

**Gaithersburg State of the City**  
**April 18, 2024**  
**Introduction by City Council Member Lisa Henderson**

**Outstanding Organization**  
Soroptimist International of Upper Montgomery County

The Outstanding Organization Award gives us the opportunity to acknowledge the associations, nonprofit organizations, and businesses whose contributions enhance our community. This year's honoree is Soroptimist International of Upper Montgomery County. Accepting the award tonight is Johann Dretchen.

Soroptimist International is a multiyear youth-enrichment grant program focused on young women's empowerment and career planning.

Since its inception in 1963, the organization has been a steadfast pillar of support and service in the Gaithersburg community ensuring women and girls have the resources and opportunity to reach their full potential and live their dreams.

For more than a decade, Soroptimist has served as a dedicated partner with the Gaithersburg Holiday Giving Coalition and the Gaithersburg Youth Opportunities Coalition. The organization's presence and commitment to making a difference has been felt in every corner of our City, from providing volunteers for the Holiday Giving Program - to participating in the Gaithersburg Book Festival - to taking part in the annual Principals' Breakfast.

In 2016, Soroptimist used City grant funds to create the transformative "Dream It, Be It: Career Support for Girls" program, which targets young women in secondary schools who face obstacles to their future success. This initiative has impacted the lives of nearly 665 girls across three local high schools – Gaithersburg, Watkins Mill and Quince Orchard – empowering them to dream big and pursue their aspirations with confidence and determination.

In support of teen volunteer mentoring, the organization initiated the Soroptimist Girls Club. This inspiring project provides middle school girls with the opportunity to support Gaithersburg community service projects in an atmosphere of mentorship and friendship that will lead to a lifetime of community service. This project not only instills a sense of responsibility and civic duty but also cultivates lifelong bonds and a spirit of service that will endure for generations to come.

For their long-standing partnership and service, it is my honor to present this year's Outstanding Organization Award to Soroptimist International of Upper Montgomery County.