

Soroptimist® International of the Americas  
99<sup>th</sup> Southern Region Conference  
Deerfield Beach, Florida  
Friday, May 2, 2025.

**#SOROPTIMISTISGROWING**

The following workshops began at 2:00 p.m.

**Book Club “Death Play”** - lead by author Tonya Sharp Hyche.  
She shared how she developed the story and her insights to the characters.

**Everything You Need to Know About Sponsorships** - SI Homestead.

SI Homestead and Conference Chair Yvette Doherty provided information on financial and in-kind sponsorships and raising funds for a successful fundraising event. She highlighted their annual rodeo dinner and dance and promotional strategies and sponsorship benefits and levels.

**Soroptimist is Growing** - Governor Barbara Spyke and SI Members

Governor Barbara Spyke provided information on the growth and decline in clubs and membership. The mission is to retain membership and grow existing clubs. She also encouraged clubs to advertise meetings and events through social media and to promote social activities.

Governor Barbara Spyke discussed the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for content ideas, writing aides and empowerment topics. There was questions and answers.

Workshops adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

The evening of May 2, 2025 began with a Welcome First Timers’ party hosted by SI Stuart. Followed with a Stations Dinner reception with games, adventures and dancing party for all attendees and hosted by Governor-Elect Kacie Obradovich.

Gail Reinfeld  
Secretary, SIA - Southern Region

Soroptimist® International of the Americas  
99<sup>th</sup> Southern Region Conference  
Deerfield Beach, Florida  
Saturday, May 3 and Sunday, May 4, 2025.

#SOROPTIMISTISGROWING

The meeting was called to order 9:10 a.m., Saturday, May 3, 2025 by Governor Barbara Spyke.

Marie Kennedy (SI Stuart) made a motion to accept the consent agenda. There were no objections.

Governor Barbara Spyke introduced Tellers Tanda Jackson (SI Tuscaloosa) and Jes Robinson (SI Stuart).

The following individually welcomed the attendees to the conference via a video:

- Michelle Strawser, Secretary for the SIA Board and SI Pasco
- Ginger Cole, President of SIA
- Michelle J. Burnett, Executive Director/CEO of SIA

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Governor Barbara Spyke recognized Sarah Bang (SI Huntsville) for handling the AV portion of the conference, SI Huntsville for handling registration functions, and SI The Palm Beaches for handling the conference bags and contents.

**State of the Region:**

Governor Barbara Spyke presented her main goals to retain membership and grow existing clubs. She described her four strategies to improve the lives of women and girls: (1) focus on our mission to access education and training programs to achieve economic empowerment, (2) advertise meetings to make it easier for women to find us and increase visibility, (3) promote social activities through social connections to improve well-being and longevity and (4) collaborate with other clubs to create a larger audience and foster support among clubs. She described her vision to have resources and opportunities for women to reach full potential and live their dreams.

Governor Barbara Spyke spoke of four core values: (1) gender equality – women and girls live without discrimination, (2) empowerment – free to act in best interest, (3) education – access to education and (4) diversity and fellowship – varied background and perspective.

**Announcements:**

Governor Barbara Spyke stated there were various items for purchase such as; raffles, anti-human trafficking pins and patches for pins.

She introduced the Soroptimist Orientation and Leadership Training (SOLT) Committee Chair and its members comprised of past Southern Region Governors.

**A Call to Action:**

SIA Board Director Gail Dekreon presented three vital actions to empower women and girls: (1) embracing change, (2) celebrating success and (3) committing to inclusivity. SIA celebrates

serving 26,000 women and girls, 750 new members, 40,000 volunteer hours and this year's 49 Live Your Dream recipients in Southern Region.

She also stated clubs should create welcoming environments for inclusivity. Every member should feel valued and heard. Clubs should take action together by listening actively, being respectful and speaking up.

Gail Dekreon concluded by stating "together we can make a difference."

#### **Announcement:**

Governor Barbara Spyke instructed attendees to take two of the paper clouds on the table and write something important they were going to execute for the club on one cloud and write a personal growth point to work toward on the second cloud. She asked attendees to bring these clouds to the Fall District meeting for further discussion.

#### **Combating the Great Membership Decline:**

Adrienne Griffitts, SR Membership Co-Chair (SI Homestead) presented information on declining membership, membership campaigns and Tech Tools via SIA #TechTalks Learning Labs.

#### **Introduction and Presentation of Club Charter Certificate:**

Governor Barbara Spyke introduced members of the newest chartered club - SI Glades and Palm Beach North. It is a virtual club with 22 members from various locations in Florida, South Carolina, Illinois, and Virginia. Governor Barbara Spyke presented the Club with its club certificate of charter dated January 15, 2025. (self-introductions later in the day)

#### **Break**

#### **Opening Credentials Report:**

Treasurer Denise Held (SI Homestead) presented the preliminary credentials report which was comprised of 14 clubs in the region (six clubs in District I, five clubs in District II and three clubs in District III).

13 clubs were represented at the conference; six clubs in District I, five clubs in District II and two clubs in District III.

Presidents	10
Delegates	24
Board Members	7
<b>Total Voting</b>	<b>41</b>

Non-Voting Soroptimists	29
Official Federation Visitor	1
Federation Guest(s)	1
Guest(s) (Soroptimists)	0
Guest(s) (Non-Soroptimists)	2

**Total Attendees 74**

The preliminary credentials report, as presented, was approved with no objections.

**Dream It, Be It:**

Southern Region Dream It, Be It Co-Chairs Elizabeth Seymour (SI Homestead) and Jeanne Sherwood (SI Homestead) presented an overview of the SI's seven session curriculum for a Dream It, Be It (DIBI) program and shared SI Homestead's Dream It, Be It (DIBI) successes.

**Reaching the Big Goal Together:**

President SI Homestead Alexandra Peña presented best practices for the Big Goal Accelerator project and Dream It, Be It (DIBI) program. She described SIA's goals to invest in dreams of a half million women and girls and to increase Live your Dream and Big Goal projects annually by 10%. She facilitated an activity and also discussed SIA tech tools.

SI Homestead along with all attendees congratulated Alexandra Peña on recently earning a Bachelor's degree.

**How to Plan an Anti-Human Trafficking Event:**

Past Governor, Human Trafficking Awareness Committee Chair and Chair of the State of Alabama Human Anti-Trafficking Task Force Patricia McCay (SI Huntsville) presented how to plan types of anti-human trafficking events, budget, naming the program, program or topic, target audience, location and time of day, whether to provide refreshments, advertisements/marketing, exhibitors/vendors, continuing education credits, age-appropriate content and online registration portal via Zeffy for non-profit organizations.

**Break****Live Your Dream and Luncheon:**

Southern Region Live Your Dream (LYD) Chair Wanda Moore (SI Greater Daytona Beach) presented an update on the Southern Region's LTY awards to 49 recipients and \$74,500 surpassing the goal of 40 awards. SIA provided an additional \$8,000 to be distributed to top two recipients, making the total of \$82,500 awarded.

First place winner: Caroline Kelly.

Caroline Kennedy spoke and thanked SI Stuart for the award. Wanda Moore presented the award.

Second place winner (not in attendance): Tamika Jenkins.

Wanda Moore read a statement from SI Nashville (not in attendance). Because of the award Tamika would be able to graduate in May instead of December.

**Overcoming Your Fear of the Ask:**

Past Governor and Fundraising Chair and Marie Kennedy (SI Stuart) presented fundraising barriers and overcoming barriers.

**Laurel Society:**

Marie Kennedy (SI Stuart) encouraged attendees to sign up as “stargazers” and/or buy a patch on the quilt. She stated Southern Region currently had 73 Laurel Society members and 22 Stargazers.

She presented Marie D’ Amato Rizzi (SI Davie) with an inner circle pin and certificate for her cumulative contributions of \$25,000 to Laurel Society.

**From Vision to Launch:**

President SI Pasco Kristen Rumberger presented why public awareness matters and she provided strategies to develop an action plan, stay true to branding, develop an action plan, leverage social media strategically and community involvement and local partnerships through grass roots marketing. After the presentation there were questions and answers.

**Introduction and Presentation of Club Charter Certificate:**

Governor Barbara Spyke introduced members of the chartered club - SI Pasco. Governor Barbara Spyke presented the Club with its club certificate of charter dated July 1, 2024.

**Break****Presidents Reports and Panel Discussion:**

The following club Presidents or designee briefly highlighted their activities over the past year:

Boca Raton–Deerfield Beach – Marybeth Keenan, Davie – Lynda Bornstein, Glades and Palm Beach North – Glenda Garrett, Homestead – Alexandra Peña, Huntsville – Sarah Bang, Pasco – Kristen Rumberger, Pompano Beach – Pam Sargent, St. Lucie – Kathy Blanton, Stuart – Mary Ann Searle, Tampa – Lorraine Lundy, The Palm Beaches – Lisa Fergus and Tuscaloosa – Skye Kent Burnett.

After the reports there were questions and answers.

**Live Your Dream Certificates:**

Governor Barbara Spyke presented certificates for their LYD program to the following clubs in Southern Region: Boca Raton-Deerfield Beach, Davie, Homestead, Huntsville, Pasco, Pompano Beach, St. Lucie, Stuart, Tampa, The Greater Daytona Beach, The Palm Beaches and Tuscaloosa.

**Thriving Through Change:**

SIA Board Director Gail Dekreon presented change go through denial, anger, acceptance and adaption. She facilitated an activity of a time attendees experienced change.

**Final Credentials Report:**

Treasurer Denise Held (SI Homestead) stated there was no change from the preliminary credentials report presented earlier in the day and final report.

**Delegate and Board Vote:**

No items were pulled from the consent agenda. Southern Region Delegates and Board members voted to approve the consent agenda. There was a unanimous vote to affirmatively to approve the consent agenda. There was no opposition.

**Ruby Lee Minar Annual Meeting:**

RLM Treasurer Teri Matlach (SI Tampa) convened the committee's annual board meeting from 3:30 p.m. – 3:37 p.m.

**Announcements:**

Marie Kennedy (SI Stuart) announced the Laurel Society and Stargazers reception would be held at the conclusion of today's meeting.

**Conference workshops recessed at 3:40 p.m.**

The evening of May 3, 2025 began at 6:00 p.m. with dinner and a Luau with Dancers.

Sunday, April 21, 2024 reconvened at 9:00 a.m.

**Celebration of Life:**

Hosted by Southern Region District II Director and SI Stuart Deborah Wilde and SI Tampa:

Two Southern Region members, District II Evelyn Deggeller, SI Stuart and District I Barbara Reistma, SI Davie passed since the 98<sup>th</sup> SR conference.

Prayer was led by Barbara (BJ) Scott (SI Tampa) and an inspiration message, entitled "It's only a blueberry muffin", was shared by Lorriane Lundy (SI Tampa).

Gail Reinfeld, Board Secretary Southern Region and SI Davie, led a memorial tribute for Barbara J. Reitsma.

Nidea Bernstiel, SI Stuart led a memorial tribute for Evelyn Deggeller.

The celebration of life concluded with individual remembrance of these members, distribution of sea shells inscribed with the name of Southern Region and attendees tossing the shells on the sand and/or into the ocean.

**Announcements, Raffles and Awards:****Announcements**

Governor Barbara Spyke announced the next district meetings would be in the Fall 2025 for District I and II in Tampa, Florida (date TBA) and District III in Huntsville, Alabama on September 20, 2025.

Governor Barbara Spyke also announced the next Southern Region (100<sup>th</sup>) conference would be held the first weekend of May 2026 in Orlando, Florida. She stated the installation theme would be “the Queen and her Court” and the dress for the event would be formal.

### **Gift Card Raffle Winners**

### **Awards**

Governor Barbara Spyke presented award certificates to the following clubs for five winning categories:

- Attendance – Glades and Palm Beach North
- Facebook – Stuart
- Membership Gain – Stuart – first place and St. Lucie – second place
- Mileage – Huntsville
- Website – Boca Raton-Deerfield Beach

Attendees gave applause to Governor Barbara Spyke.

Governor Barbara Spyke gave special recognition to board members, club presidents, conference and region chairs, member presenters, moderators of conference sessions, coordinators of special activities, and all members that fulfilled a specific function during the conference.

After the Soroptimist Pledge, as there was no further business the 99<sup>th</sup> Soroptimist Southern Region Conference adjourned at 10:25 a.m., Sunday, May 4, 2025.

Post conference evaluations were distributed, completed and submitted by attendees.

Gail Reinfeld  
Secretary, SIA - Southern Region