



Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award Frequently Asked Questions

Information and materials for clubs to participate in the Violet Richardson Award program are available in the Club Resources: Service Program section on the Founder Region website. In the Club Instructions, clubs will find step-by-step instructions to administer the program, including tips for finding applicants and judging sheets. A club transmittal form, which is required with the club's winning application, is also provided. Questions about the program can be sent to your district representative or Violet Richardson Award Chair.

Is the Violet Richardson Award a scholarship?

The Violet Richardson Award is not a scholarship. Rather it is a leadership program that recognizes young women for their work as volunteer leaders in their community. The girls honored by the Violet Richardson Award need not be the smartest girls in school or outstanding athletes or active in other school activities. Instead, they should be girls who have demonstrated leadership and initiative in identifying a problem in their communities or the world and have worked hard to address the problem. Because this is not a scholarship, schools are not always the best places to look for candidates. Clubs should consider expanding their search for applicants to local non-profit organizations or other places where girls might volunteer.

What are the age limits for this program?

The girl must be between the ages of 14 and 18 on the deadline for the award. In other words, the deadline for the club award is November 15; therefore, the recipient must be between the ages of 14 and 18 on November 15 of the year that she applies.

Why is the age limit 14 to 18?

Founder Region has elected to include girls between the ages of 14 and 18, as many high school seniors are young women who qualify for the award based on their volunteer actions, community spirit and giving, but were previously excluded from the award qualifications due to the age limit requirements by SIA (14-17). Founder Region believes it is important to continue the spirit of the award of Violet Richardson in our region and to also include those young women who excel at their volunteerism and community giving.

Are clubs required to give money to the recipient and the charitable organization of her choice?

The club is not obligated to give award money to the recipient or her charitable organization. Focus groups that were conducted when designing the award found that teenage girls were very motivated by public recognition for their work. Clubs are encouraged to put an extra effort into public recognition of their honoree. An honoree may receive certificates or recognition in the local newspaper. This award was not designed as a scholarship, but rather a leadership and volunteer recognition program. The recipient may appreciate a cash award given in her honor to the organization, agency or charitable organization where she is most active.

Why is it important to 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. Our 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 – only 17 percent of surveyed girls see themselves as confident. Unfortunately, the fact that most strongly influences girls’ desire to pursue leadership is confidence in skills and competencies.

Clubs can help bridge this disconnect by supporting and encouraging young women to fully actualize themselves as leaders – now and in the future. Clubs can provide award recipients with leadership opportunities to develop their skills and sense of self-confidence, both equally important in ensuring they continue their work as community leaders. In short, promoting leadership in girls is a matter of fostering their self-confidence and providing supportive environments in which to acquire leadership experiences.

What are some examples of leadership opportunities clubs could provide?

The following is a list of 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 thereby providing interactive opportunities for recipients to speak knowledgeably about their work in front of others.

Why is the eligibility limited to only girls?

The mission of Soroptimist International of the Americas is to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. SIA does not discriminate against boys or men, but rather chooses to focus on the special concerns of women and girls.

Is the Violet Richardson Award application available on the web site?

Clubs can find the application and other resources on the Founder Region website, under Club Resources: Service Programs, which is designed to accommodate young women between the ages of 14-18 years old.

How do I get applications for the Violet Richardson Award?

We encourage clubs to use the writeable application form found on the Founder Region website and distribute via email.

Are “S” Club members eligible for the award?

“S” Club members are eligible for the Violet Richardson Award. However, in order to avoid any sign of impropriety, if clubs have members of their “S” club competing for the Violet Richardson Award, they should use judges who are not Soroptimists. The honoree should also be encouraged to give her donation (should she receive one) to a different charitable organization, rather than donating back to her “S” Club.

Media Exposure

To maximize potential media exposure, clubs should hold a ceremony to honor their award recipient that coincides with International Women’s Day, March 8 (March is also Women’s History Month in the U.S.). Make it a more prestigious event by also recognizing the club's Live Your Dream Award and Ruby Award recipients at the same time. Invite local dignitaries to participate in the awards gala.