

Dear Soroptimists of Bidwell-Rancho,

At the end of the year we would very much like to send our season's greetings and tell you about our club activities in 2017.

We are 36 members from 36 to 92 years of age. In October 2016 Andrea Bonse (48 years) took over as president. She is a medical doctor working with people suffering from dementia at an outpatients' clinic. Vice president is Barbara Rommé, curator of our City Museum of Muenster. Olga Felix, a lawyer, is our club secretary and gynecologist Sylvia Vornhecke covers "international affairs". Eva Hoffmann, a banker, takes care of our finances now and Sabine Schiller-Lerg (our communications consultant) continues to set up our program with the help of Heike Bungert (a Professor of History at Muenster University).

Sadly two of our long term active members died: Irmgard (only 68 years) and Lisa (81 years). All of us will miss them very much, because they were true Soroptimists in the very best sense.

This year we do have a few guests but we could not welcome any new members. Our recent and youngest member Marion Meinert, a 32 year old engineer and fire-protection expert left us for a new job in Copenhagen, but four of our club members visited her there and spent a lovely time in Denmark. Our new "goddaughter" whom we invite to our club meetings for one year to experience the idea of Soroptimism was Yoke, aged 22, a (house) painter now studying art. She enjoyed our club life very much and hopes to become a member some time.

As you know one of our ongoing club projects still consist of supporting "Cactus" the theatre group of young students (some who immigrated to Germany from African countries), so that they do learn to express themselves in German, interact with German students, understand our culture and get self-confidence. This group is run by Barbara Kemmler, one of our club members (she is an actress herself). She even organized theatre projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Kenya with some of her students and she travelled to Ghana in 2017 with Gifty, one of her students, to present a play about the differences in Germany and Ghana.

Another project is sponsoring a German language class for women refugees with small children who live in Muenster. As language is the key for integration we think this is especially important.

We do support a talented student of Music in Muenster for one year so that she does get extra lessons which her parents could not afford to pay (this time a flute player and in 2018 it will be a pianist from Albania).

In May we organized another benefit-concert with excellent German and Japanese student musicians, raising about 5.000 € for our projects. And about 40 members from 12 SI-Clubs from the region visited our SI-weekend and guided tours of the "Sculpture Projects", a well-respected open air art event in Muenster that takes place every ten years.

Together with 12 SI-Clubs of the region we continue the "Soroptimists go for water" project donating money for water projects in Africa.

In April six members from our club (plus two husbands) visited the "Diamond Jubilee" event of our friendship-link St. Albans, UK. All of us enjoyed meeting our Soroptimist friends, their hospitality, a fantastic programme as well as a wonderful formal dinner, where we met some members of the SI-Club of Osaka, Japan. In the end we established a new friendship link with them and we are already very excited to fly to Japan (hopefully in 2020). We also met a Soroptimist of the SI-Club of Chico (the other one in your home town), as they are twinned with St. Albans as well.

During the year 2017 most of our talks covered international topics focusing on foreign cultures in connection with our projects and events.

All of us wish you a very happy Christmas time and all the best for a successful Soroptimist life in 2018 and we are looking forward to seeing you some time soon.

In friendship,

Your Soroptimists from Muenster