



SOROPTIMIST  
Best for Women

# Soroptimist International of the Sierra Foothills (SISF)

October 2024  
2024/2025 Volume 8, Issue 1

## Food and Conversation at Lily's Garden

Lily's Garden provided the backdrop for an SISF gathering with one goal in mind, and that was an opportunity for socialization.

The Program Committee invited all members and potential new members to gather. This was a time to visit with one another and become better acquainted, especially since once the official year begins, so does work, that of committees, fundraising, and supporting women and children in our community and beyond.

The evening began with a surprise visit from Barbara and Don Scoble. No SISF event would be complete without Barbara's beautiful smile. Even though not well enough to be around folks in an enclosed space, that didn't stop Barbara from having Don bring her to the garden where she came bearing gifts, delicious chocolates



Barbara and Don stop by to visit as with guests as they arrive at Lily's Garden for an evening of socializing.

eating began. Cooking is one of the many talents that SISF members possess. Everyone was asked to bring either a salad or a dessert, and all delivered. No one left hungry!

The remainder of the evening was devoted to visiting. Some shared stories of summer vacations, while others recalled time spent with friends and family. Prospective new members were encouraged to join the organization.



Sharyn visits with Suzie James, a potential new member, and Shelley Bryan who has just returned from an amazing trip out of country.

and wine from her special collection. Everyone was thrilled to see how well Barbara was feeling and let her know that before long she will be back with us.

Potential new members were also welcomed and had an opportunity to interact with the group.

Many took the time to walk the beautiful gardens while delicious horderves and desserts were set out on tables in the special gathering room at Lily's.

Once guests were welcomed by President Linda and all in attendance introduced themselves to the group, the



Members enjoy visiting with each other, the sole purpose intended by the Program Committee who organized the event.



# Scammers Have Open Portal Into Lives

Twenty-eight-year law enforcement veteran, Randy Billingsley, recently shared valuable information concerning scams and how they are affecting lives.

Billingsley has spent the last 14 years serving in Nevada County. From 2009-2019, he was the Chief Investigator at the District Attorney’s office. In 2020, he served as a Captain and then the Chief of Police in Truckee until he retired in 2022. He is currently working as a private investigator and is also the head coach of the Bear River Boys Basketball Team.

During Billingsley’s work in the field of law enforcement, he has seen many people be taken advantage of, including the difficult circumstances of identity theft involving his own Mother shortly after the death of her husband. One morning, Billingsley got a call from his Mother saying that UPS was on the phone with her. He told her to hang up and unplug her computer, but unfortunately, she had given them some information because they “seemed so official.”

Mrs. Billingsley simply explained, “They seemed so official.” She herself had worked in Silicon Valley where she designed military software. She is honest and couldn’t believe that someone would take advantage of her. It took six months of due diligence for her identity to be recovered.

“Con artists and foreign entities really hyped it up during Covid,” explained Billingsley. “They have an open portal into our lives,” he continued. This is due to cell phones, computers, etc. Further, these scammers are very sophisticated and are able to access social security numbers, driver’s license numbers, and credit cards.

Billingsley shared that every public entity has been hacked by foreign entities, so nothing is safe from this type of crime. Hackers find “worm holes,” so the government now has many firewalls in place to avoid being hacked and having public information held for ransom.

Billingsley recommends credit monitoring provided by companies such as Dave Ramsey’s Zander, Lifelock, and Experian. These systems monitor information on the Dark Web and alert subscribers to any unusual activity. They also include protection against the loss of things such as deeds of trust and monitor home equities, etc.

The Dark Web involves everything that is bad on the web and is mostly foreign. Those involved with the Dark Web usually sell personal information; therefore, a credit monitoring service helps prevent one from being hacked.

Billingsley explained the why for a monitoring system by saying, “If a big mean man was at your door at night, would you let him in?”



Randy Billingsley, a veteran law enforcement member, shares a very personal story about how his own highly educated and trusting Mother was scammed. With all of his knowledge of scams, it took six months for her identity to be restored.

He also said to never answer a home phone call if you don’t know who it is who is calling. He explained that if it is a legitimate caller, the person will leave a message.

Using email, hackers “phish” on the internet. Billingsley said an easy way to identify them is to check the header behind the name. If it is not identifiable, the email should be deleted.

Scams are out there, and in many forms. Consumers need to be aware of scams and cognizant of what they have to lose.

# Presidents' Message



We are hoping everyone has had an enjoyable and restful summer and is energized and ready to hit the ground running.

Our group has dealt with a variety of health issues and is hopefully returning stronger than ever. First and foremost, our goal for our group is that we take care of one another. We want to encourage members to check in on each other and to not hesitate to call one of us if you need help.

Since the Harvest Festival is not happening this fall, the plan is to introduce a gas card drawing as a way to boost the general fund. It seems like a fairly easy way to raise money, since most people use gas. Of course, all members will be asked to help promote the drawing by talking it up then selling tickets to friends and family.

We are also thrilled that Paula has agreed to chair this year's Annual Garden Tour, which will occur next May 17 and 18. Once she returns from her world travels, we can all expect that she will be asking us to sign up for a variety of jobs, from making garden shop items, to selling sponsorships, to selling tickets, and the list goes on. Since this is our major fundraiser of the year, we know that we can count on everyone to step up to help as much as their schedules allow. Do remember that each of us is expected to work one of the days of the tour or find a friend to cover.

Our Program Committee is working on scheduling social activities on a regular basis, since we need to make time to have fun while enjoying each other's company. In August, we met at Lily's Garden, and this month, as many of us who were available headed to Maria's for lunch. These events are billed as purely for fun, not for conducting SISF business.

Committees are meeting and organizing. Arranging speakers, brainstorming fundraising ideas, establishing a greater social media presence, inviting potential new members, promoting the Live Your Dream program, and scheduling regular social activities are all in the works.

As you can all see, we are off and running. We promise to stay in touch with those who are not yet well enough to return and to let you know if they need anything whatsoever.

We are truly looking forward to working and socializing with all of you as we head into another year of supporting our community.

Lynn and Linda

# Committees 2024-2025

## Awards & Recognition

- |                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Susan Warner         | Shelley Bryan |
| Susan VanSteenkiste. | Carol Nimick  |
| Jill Myers           |               |

## Media

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Lynn McDaniel  | Jenny Darlington |
| Heather Thorpe | Margie Carr      |

## Membership

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Susan Rasmussen | Linda Fischer |
| Suzie Krill     | Liz McAteer   |

## Programs & Activities

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Helen Hansen   | Linda Decker     |
| Kyra Kelley    | Kristy Dal Porto |
| Barbara Scoble |                  |

## Service

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Sue Williams  | Trish Gerving |
| Sharyn Turner | Robyn Ettl    |

## Ways & Means

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Wendy Price    | Ann Erdmann   |
| Paula Campbell | Linda Fuentes |
| Merrill Kagan  |               |

A special thank you to Kristy and the Program Committee for organizing a delightful SISF lunch date for us at Maria's last Tuesday. The goal was simply to have together time devoted to nothing but enjoying each other's company, and that we did.

The setting couldn't have

been better, the food was delicious, and those who were able to be there are already looking forward to the next social activity. We were sad that Kristy couldn't join us because Covid managed to get the best of her.

Kristy, Get Well Soon!!!

Save the Date:  
Saturday, May 17 and  
Sunday, May 18  
Annual Garden Tour



# Merrill Kagan Brings Her Energy to SISF



Merrill and her grandson, Aurum, enjoy time together at The Children's Festival in Nevada City.

Recently, SISF welcomed Merrill Kagan, who transferred to our club from the American River Club in Auburn, following her move to Grass Valley.

Merrill has been a Soroptimist since 2002, once her daughters were grown. "I waited until my kids were grown because I knew I would be all in, committed to the organization," said Merrill. She initially joined the Auburn Club, then in 2013 moved to the American River Club, also in Auburn.

Merrill was born in Philadelphia. Eventually, her family migrated to the west coast, then she followed in the mid- 1970's, initially settling in the Los Angeles area.

A print shop in Los Angeles hired Merrill, and this began her career in the world of printing and matrimony. One day, a paper salesman walked into the shop, and their meeting led to a long happy married life.

Merrill and her husband had two daughters. When their

oldest daughter was one, the Kagans decided to get out of the LA area. They purchased a small print shop in Auburn, which her husband worked while Merrill found work with a big printer in Sacramento. Before long, the Merrills' business grew from a three-person shop to one with 19 employees, which allowed Merrill to stop commuting to Sacramento and work alongside her husband.

Merrill and her husband sold their business and were ready for retirement, but not too long after, Merrill's husband died. Following his death, Merrill decided she needed a change and fell in love with Nevada County. Here, she purchased a small place, and eventually, her youngest daughter moved into the house right next door to her, which couldn't have worked out better since she gave birth to a preemie and needed a lot of help.

Merrill lights up when talking about her grandson, Aurum, which is Latin for gold. She said at four, he is gold and has an amazing personality.

In June, Merrill lost her oldest daughter. She was mother to 10-year-old Evelyn, named after Merrill's Mother, and to seven-year-old Solomon. Merrill is on-call to help their dad. She even volunteers in their classrooms at the Bowman School in Auburn.

When asked about her other interests, Merrill explained that she was an equestrian and is still involved in the Tevis Cup ride, the annual 100-mile ride in the Sierras that has riders going from Tahoe to Auburn. She willingly works whatever job they need filled during the event.

Since 2022, Merrill has been a Master Gardener, having taken a six-month course to achieve her status. "My yard is small, so I spend most of my gardening time at the Master Gardeners garden located at NID," shared Merrill.

Merrill is also a volunteer at the Center for the Arts. One of her roles there is being an ambassador for the Center, which means that she answers questions about membership.

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, Merrill will be performing her Civic Duty by serving as a poll worker on Election Day.

Merrill is excited to be a member of SISF and is looking forward to promoting women and children in our local community.

**Next Meeting is Thursday,  
November 7th**

# NID's Sharon Hull Provides Local Water Update

NID Division III Director, Karen Hull, came to talk about NID's water storage situation, current water reserves, and the status of the proposed Centennial Dam project.

Hull was elected to the NID Board in 2020. She earned an MBA from California State University Sacramento and worked at UC Davis as an Associate Vice Chancellor,



Liz thanks NID Division III Director, Karen Hull, for taking time out of her busy schedule to provide an update on what is going on with NID. She began by explaining that NID itself is 100 years old and that our water infrastructure in Nevada County dates back to the Gold Rush era.

Managing a \$33 million budget and 175 employees.

She also oversaw UC Davis' Human Resources, which involved dealing with 16,000 employees. Before retiring, Hull started a commercial flower farm in Placer County. They specialize in growing peonies, ranunculus and ixia. She and her husband also operate a donkey rescue.

An interesting fact that Hull shared is that 94 percent of our water in Nevada County goes to irrigation, for agriculture and farming and for people who depend on it.

This year's storage capacity is at 104 percent of the 10-year average high in the mountains. Rollins topped out at 67,000-acre feet before irrigation season. It got down to 39,000-acre feet but is currently back up to 44,000-acre feet and climbing.

Hull shared about the two major repairs. The large repair in the mountains was successful, which is allowing Rollins and Scotts Flat to gain water. The second repair to the frozen powerhouse generator is a number one priority.

In the event this repair is delayed and water isn't generated to the rim, a bypass system will be used. Since there are two horns on the system, Hull explained that if all goes well with the first repairs, work on the second will begin in March. If that isn't possible, the repair may not be able to occur until the irrigation system closes in 2025.

One question posed was why some ditches continue to run after the irrigation system ends. Hull explained that some ditches have to continue to run because some homes depend on this water.

Hull also took some time to address the Centennial vs Rollins issue. She explained that right now, the district has adequate water supply and needs PG&E to work well with NID. They can buy PG&E water, if needed, which is a practical way to manage droughts, but an automated system would allow access to this water all of the time. Another option is on-site water storage, which needs to be implemented with PG&E.

Eventually, water storage will need to be augmented, and the Centennial proposal would provide this but more for Placer County than for NID customers.

The Centennial would involve damming the Bear River between Rollins and Combie Lakes, which would destroy the Bear River and cost a billion dollars.

Hull explained that we are a small water district and that never did a "what can we afford" approach be taken when the Centennial discussion took place. She also pointed out the fact that local rate payers have to be taken into consideration. "The rates to sustain the project would destroy all," said Hull.

The capper to the project proposal is that NID doesn't have the water rights and has been trying to acquire them since 1927.

Hull said the key for NID is that the district purchased the 17-mile canal for a dollar. The canal goes through a wooded area where there had been an 8.5-mile slide across a steep area, which NID was totally aware of and knew had to be fortified.

Currently, our power plants need major upgrades, and NID is seeking state funding, grants, etc. to make this happen. Additionally, NID pipelines are old and need to systematically be upgraded, and water rates will have to go along with this.

Hull ended by sharing that NID supports the Healthy Rivers and Landscape Program, since it is based on available water.



# District Meeting Draws Clubs to Woodland

"Let's Take Flight!" was the theme for this year's District 2 meeting held in Mojo's Lounge in Woodland.

The Woodland club was proud to share that their club was founded in 1946 and has been active ever since, which was evident as they enthusiastically welcomed attendees. There were raffle baskets, gifts, and recognitions throughout the day.

The Sierra Nevada Region's theme for the year is "Making Dreams Soar," which was explained by District Governor Stacey Jensen, who also introduced the Region's Governor-Elect, Kathy Dunbar, who was proud to mention that her sister is Paula Campbell, our SISF Garden Tour and Shop chair extraordinaire.

Early on in the meeting, Jennifer Young, SNR District 2 Director, an SI Woodland member, recognized first-time attendees at a District Meeting, and Lynn was recognized and received a themed pair of socks. The Making Dreams Soar theme was represented by the hummingbird, a thoughtful choice.

Governor Jensen recommended that members who are interested in learning what is going on in SIA should go to SIA's U-Tube channel, @SIAHQ. Information is there in six different languages, so viewers should be aware that the program runs slowly.

Governor-Elect Kathy reminded the group that the 49<sup>th</sup> SNR Conference will take place next June 6-8, at the Atlantis, in Reno. She encouraged all to attend because there will be "lots to vote on."

August 16-17, 2025, is the date that has been set the next

Development Retreat, which will also be held at the Atlantis.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Bi-annual SIA Convention will occur in South Korea July 22-25, 2026. Clubs were encouraged to budget at least 500 dollars a year, because each club is billed every convention year for one attendee, whether someone from the club attends or not, and it is expected that this year's 850 dollar fee will only increase over the next two years.

All were encouraged to check the SNR website regularly. On the site, to access any roster for information, the password is 1921, the year the Soroptimist organization was founded.

SNR members are encouraged to access the region's U-Tube channel, @sierranevadaregionsoroptimist. Here one can find a variety of videos, many of them valuable training videos for new officers, information about programs such as Dream It Be It and the Uplift Her initiative, with a 10-year goal to reach 500,000 girls.

It was explained that the meeting's presentations and much more information about the region is available on the District's website.

It was also announced that SNR is looking for someone who might be interested in taking on the position of E-Blast coordinator. Anyone considering this position should contact one of the SNR officers.

Many asked how SNR clubs can help Florida. The officers are in contact with SIA and Soroptimist clubs in the area and promise to share information via SNR E-blast.



As the meeting came to an end, all in attendance were asked to meet on the deck for a group picture. Mojo's Lounge, a popular hot spot in the heart of old town Woodland, was a great location for the meeting. The staff was welcoming and accommodating. Merrill and Lynn represented SISF.