

November 3rd, 2009

Dear Soroptimist Friends,

At the start of my biennium as your President, I would like to thank you for giving me this fantastic opportunity to work with you for the advancement of Soroptimist International of Europe.

SI stands at a turning point. After almost one hundred years, we need a dynamic and innovative vision for the future of our organisation. To attract and retain new members, SI will have to adapt to the 21st century by targeting professional women, who are interested in joining an organisation that offers networking and active participation in women-oriented projects.

The path toward a sustainable development of SI is difficult; each solution has to be balanced between tradition and innovation. Our European Federation has a unique cultural and ethnic diversity. Although this is an enormous asset, we also have to respect individual sensibilities. Information and communication are the key prerequisites for a smooth transition to a successful and modern service organisation for professional women, and I plan to make both a priority during my presidency.

Since taking office on October 1st, I have been asked almost daily why I took up this challenge and how I can possibly expect to handle this responsibility with a fulltime job. For the how, I have my standard answer: the president of an organisation for professional women should be active in her profession, and a president does not work alone. She has a team composed of her Federation Board and the staff at HQ, who all help and support her. For the why, it is quite simple: Soroptimist International rewards me more than I can ever give back: friendship, a sense of usefulness, career opportunities, an international network, the satisfaction of helping people – in fact, it makes my life just a little richer and more meaningful.

As an individual, I can contribute on a small scale, but as a Soroptimist, whatever I do is multiplied by the backing of our international membership. SI gives me the possibility to support and empower women all over the world. I, and all of you with me, want to help women and children achieve a better life with access to clean water and adequate sanitation, health care and education. In continuation of the theme 2007-2009 “Soroptimist go for Water”, I ask you to implement projects that will secure “Safe Water for a Safe Life” for as many women and children as possible.

To assist those of you who want to propose a project and for those who are looking for a project to join, we have the Project Exchange Pool, better known as PEP. This PEP has been

extended to include an Experience Exchange Pool, EEP, where the emphasis lies more on sharing expertise and knowledge, rather than just providing money. For more detailed information, I urge you to go to www.soroptimistsgojorwater.nl and look for the PEP and EEP pages.

I hope that we, the 35,000 members of Soroptimist International of Europe, will continue to work together to realise what we are all striving for: a progressive, dynamic and vibrant SI with projects that empower women all over the world.

In Soroptimist friendship.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eliane Lagasse
SI/E President 2009-2011