



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women

*An international volunteer organization working to
improve the lives of women and girls, in local
communities and throughout the world.*

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award Club Instructions

Program Overview

Program Description

According to the report from the Girl Scout Research Institute, *Exploring Girls' Leadership*, girls believe that being a leader means making a difference in the world. It means focusing on helping others and making a commitment to fight against social injustices. The Violet Richardson Award program recognizes young women ages 14-17 for demonstrating leadership by identifying an issue that is important to them in their communities and the world and addressing it through their volunteer efforts. In addition to recognizing young women for their efforts to make the world a better place, the program provides recipients with leadership opportunities to encourage and support them to continue their work as community leaders.

Leadership for these girls is defined as having identified a social, political and/or economic need, locally or globally, and taking action to address the need and bring about positive change. This does not mean, however, that applicants must have started their own not-for-profit business or have accomplished a miraculous feat. Just taking a first step to try to make a difference in an area that is important to the applicant should be recognized as exhibiting leadership qualities and aspirations.

The award is in honor of the president of the first Soroptimist club, Violet Richardson, a woman of action, whose indomitable spirit and sense of personal responsibility were demonstrated by her lifelong commitment to volunteering in her community. In tribute to Violet, the award is given to girls who are pursuing their leadership aspirations through volunteer service.

All awards are given for activities conducted on a volunteer basis. Volunteer projects can include, but are not limited to, projects that address social problems such as homelessness, violence, drug abuse, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, AIDS, and pollution. Projects may assist any group including the elderly, the disabled, and mentally or emotionally challenged groups.

Projects that benefit women or girls are especially valued. Topics can include, but are not limited to mentoring, sexual harassment, sexual decision-making, teen parenting, careers, finances and any other projects that specifically benefit women, young women or girls.

This award is based solely on the applicant's volunteer work and leadership qualities. This award is an opportunity to honor a girl who might not otherwise receive recognition. She may not be the best student, the best athlete, or the most popular girl in school, but she is committed to making the world a better place.

Who is the Violet Richardson Award Honoree?

- A young woman who is caring, compassionate, creative and most of all committed to making the world a better place.
- A young woman who has demonstrated leadership and initiative in both identifying a problem and in trying to solve it. Taking a first step in making a difference in the world shows both leadership and initiative.
- A young woman who has had significant and noteworthy accomplishments as a volunteer.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be young women 14 to 17 years of age.
- Applicants must be engaged in volunteer activity.
- Soroptimist members, SIA employees and their immediate families are not eligible for any Soroptimist monetary award available to the public. Immediate family is defined to include spouse/partner, parents, siblings, children and grandchildren by adoption, blood or marriage. Previous winners of the award are also ineligible.

Sample Program Timeline

It will be the responsibility of each club to set their own deadlines for applications and judging.

December 1: Application deadline.

December- January: Hold club-level judging.

January- February: Inform applicants of their award status.

*NOTE: Some regions may conduct the program at the region-level. Please contact your Region Governor to learn if your region participates in the Violet Richardson Award program.

How the Program Works

Local Soroptimist clubs begin by soliciting applications in their communities. After applications are received, clubs will hold a judging to determine their club award recipient.

An honoree may receive a certificate or recognition in the local newspaper. Clubs may also give a cash award, given in her honor, to the organization, agency or charity where she is most active. Focus group outcomes consistently demonstrated that teens particularly appreciate public recognition. Soroptimist clubs will also benefit from the attention. Clubs are encouraged to put an extra effort into public recognition of their honoree. For assistance with public relations efforts, please refer to the Violet Richardson Award [resources](#) available in the program section of the members' area of the SIA website.

Award recipients should also be provided with leadership opportunities within the club. Supporting and encouraging girl leaders by providing them with opportunities to further develop their leadership skills is a critical factor in ensuring they become agents of change in the future. For research shows there is a strong correlation between leadership opportunities and leadership aspirations. A great way to do this is to have your club's recipient be a member of your Dream It, Be It girls advisory group. This gives them the opportunity to gain important leadership skills and gives your club a valuable partner in your program's development. For more

information about forming a girls advisory group check out our resource “A Guideline for Partnering with Girls.” Additional ideas for providing leadership opportunities are included in Step 10 of the club instructions listed below.

Website Resources

All the materials your club needs to participate in the Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award program are available in the program section of the members’ area of the SIA web site. Listed below is a comprehensive list of all Violet Richardson Award [resources](#) available:

Club Participation

Violet Richardson Award Emailable Application
Violet Richardson Award Club Participation Instructions (writable)
Violet Richardson Award Certificate (writable)

Public Awareness

Violet Richardson Award Information Poster (writable)
Violet Richardson Award Information Poster Instructions
Violet Richardson Award Sample Publicity Materials

Club Instructions

Step 1: Appoint a Chair

Step 2: Determine the Award the Club Will Give the Honoree

Step 3: Prepare the Application and Brochure for Distribution

Step 4: Distribute the Applications

Step 5: Schedule the Selection of the Honoree

Step 6: Obtain Publicity for the Program

Step 7: Select an Honoree

Step 8: Acknowledge Applicants

Step 9: Recognize the Club Honoree

Step 10: Provide the Recipients with Leadership Opportunities

Step 1: Appoint a Chair

The club president should designate a chair for the program. The chair may then wish to form a committee to assist with distributing applications, selecting the honoree, planning an event to honor her, and getting media attention.

Step 2: Determine the Award the Club Will Give

Determine the type of award the club will give to the honoree. This is important to do before communicating with the public and potential applicants about the award. Because this is not a scholarship, but an award to acknowledge a girl's volunteer action and leadership qualities, a monetary award to the girl is not necessary. Instead consider a gift that could help her with her volunteer work or a donation to her volunteer organization. The club can recognize the honoree at a club meeting or a special event.

It is strongly recommended that part of the honor includes public recognition. Public recognition such as an announcement in the local paper about the club's honoree and her volunteer organization can go far in making the honoree feel truly recognized for her volunteer work and community leadership. A public recognition event will also be helpful in attracting applicants in subsequent years. The public recognition that the club gives to the honoree and her volunteer organization is also good for the club's standing in the community.

NOTE: Certain U.S. tax legislation affects the taxability of awards, which includes the Violet Richardson Award. These awards are not designed as scholarships, therefore recipients must report their monetary awards as income. As taxable income, clubs and regions must provide Form 1099MISC by January 31 (of the following year) to all individuals receiving \$600 or more in one year. Copies must also be provided to the IRS by February 28. Recipients should consult IRS Publication 520, "Scholarships and Fellowships," Tax Topic 421, "Scholarship and Fellowship Grants," and IRS Publication 525, "Taxable and Nontaxable Income," or their tax planner for further information. In order to comply with U.S. tax regulations, it is imperative that the social security number and complete name and address of each recipient be obtained.

Step 3: Prepare the Application for Distribution

The Violet Richardson Award application is available in all federation languages as an easy-to-use writeable PDF form. Soroptimist clubs can email the application to partner organizations or directly to individual applicants. Applicants will then be able to complete the application online and email the completed form directly to clubs. The [writeable application](#) can be found in the program section of the members' area of the SIA website.

Generally speaking, girls age 14-17 spend a lot of time on-line and are very adept in their use of the internet. They will be comfortable with and confident in their use of a writeable/emailable form.

Please remember to add club contact information on each application, including an email address and phone number, if possible. This is especially important because applications are not accepted at SIA headquarters so it is imperative that you supply club contact information.

Step 4: Distribute the Applications

It is recommended that the club distribute a minimum of 25 applications to ensure sufficient returns for the selection of one honoree. If the club would like a larger pool or plans to offer multiple awards, distribute 50 applications. The emailable form makes it easier than ever to distribute applications, allowing clubs to email directly to applicants or partner organizations. Please refer to page 7 for a sample letter that clubs can use when emailing applications to partner organizations. Also, please note that a typed name on a writeable/emailable application will serve as the applicant's signature. This is stated on the application form as follows: "By typing your name below you adhere to the above requirements."

Applications can be emailed to religious facilities, community centers, libraries, schools, and places of business. Perhaps the best place to distribute applications is to volunteer organizations. Program administrators at these organizations would serve as excellent referrals for the kind of young woman the award targets.

Step 5: Schedule Selection of the Honoree

Schedule the selection process and invite panelists as early as possible in order to get a commitment from panelists who have busy schedules and many demands for their time.

Step 6: Obtain Publicity for the Program

The Violet Richardson Award helps brand Soroptimist as an organization that works to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. For Soroptimist to gain global recognition, however, the word must get out at the community level through participation in Soroptimist programs, and strong, consistent publicity efforts. This can be accomplished in several ways by:

- Publicizing to the local media, nearby schools and community organizations about the availability of applications.
- Providing information about the program on the club web site (if applicable).
- Selecting local, prominent non-Soroptimists to serve on the judging panel, such as members of the media, school officials, dignitaries or other leaders in the community.
- Publicizing the program and the club's recipient to the local media and her school.
- Holding a special event to recognize the recipient(s) during Women's History Month/International Women's Day (March 8); publicizing this event to the local media.

Sample [publicity materials](#) for the Violet Richardson Award are available in the program section of the members' area of the Soroptimist website. Club members handling publicity for the program should take the time to learn about the program's objectives and requirements to easily answer questions from applicants and the media. The publicity packet contains materials that clubs can adapt with their own information to gain publicity for the program within their communities.

Step 7: Select an Honoree

The honoree may be selected by a panel of Soroptimist members or an outside panel of non-members. A panel consisting of three or five individuals is recommended. The panel may be charged with selecting the honoree outright or in screening applicants for selection of two or three young women for a personal interview. Clubs are encouraged to invite two or more candidates to a personal interview with the selection panel. This is a good way to personalize the program and to get to know the young women applying. The interview is not mandatory. As stated previously, the panel may complete the selection of the Violet Richardson Award honoree without an interview. Please refer to pages 8 and 10 respectively for evaluation and interview worksheets.

Step 8: Acknowledge Applicants

Acknowledge receipt of applications by sending each applicant a brief note thanking her for her application, congratulating her for her efforts and informing her that another applicant was selected.

Step 9: Recognize the Club Honoree

In Step 2, the club determined how the Violet Richardson Award honoree would be recognized. Clubs may wish to recognize the honoree at a club meeting, hold a special event or combine the awards ceremony with the Live Your Dream: Education and Training Award (formerly the Women's Opportunity Awards) and Ruby Award recognition. Some clubs recognize honorees with a special event on March 8th, International Women's Day.

Step 10: Provide Recipients with Leadership Opportunities

What young women need most to increase their self-confidence as a leader are supportive environments where they can express themselves, develop their voice and gain leadership experience. The goal is to help young women build confidence in themselves and to encourage their leadership aspirations. Young women are a vital source of creativity and innovation in realizing long-term social change. Yet girls continue to suffer from low self-esteem and confidence. Unfortunately, the fact that most strongly influences girls' desire to pursue leadership is confidence in skills and competencies.

As mentioned above, inviting your club's recipient to join your Dream It, Be It girls advisory group is a great way to build leadership experience. Your girls advisory group will help to develop a sense of pride and a commitment to helping others within girls. Letting your recipient have the authority to make key decisions about Dream It, Be It will empower them. It helps to develop important skills such as leadership, planning and teamwork. Also, being a part of a partnership can build a sense of belonging and the feeling of being needed and valued.

The following is a list of other simple things clubs can do to foster self-confidence amongst award recipients while providing them with leadership opportunities. The list is by no means exhaustive.

- Have the recipients serve as an advisor to the club when conducting a girl-focused project.
- Engage recipients in the planning of club projects focused on issues that are of interest to them.
- Ask past award recipients to serve as judges for the award in subsequent years.
- Invite recipients to give a presentation of their work at meetings, conferences or events other than the award ceremony to provide interactive opportunities for recipients to speak knowledgeably about their work in front of others.

Sample Applicant Recruiting Email Letter

The *Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award* application is available as an easy-to-use writeable PDF form. Soroptimist clubs can email the application to partner organizations, such as high schools or girl-centered organizations, such as the Girl Scouts. The high school or organization can then distribute, also via email, the application to prospective applicants. In addition, clubs can email the application directly to individual girls. In either case, the applicants will then be able to fill out the form on-line and email the completed application directly to the club.

However, before emailing the form to an organization or an individual, **clubs must fill in the club contact information** on the application instruction page. This is the most important step in using the writeable form – applicants must know where to email their application.

Clubs may use the Sample Applicant Recruiting Letter below when emailing applications to partner organizations.

September 1, 20XX

Sarah Jones, Dean of Students
Walt Whitman High School
55 Main Avenue
Anytown, Anystate 55555

Dear Ms. Jones,

Do you know a young woman between the ages of 14 and 17 who exhibits leadership qualities as a volunteer in your community or school? Who sees challenges instead of obstacles? Hope instead of despair? If you know a young woman who believes in the power of volunteer action, then she may be eligible for a *Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award*.

The *Violet Richardson Award* is Soroptimist International of the Americas' leadership and volunteer recognition program dedicated to teen girls. Soroptimist International of Anytown is one of nearly 1,400 clubs that make up Soroptimist International of the Americas, a global women's organization whose members volunteer to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.

The *Violet Richardson Award* recognizes young women leaders who make the community and world a better place through volunteer efforts. This does not necessarily mean starting one's own not-for-profit business or accomplishing a miraculous feat. Taking a first step in trying to make a difference in the world is recognized as showing leadership and initiative. Volunteer actions that benefit women or girls are of particular interest. Although we realize that volunteering is its own reward, we also know the power that positive reinforcement brings, especially in supporting and encouraging young women to continue their work as a community volunteer leader.

Please find attached an emailable *Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award* application. Please forward these materials to any young women you know who are dedicated to serving their communities through volunteer work. We have included our club's contact information in the materials so that applicants may submit the applications directly to us. We hope that you can take a moment out of your busy day to help recognize a young woman in your community by forwarding her this information.

Thank you for your time and support. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Diane Banks, Chair
Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award, Soroptimist International of Anytown

Violet Richardson Award Application Evaluation Worksheet

Applicant Name: _____

PART I: Basic Requirements (A “no” response disqualifies the applicant.)

The application is complete and is signed.

____yes ____no

The applicant is between the ages of 14 and 17 on December 1.

____yes ____no

PART II: Scoring

Please rate the applicant on items A through E based on your reading of the applicant’s responses in her application. A total of 100 points is a perfect score.

A. (30 Points)

The applicant shows leadership qualities by having identified a need and taken volunteer action to bring about positive change.

Score_____

B. (20 Points)

The applicant has demonstrated initiative in identifying a social problem and trying to solve it or identifying a need and trying to fill it.

Score_____

C. (20 Points)

The applicant has had significant and noteworthy accomplishments as a volunteer.

Score_____

D. (20 Points)

The applicant is an inspiration to other girls.

Score_____

E. (10 points)

The applicant’s volunteer action benefits women or girls.

Score_____

TOTAL SCORE:_____

Violet Richardson Award Personal Interview Guidelines

Clubs may wish to hold personal interviews with two or three applicants after a panel has screened applications. Depending on the schedules of the panelists, clubs may use the same or a different panel for rating the applications and conducting the personal interview.

A rating sheet for the interview is provided in this packet. To weight the interview evenly with the application, simply average the applicant's average score on the application with her average personal interview score. The weight of the personal interview in an applicant's total score is up to the club.

The personal interview is a great way to get to know applicants. An interview can also be very intimidating for even the most accomplished applicant so it is important to make her comfortable before and during the interview. Helping her to be at her best will help the club to get the information and insight needed to select a club honoree. In addition, conducting an interview will provide the applicants with an opportunity to express themselves and gain experience speaking in front of others, both of which are conducive to developing an increased sense of self-confidence as a leader.

Begin with easy questions about the applicant's background, interests and family. These questions help the applicant to relax.

- Where do you go to school?
- What are your hobbies?

The remainder of the questions can focus on her application. Ask her to elaborate on certain points she made in her essay. If there are any important details left out of her application, ask her to fill them in.

These questions can include:

- What does being a leader mean for you?
- Provide an example of a time when you served in a leadership capacity.
- Why do you volunteer?
- How many hours per week do you volunteer?
- Why did you select the organization where you volunteer?
- What is your greatest accomplishment as a volunteer?
- What is your greatest strength as a volunteer?
- How do you think your work, and the work of your organization, helps the community?
- Are there any skills you have learned from volunteering that you think you will use later in life?
- What was your best moment as a volunteer? What was your worst moment?
- What more could your volunteer organization do to help others?
- Who are your role models?
- What is your vision of yourself as a future leader?

The final questions can be for the club's information:

- What did you think of this selection process?
- How do you think volunteer leaders like yourself and other girls should be recognized by their community?

End the interview on a positive note. Be sure to tell the applicant how impressed the club is with her and the work she does for the community.

Violet Richardson Award Interview Evaluation Worksheet

Applicant Name: _____

Scoring:

Please rate the applicant on items A through E based on your understanding of the applicant's responses in her interview. A total of 100 points is a perfect score.

A. (30 Points)

The applicant shows leadership qualities by having identified a need and taken volunteer action to bring about positive change.

Score _____

B. (20 Points)

The applicant has demonstrated initiative in identifying a social problem and trying to solve it or identifying a need and trying to fill it.

Score _____

C. (20 Points)

The applicant has had significant and noteworthy accomplishments as a volunteer.

Score _____

D. (20 Points)

The applicant is an inspiration to other girls.

Score _____

E. (10 points)

The applicant's volunteer action benefits women, young women or girls.

Score _____

TOTAL SCORE: _____