



Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award Club Instructions 2008-2009

Program Overview

Program Description

The Violet Richardson Award is a recognition program for young women ages 14-17 engaged in volunteer action within their communities or schools.

The Violet Richardson Award is given to young women whose volunteer activities make the community and world a better place. 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.

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. 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 initiative in both identifying a problem and in trying to solve it.
- 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 as of December 1 – the deadline for application.
- Applicants must be engaged in volunteer activity.
- Soroptimists, Soroptimist employees and the immediate families of both are ineligible. Previous winners of the award are also ineligible.

Program Deadlines

December 1: Completed applications to club.

January 15: Club honoree's application due to district or region. (The process varies by region. You must check with your region chair or governor to find out where to send the club honoree's application.)

For region chair contact information, please visit the leadership directory in the members-only section of the Soroptimist website at www.soroptimist.org.

March 15: Region honoree's application to federation (SIA Headquarters).

Federation awards packets, including checks, are sent to region governors beginning in April. Federation-level judging takes place in May and the federation honoree is announced in July or August.

How the Program Works

The Violet Richardson Award begins at the club-level. Local Soroptimist clubs solicit applications in their communities. Applicants should be advised that club-level recognition varies and depends on the club to which they are applying.

An honoree may receive certificates 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. Special public relations materials provided by SIA headquarters are available in the library of the member's only section of the Soroptimist website and will assist clubs in obtaining media attention.

Club-level honorees become eligible for region-level awards. One region-level cash prize of \$1,000 will be given to the region honoree and an additional \$1,000, given in her honor, to the organization where she is most active as a volunteer.

Each region-level honoree is eligible for the federation-level award. This honor culminates in one young woman receiving international recognition, a certificate, a personal gift from Soroptimist and \$2,500 given in her honor to the organization where she is most active as a volunteer. The federation will use a panel of non-Soroptimist judges to make the final decision. Applications that are not complete or are ineligible will not be included in the judging.

The federation award will be given at the biennial convention or during another federation meeting. The Violet Richardson Award federation honoree may be invited to attend these events to receive the award in person.

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: Submit the Application for Further Awards

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. The club chair is responsible for submitting the honoree to the region chair.

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, 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 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.

Step 3: Prepare the Application and Brochure for Distribution

Neither the application nor the brochure should be photocopied.

Packets of 25 applications with brochures can be ordered from SIA headquarters. Order forms are available in the program section of the members' area of the Soroptimist website. Orders will be processed as they are received and can take two to three weeks within the continental United States and longer for clubs outside of the United States.

Place contact information in the box on the back panel of each application. Make sure it is complete and includes a phone number in case applicants have questions. Completed applications will not be accepted at headquarters so it is imperative that you supply the 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. Because printed materials are costly, please follow up with the places you distribute the applications to increase the rate of return.

Applications can be distributed at 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. Remember that applications are due to the club on December 1st and that the club honoree's application must be sent on for further awards by January 15. This allows only six weeks for the club to complete the selection process and meet the region or district deadline. For many clubs, this is a busy holiday season. Schedule the judging early 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 improves life for women of all ages. For Soroptimist to gain international recognition, however, the word must get out at the community level through participation in this (and other) Soroptimist programs, and strong, consistent publicity efforts. This can be accomplished in several ways by:

- **(September)** publicizing to the local media, nearby schools and community organizations about the availability of applications.
- **(September)** providing information about the program on the club web site (if applicable).
- **(December)** 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.
- **(February/March)** publicizing the program and the club's recipient to the local media and her school.
- **(March)** 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.

For more information about publicizing the Violet Richardson Award, contact SIA's public relations specialist, Kamali Brooks, at kamali@soroptimist.org.

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. This packet contains a selection guide for use by Soroptimist or non-Soroptimist panelists.

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. Furthermore, the interview will have no bearing on future awards.

Clubs may designate the number and level of awards given by the club, however, each club may select only one first-place honoree to submit for further awards (district and region-level judging).

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 Women's Opportunity Awards and Making a Difference for Women recognition. Some clubs recognize honorees with a special event on March 8th, International Women's Day.

Step 10: Submit the Application for Further Awards

WHEN: January 15th is the deadline for submitting the club honoree materials for district or region judging. The application must be received by that date.

WHERE: In some regions there is district-level judging and awards are given. In other regions, the districts screen applications for the region. In regions with no districts, applications go directly to the Violet Richardson Award region chair. Please contact the region chair for information about a specific region's procedures. For region chair contact information, please visit the leadership directory in the members' section of the Soroptimist website at www.soroptimist.org.

HOW: As stated above, only one honoree per club can be submitted for further awards. For your club's honoree to be included in the district or region-level judging, the following **MUST** be included in the packet forwarded to the district or region chair:

- The **original, signed** application. Unsigned applications will be disqualified at the region-level and will not be accepted at the federation-level.
- The completed **transmittal form** included in this packet.

Tax Regulations Affecting the Violet Richardson Awards in the U.S.A.

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.

Violet Richardson Award Suggested Timetable

April–August (prior)	Order applications from SIA headquarters. Applications may be ordered in packs of 25.
August–November 15	Initiate public relations strategy. Distribute applications and recruit applicants. Schedule panel for selection of the honoree.
December 1	Completed applications due to club.
December-January	Club-level selection process including personal interviews.
<u>January 15</u>	Club honoree application due to district or region. Check with the region chair to find out where to send the club honoree.
After January 15	Continue public relations plan with honoree recognition.

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 at the date of application.

____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 is committed to making the world a better place as evidenced by the amount of time and quality of effort dedicated to volunteering.

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, however, it is recommended that the application be weighted as one-half or more since only the application has any bearing on further awards.

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.

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:

- 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?

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

- What did you think of this selection process?
- How do you think volunteers 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 is committed to making the world a better place as evidenced by the amount of time and quality of effort dedicated to volunteering.

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: _____

Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award Club Transmittal Form 2008-2009

This form must accompany the entry submitted for judging from the club to district or region level. Keep a copy of the application and the completed transmittal form for club files and mail the **original** application and transmittal to the designated member at the district or region level by **January 15th**. For region chair contact information, please visit the leadership directory in the members-only section of the Soroptimist website at www.soroptimist.org.

DO NOT SEND CLUB MATERIALS DIRECTLY TO HEADQUARTERS.

Please fill in the information requested below:

Entry submitted by SI of _____ Region: _____

Entry submitted by (Name and Title): _____

Phone/fax/e-mail: _____

Our club held interviews as part of the selection process. Yes No

I. Our Violet Richardson Award honoree is:

Name: _____

Organization where she volunteers (include the name of organization, contact name, address, phone number and e-mail): _____

II. Recognition

1. The following recognition was given to our honoree:

a) Certificate or gift: _____ b) Cash award of US\$ _____ (amount)

c) Public recognition such as being mentioned in local press/media: (please describe)

d) Other: (please describe)

2. Awards of US\$ _____ (amount) were given to _____ (number) runners-up.

III. Donation (fill in if applicable)

1. A donation of US\$ _____ was given to her volunteer organization.

2. Donations of US\$ _____ were given to the runner-up's volunteer organizations.