

Soroptimist International of Conejo Valley
2026 Winter Bunny Tales



President Suzanne Walker

Hello Soroptimist Members

March is Women's History Month. The theme for Women's History Month is "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future."

Women's history is a key resource to find both solutions and sources of empowerment.

EMPOWERMENT. A word we hear and are familiar with in Soroptimist.

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

Our "Live Your Dream " Program was held February 17th. We honored five very worthy recipients with a Cash Award, a Goodie Bag, and dinner for themselves and two guests.

It was a wonderful celebration attended by the families of the recipients, Soroptimist members, LYD sponsors and LYD judges.

**All LYD Recipients are enrolled in College. It is a proven fact that when women are educated, they are more likely to get paying jobs that increase their financial contributions to their families. Families live healthier lives. And children who have educated Moms are more likely to reach higher levels of education
"Education is Empowerment."**

Sunday March 8th is International Women's Day. A day recognizing the social economic, cultural and political achievements of women while advocating for gender equality.

As we wear Red for Valentine's Day. Green for St. Patrick's Day.
Wear Purple on March 8th for Women's Day
to signify justice and dignity for women.

Suzanne





The club rings in the Holidays with our annual Holiday Dinner held at Los Robles Greens on December 16th with a fabulous dinner and gift exchange.



Pictured above left is Cheryl who got a festive bottle of wine and Carole on the right with a Holiday Coco Mix. Bottom left is Jenny who got Starbucks and handmade Goat Milk Soap and bottom right is Debbie enjoying her Lenox holiday coffee mug.



Below Greg Lockwood scores a Popcorn kit and
Donna takes home a Festive Snow Man
Below is the picture of all the attendees. It was a fun night!





Service and Community Awareness Projects



Above Carol and friend support "Santa to the Sea Race" which is a charity that supports community serving over 3,000 low-income children giving out toys for Christmas as well as partnering with local food banks and scholarship funds for high school seniors. Over 3,000 racers from all over Southern California participate in this event.

Below January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month where Soroptimist Clubs all over the nation bring attention to the international horrors of Human Trafficking.



Members Dixie, Suzanne and Jacque attended the STOP Human Trafficking Awareness event presented by Simi Valley Soroptimist on January 21, 2026.

The event began with a survivor, Rebecca Bender, sharing her personal story of being "trafficked in plain sight" and how she now advocates for others through her *Initiate & Elevate Academy*. This was followed by a Q&A session with the panelists addressing audience questions.



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Human trafficking is a complex and dynamic act against humanity; it takes the whole of humanity to recognize and report human trafficking.

Elizabeth N., Regional Analyst

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#WearBlueDay



SOROPTIMIST®
Simi Valley Investing in Dreams

1/21/26
ATTEND A FREE AWARENESS
PANEL WITH A SPECIAL
PRESENTATION FROM A
SURVIVOR.

**STOP
HUMAN TRAFFICKING
AWARENESS MONTH**

Detective Jamal Labbe Special Crimes Unit/Intel Ventura County Sheriff's Office	Shannon Sergey Founder and CEO Forever Found	Rebecca Bender Trafficking Survivor CEO & Founder Rebecca Bender Initiative and Elevate Academy	Chief of Police Steve Shorts Simi Valley Police Department	Twyla Atmore Deputy District Attorney, Ventura County
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Simi Valley United Methodist Church
2394 Erringer Rd., Simi Valley
Wednesday, January 21st @ 6 PM- 8:30 PM



SAVE YOUR SEAT
soroptimistsv.org/stop

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT DEBBIE SAMEL:
Soroptimist Int. of Simi Valley | Chair, Human Trafficking Awareness | dssamel@yahoo.com

Other Service Projects



December Service Project Soroptimist International of Conejo Valley donated 20 sets of Pajamas for Shelter Care/Heart to Heart which works with underserved children in Ventura County for Christmas. Above is Service Chair Leslie with Corey Branchflower director of Shelter Care/Heart to Heart.

Below Soroptimist Members volunteer at the Annual Mardi Gras Ball that raises funds for Community Conscience having a bit of fun. Left to right Dixie, Cheryl (on the Community Conscience board) Suzanne, Donna and Jacque (also on the Community Conscience Board)



Also included in service projects are generous personal donations by Debbie Cutler and family of furniture to James Storehouse and many boxes of books.

And members President Suzanne Walker and Jacque Turner delivering clothing donations for James Storehouse from Soroptimist of Conejo Valley March 2026.



live
YOUR
dream
education & training awards for women®



Live Your Dream co-chair Carol Magorien and chair Claire Chang (pictured above) honored our five recipients of Cash Awards to our Live Your Dream candidates on February 17th. In attendance were the Judges who assisted in selecting the recipients, Governor Cynthia Jarvis, and District 1 Director Carole Savala. Above is a group shot of all the attendees to the event.

Now we meet our winners!



Astri Hernandez Cruz is our 1st Place Recipient - From Astri

"I am a young mother who has learned that life is not always easy. I have faced hardships, fears, and difficult moments but I have also found strength where I didn't know it existed. Today I keep moving forward for my son, because I want to be a better mother every day and with love, effort, and perseverance anything is possible. This scholarship represents an opportunity to keep fighting, growing and building a better future for us. Because yes, foster moms can also be good moms, despite everything we have been through". Pictured below is Astri with her case workers.



Below are Runner Up Anna Matshkalyan (left) and Cythia Dvorsky-Garcia (right)

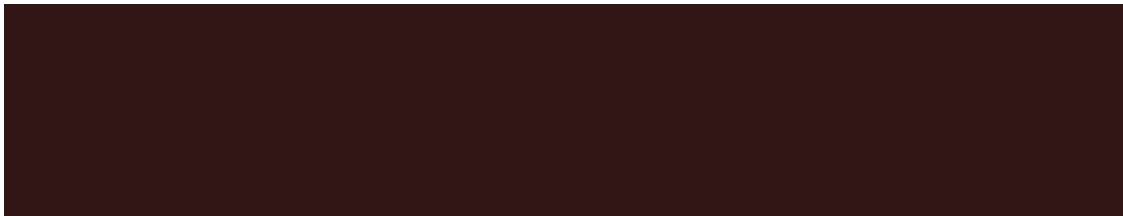
From Anna

"I am a motivated programmer who is passionate about learning and building practical, user focused software solutions. As a hard-working individual and lifelong learner, I

have balanced personal responsibilities with my commitment to education and skill development in technology. My journey into programming has been shaped by perseverance, resilience, and a desire to create a better future for myself and my family. I enjoy solving problems through code and continuously expanding my technical and analytical abilities. Receiving this award is a meaningful milestone that supports my educational goals and strengthens my determination to use technology to make a positive impact in my community."

From Cynthia

"I am a single mother of 4 little ones, my oldest is almost turning 9, I simply cannot fathom how fast time flies. I am currently attending Moorpark College and aspire to work as a mental health technician some day. In my free time I blog on Godismyanchor.org, read the Bible, and sing for fun as well as write childrens books. As a woman and person, I have seen a lot of difficulty and hardship the last several years including bankruptcy, car repossession, divorce and loss of a loved one and other major issues. My faith in the LORD is what has without a doubt lifted me up and pushed me to keep going when everything seemed shaky. I just want to encourage anyone going through difficult times right now to never lose hope and not to give up, and to know that weeping may last for the night but joy cometh in the morning. "



Below are Hasmik Khachatryan (left) and Melissa (right)

From Hasmik

"I am a mother of three and a Business Administration student at California State University Chico. I immigrated to the United States from Armenia during the COVID-19 Pandemic in search of a safer, more stable future for my children. Starting over in a new country without strong English skills, a job, or a support system was incredibly challenging, but my love for my family and belief in education-kept me moving forward.

In Armenia, I worked in banking for more than 12 years and served as a branch manager. After moving to the U.S. I rebuilt my career through education, earning my associate's degree in business administration and Banking and Finance, along with multiple certificates. I was honored to be on the President's and Dean's Lists, became a member of Phi Theta Kappa, and worked as a student employee in my college's Business Office. I am currently pursuing my bachelor's degree with the goal of becoming a business and technology systems specialist, combining my experience in finance with modern technology. My journey is driven not only by professional goals, but by my desire to inspire other women to believe that it is never too late to start over and follow their dreams."

From Melissa

A goal-driven mother of three teenagers and a toddler, currently working part-time while pursuing a Teaching Degree at Moorpark College, focusing on students with disabilities. "I hope to transfer to CLU for my bachelor's

and master's in Sociology and eventually pursue a PhD at UCLA," she shares passionately. Her dream to empower others stems from her experiences as a single mother of four children.

Determined to be a beacon of hope, Melissa emphasizes, "Every day we have the opportunity to make a difference and change our lives". Her involvement in a supportive organization for students with disabilities and her role in EOPS show her commitment to advocacy and empowerment. With a foster care license and an eagerness to support families in need, she believes "Every battle is a pathway to better ourselves and grow in such a beautiful way".



It was a magical evening to meet our winners and give Live Your Dream awards to the very worthy recipients.



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF CONEJO VALLEY



SOROPTIMIST®
Investing in Dreams

What have the club members been up to!



Above is our member Sandy taking a picture as she attends her Son Ryder's baseball game. Ryder is the catcher for the team Newbury Park Pirates. We root for a successful season for Ryder's team

Below is a family shot of Debbie and Don Cutler with their MANY grandchildren.



Jacque and husband Greg are all dressed up for the Mardi Gras Ball - Jacque is on the board of Community Conscience

Below is member Claire hiking Wendy Water Fall with friends Vicki Waier and Sarah Kinney. Claire has a passion for hiking. Below the waterfall are the three hikers at Boney Fossil Lookout enjoying the sunshine.





Recipe from Marcy Shewmon - Great for Springtime dessert

LEMON BLUEBERRY BREAD

- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 large eggs at room temp
- 1-1/2 cup AP flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup 2% milk
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped nuts
- 2 tbsp grated lemon zest

Then glaze with 2 tbsp lemon juice and 1/4cup sugar

Directions:

Mix butter, sugar, lemon juice and eggs.; In a separate bowl mix flour, baking soda add to egg mixture alternately with milk mixing well after each addition, then fold in the blueberries, nuts and lemon zest

Transfer to a loaf pan that is greased bake at 350 for 50-60 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes and then remove from pan and drizzle with glaze.



Calendar of Events

March 17 Program Meeting Los Robles Greens 6:00 pm

March 26-29th Camino Real Spring Conference

April 7 - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens 6:00 pm

April 21 - Program Meeting Los Robles Greens 6:00 pm

May 5 - Business Meeting Los Robles Greens 6:00 pm

May 19 - Program Meeting Los Robles Greens 6:00 pm

June 2 - Program Meeting Los Robles Greens 6:00 pm

June 16 - Office Installation Banquet Los Robles Greens 5:30 pm



Soroptimist Vision & Mission

VISION

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

MISSION

Soroptimist improves the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and 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.