

Soroptimist International Chico

For as long as Bonnie Chapman can remember, she has been a leader. *"I'm a first-born, and I've always had that tendency,"* she laughs. In high school, she joined student government. In college, she was an RA. As a parent, she spent 13 years as a Girl Scouts troop leader. By the time that she joined Soroptimist, she *"just wanted to dive in"*—and she became president just a few years later. By overseeing Chico's chapter of the international organization, Bonnie leads members in countless programs to help women of all ages and backgrounds.

"Soroptimist felt like a perfect fit for me," Bonnie remembers: not only does the organization focus on acts of service, but it allowed her to connect meaningfully with other women after her children left for college. Splitting her weeks between a writing job and the volunteer organization, Bonnie spends up to 20 hours a week organizing 80 members and six committees in meetings, programs, scholarships, and more—benefiting everyone from single mothers in Butte County to young girls in developing countries. *"There's a lot of wheels turning all the time,"* she says about the organization. *"It takes a village, but that's just how we operate."*

Seeing that many of Soroptimist's programs benefited younger women, Bonnie decided to educate herself and others on struggles that the senior population faces as well. With this goal in mind, she selected Alzheimer's disease as the chapter's annual focus. Soroptimist International Chico has already raised over \$10,000 during the Walk to End Alzheimer's, and continued to aid Alzheimer's research with April's Hilarity for Charity fundraising event. By inviting experts to talk to her group chapter meetings about the cause, Bonnie feels more inspired than ever. *"So much information that has been brought to our group,"* she says. *"It's important to know that there's work being done, and that research looks promising for the future."*

Soon the Chico chapter will celebrate its 90th birthday—with some members having served for over 50 years—and Bonnie is thrilled to lead alongside other women as driven as she is. She was struck with this sense of unity when participating in last year's international convention in Japan: *"We're all doing the same thing; we all have the same mission. That was so powerful."* After years of moving between organizations, Bonnie has found a group that she can grow with, creating lasting change by helping other women succeed. When she listens to previous Soroptimist scholarship recipients and program graduates tell their stories, she knows that the work is worth it. *"They'll come back and say, 'Your confidence in me gave me the knowledge that I could do what I set out to do—and now I have.'"*