Soroptimists go for water
safe water = safe life
Soroptimist International of Europe

PROGRAMME NEWS

No. 10, August 2010

Dear Soroptimists,

We delightfully bring you news about our Programme activities and international campaigns. Please share the Programme News with your fellow Soroptimists, friends, and colleagues!

Water is a Human Right

It is time to celebrate! Finally, on the 28th of July, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution entitled "The Human Right to Water and Sanitation," with 122 states voting in favor. This is a momentous step toward a future treaty. The resolution calls for states and international organizations to provide financial resources, transfer technology and build capacity to ensure that water and sanitation is clean, safe and accessible for all.

The GA expressed concern that 884 million people are without safe drinking water and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation. As a result of unsafe water and lack of sanitation, 1.5 million children under 5 years old die each year of waterborne illnesses. As is well known throughout SI/E, water is a key issue for women and girls. They are often responsible for collecting water, which takes away precious time from school or paid employment possibilities and also can put them at risk on their long journeys. Decision-making about water issues requires a gender perspective, but unfortunately, women's voices are often not heard publicly. To learn more about the right to water, please visit http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/rightowater/en/

International Year of Youth

The International Year of Youth commences on the 12th of August 2010 under the theme "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding." The goal of this year is to increase and support the participation of young people in society and to encourage their imagination and enthusiasm. In light of the theme, the International Year of Youth aims to support cross-cultural and cross-generational understanding. Soroptimists in particular can use this year as a time to especially reach out to young women to mentor them, encourage them in communal participation, and foster their initiatives. For more information on the International Year of Youth, for an events calendar and to get ideas for projects, visit the website http://social.un.org/youthyear/index.shtml .

International Day of Peace



The International Day of Peace was celebrated for the first time in September 1981. Now it is celebrated annually on the 21st of September. It is a day to remember ideals of peace and to create practical acts of peace. Peace Day is also a day of international ceasefire. The official website (http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org/) offers both educational tools to learn about peace building and lists of ideas for Peace Day activities that anyone can do. Some examples include:

- Art & Culture: Organize an art exhibition on the theme of peace
- Media: Write an article for your local newspaper about Peace Day or peace building in general
- Music and Performances: Organize a multi-cultural event, with performers from different countries
- Petitions/Government: Write letters to your local officials, asking them to support International Day of Peace
- Education: Organize seminars and lectures about peace building in your community/organization, include discussions and work groups
- Sports/Health: Organize a "Yoga for Peace" class, including a meditation on peace

To find resources on creating your own event, please visit the above website. There, you can also register your event or find events happening in your local area.

The Power of Optimism

In order to imbue the participants of the 8th European Meeting and Friendship Days with optimism, we have invited inspiring speakers. Let us introduce them:
Pilar Oriente Guarido became the first female counselor in the Malaga Town Hall in 1979 and is currently the coordinator of the Andalusian Women's Institute, working for the rights of women, denouncing discrimination and ensuring equality for all. Marta Eugenia Rodríguez de la Torre received a scholarship for young science investigators at the age of 13 and later developed a unique method of learning and intellectual stimulation. Carmen Sebastián founded a company developing courses related to personal development and projects concerning the Management of Communication, each with emotion as its basis and strategic guide. Eva Levy currently heads the Women on the Board of Directors division of the prestigious headhunting company ExcellentSearch. Her personal commitment and dedication to the career development of women is paramount to her professional life. Carmen García Ribas is a journalist and expert in strategic communication and development of managers. Ten years ago she began her work on the ideology of Feminine Leadership.

After an inspiring conference we would love to help you explore Southern Spain with visits to some of our most interesting cities: Malaga, Granada and Ronda. We encourage everybody to book these trips together with their registration. In particular, the entrance tickets for the Alhambra in Granada must be booked before 15 September.

The 8th European Meeting and Friendship Days will take place 15-17 October 2010 in Mijas (Malaga), for more information please go to our website, www.si-es.org.

Soroptimist condemns Prostitution

During their biennial convention in July 2010, the Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) club delegates voted to forward a resolution committing itself to take a stand against prostitution of any kind to the clubs for a mail ballot. After hearing a speech of author and journalist Victor Malarek, SIA has recommended following the model of the Swedish government and tackle prostitution by targeting the demand. This means SIA will condemn the purchase of sex and those who seek to exploit women or girls as sexual objects rather than condemning prostituted women or girls. The Federation will also engage to condemn and boycott companies and organizations that support and promote the sale of sex. For example, while in San Francisco, they co-sponsored an event in San Francisco at the Craigslist Headquarters to draw attention to its facilitation and profit from the sex trade. Craigslist is a public forum to sell goods, which has been now widely used as a means to sell sex. Some of SIA's plans to combat sexual exploitation include raising awareness that prostitution is a form of violence against women, educating men and boys on gender equality and the damage of buying sex, and supporting the development of sexual education in schools.

Important Websites

http://www.unwomen.org/ is the official website for the new UN entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – UN Women- which will build on and merge the work of the four current UN agencies (UNIFEM, DAW, INSTRAW, and OSAGI) for gender equality. A new Under-Secretary-General will take over the leadership and the entity will promote significant contribution of civil society organizations to the work of UN Women. The new entity is expected to be functioning as of January 2011.

http://www.wedo.org/ : Women's Empowerment & Development Organization is committed to empower women as decision makers to attain gender equality and puts emphasis on women's critical role in social, economic, and political area.

http://www.unanima-international.org/eng/ is a coalition of Roman Catholic sisters who organize to support women and children in economic poverty, immigrants and refugees and welfare on the planet. They have 17,500 members and are active in 72 countries.

http://commissioner.cws.coe.int features Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, Thomas Hammarberg's Human Rights Comments.

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