

# Soroptimist: Giving a voice to women throughout the world

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – “In spite of all the progress we have made in the last 100 years, women and children are the most oppressed group in the world, including our own country.”

Cathy Standiford, president of Soroptimist International of the Americas, conveyed that sobering reality as the guest speaker Wednesday of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.



Cathy  
Standiford

“We are Soroptimist because we are bothered by those things. I believe the world can change when we are bothered enough,” Standiford said during the lunch at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe.

She pointed to the local club developing the Fighting Chance program for schoolchildren after Jaycee Lee Dugard was kidnapped nearly 19 years ago and founding the South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center years ago as evidence the mission is working on the South Shore.

“Think how different your community would be if you weren’t here,” Standiford said.

Remembering the mission of Soroptimist – improving the lives

of women and children – is the most important thing to remember, she told the local chapter.

Being open to possibilities and having a willingness to learn new things are traits that have served Standiford well.

She heads up one of the four federations that make up the international organization. Standiford oversees 38,000 members in 19 countries.

Through her post she has traveled to many of those countries as well as ones where Soroptimist is helping empower women – like Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

Standiford said women throughout the world want the same things – economic opportunity, an education for their children, their voice to be heard, security and peace.

“What I can’t figure out is why these dreams are so far out of reach for so many,” Standiford said.