exotic Animal and Training program and America's Teaching Zoo at Moorpark College. Over the years she and her husband opened their home to students in that program needing a room to rent and they also sponsored several of the zoo animals.

Our club has been investigating opportunities to participate in the SIA Big Goal Accelerator Project. Soroptimist club work that increases access to education for women and girls facing obstacles with the ultimate goal of economic empowerment is counted as Big Goal Accelerator Projects! These include scholarships, education awards, training classes, and helping women and girls overcome obstacles by providing items (such as laptops, textbooks, or transportation for school). A cash award is part of the Soroptimist Big Goal Accelerator Project.

To be eligible for recognition in the Soroptimist Big Goal Accelerator Project, a club's work must meet all five of the following criteria:

1. Work only with women and/or girls who are facing obstacles
2. Provide access to education
3. Ultimately lead to economic empowerment
4. Be a Soroptimist-led hands-on project

We created a committee of four members to develop the criteria to be considered for a \$1,500 cash award and worked with the Moorpark College Foundation and Financial Aid office. The application link and criteria information were posted on their website under the Other Scholarship Opportunities section. This allowed our Soroptimist club to have hands-on involvement in the selection of the award recipient.

On April 22, 2024, we selected Hennessy Munoz as our recipient of the

Soroptimist Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship.

The committee met Ms. Munoz to conduct a brief interview. We were delighted by her warmth and openness in sharing her educational journey and challenges.

She shared the fact that there have been significant challenges for her in paying for my education. "My family cannot afford to assist me in any way, so I have been paying for my education through scholarships, grants, and loans, as well as any income I can make through my part-time job at Panda Express. While I have CalFresh to help with groceries, I have struggled to cover my monthly rent and other expenses, such as doctor visits, therapy, and medical fees. I am grateful for any support you can provide and will use it to continue pursuing my dreams of positively impacting the world. Together, we can work towards a brighter future for all living creatures."

Below is part of her essay to address the following topics:

- What OBSTACLES have made access to education more difficult?
- What excites and motivates You?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- What makes you deserving of this scholarship?

As a child, I was always in awe of the incredible diversity of living organisms on our planet, from the tiniest insects to the largest mammals. However, as I grew older, I became increasingly aware of the devastating impact of climate change and the loss of biodiversity we face. It breaks my heart to think that future generations may not have the opportunity to experience the same wonder and amazement I did as a child.

I am completing my first year in the Animal Care and Training Program (ACT), a two-year exotic animal training and management program that aligns with my passions. Through this program, I am learning how to care for various animals and developing skills that will allow me to make a meaningful difference in the world.

In the future, I hope to raise public awareness about the climate crisis and its devastating effects on our planet's biodiversity. I earned a degree in biology within California Lutheran University's honor program, and I am passionate about using my education and skills to help make a difference.

During my time at Moorpark College, I had the privilege of serving as the student body president of Future Animal Professionals. In this role, I

worked tirelessly to ensure that every student's voice was heard and advocated for mental health activities and open representation of the LGBTQ+ community within the program. I also coordinated volunteers for events like Boo at the Zoo and Wild Nights, where we raised awareness about animal welfare and environmental issues.

I am honored to volunteer for the Palos Verdes butterfly project as well. The program aims to rebuild the endangered population of these butterflies. This project is incredibly important because every living creature deserves to thrive, and I want to do everything I can to help preserve this beautiful species.

Brief excerpt from her letter of recommendation:

Hennessy has stood out amongst her peers as being a natural leader with exceptional commitment and passion. Her leadership skills are highlighted by Hennessy's work as president for our student group, "ZooVo", the zoo's student chapter of student voice. As president, Hennessy has been an exceptional voice for her class; one of the main roles of the group is to provide a voice to the students to staff. In this role Hennessy has been approachable by her peers, generated multiple venues that students can provide feedback depending on how they feel comfortable such as through anonymous surveys, individual one on one's, and group discussions. She is very mindful of inclusion and has advocated for classmates' needs, such as including preferred pronouns with class photos. Hennessy has shared some of the challenges she has faced and overcome on her academic journey, and the adversities she has experienced have made her not only perseverant but exceptionally empathetic and mindful of the experiences of others. She is extremely aware and supportive of the different viewpoints and experiences others bring, and utilizes this to make her a stronger leader.



Left: Hennessy speaking to the group after accepting the Memorial Scholarship award.

Center: picture of Carole Blake

Right: Hennessy with Andy Blake, Carole's husband, at the presentation of the Carole Blake Memorial Scholarship.



Members Corner!

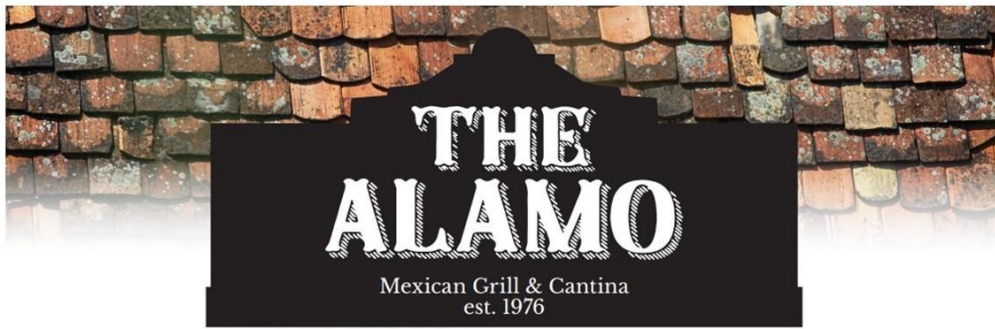
This is the opportunity for our members to share events, activities, and special memories.



Suzanne Walker and Susanne White "Live it Up" at a dinner party with the Conejo Valley Ski Club at the Elks Club April 6th.



Leslie and Ernie share Easter weekend with their new granddaughter Phoebe Jean. Phoebe has her Bunny outfit on.



BRING YOUR APPETITE TO THE
FUNDRAISER AT THE ALAMO!

Date: May 16, 2024 - Thursday **Time:** 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM



Enjoy delicious food in a fun atmosphere along with your friends and family while raising funds in support of:

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF CONEJO VALLEY
Dream Programs: Live Your Dream Award & Dream It Be It!



The Alamo Mexican Grill & Cantina
2311 Borchard Rd,
Newbury Park, CA 91320
(805) 498-3115

With each flyer presented during this **FUNDRAISING EVENT**,
THE ALAMO will donate **20% OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE SALES ***
(including alcoholic beverages) to the designated organization.

** Valid for Take-Out food orders,
Dining Room food & beverages, and Happy Hour food orders..*

Please do not distribute flyers on-site during the event.
Printed flyer must be presented to the server.



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SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF CONEJO VALLEY

SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

**THURSDAY
5:30 PM TO 8 PM**

**THE GARDENS AT
LOS ROBLES GREENS**

**299 S. MOORPARK ROAD,
THOUSAND OAKS**

22nd ANNUAL

SCAN QR CODE TO
PURCHASE TICKETS



**Margarita
MixOff &
More!**



**ENJOY MARGARITA TASTINGS AND APPETIZERS,
PLUS WINE SAMPLES, DJ & PHOTOBOOTH
ALL IN THE NAME OF CHARITY!**

**ATTENDEES WILL VOTE FOR PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD
FOR "BEST IN THE WEST MARGARITA"**

FOR INFO (805) 701-8537

**PURCHASE TICKETS AT
SICONEJO.ORG**

Or mail check to P.O. Box 3634, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359

**\$50 IN ADVANCE
\$60 AT THE DOOR**

SIOCV is in full gear actively looking for participants for the upcoming 22nd Annual Margarita Mix Off slated for September 26th at Los Robles Greens.



Above is pictured Elizabeth Eaves who treated the club to a Jazzercise Lesson at our March Program meeting. Our Program Chair, Sherry Love (pictured with Elizabeth) and President Suzanne Walker take her class for exercise giving benefits of Bone Density, Strength Training, Cognitive Health, Flexibility, Balance and Stamina.



Spicy Jalapeño Popper Soup 🍲📖 From Maree Contrares

Ingredients:

- 4 jalapeños, diced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 1 lb chicken breast, cooked and shredded
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano

1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
1/4 cup bacon, cooked and crumbled
Fresh cilantro, for garnish

Directions:

In a large pot, sauté the jalapeños, onion, and garlic in a bit of oil over medium heat until softened.

Add the chicken broth and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat, and add the cooked chicken, cream cheese, heavy cream, salt, pepper, and oregano. Stir until the cream cheese is melted and the soup is heated through.

Before serving, stir in the shredded cheddar cheese until melted.

Serve hot, garnished with crumbled bacon and fresh cilantro.

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cooking Time: 25 minutes | Total Time: 40 minutes

Kcal: 350 kcal | Servings: 6 servings



Upcoming Events and Meetings

May 14 - Program Meeting

May 16 - Alamo Fund Raiser (bring your flyer!)

June 4 - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm

June 18 - Officer Installation Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm

July 2 - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm

July 16 - Program Meeting Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm

Annual Retreat and Planning Meeting - TBD

August 6 - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm

September - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm

Margarita MixOff September 26 Los Robles Greens

October 1 - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens

October - 15 Program Meeting Los Robles Greens

October 19 - Dream It Be It with Girl Scouts of Central Coast



Soroptimist Vision & Mission

VISION

Women and girls have the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential and live their dreams.

MISSION

Soroptimist is a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.

CORE VALUES - Soroptimist International of the Americas is committed to:

Gender Equality: Women and girls live free from discrimination.

Empowerment: Women and girls are free to act in their own best interest.

Education: Women and girls deserve to lead full and productive lives through access to education.

Diversity & Fellowship: Women from varied backgrounds and perspectives work together to improve the lives of women and girls.

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,

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.