**JOY AWARD – THE BACK STORY**

Sometimes a series of events will unfold that point us in a direction of inevitability. So it is that the Joy Award came to be.

Soroptimist International of the Americas recently ended the award known as the Ruby Award, itself formerly known as the Making a Difference for Women Award. At a regular meeting of Soroptimist International of Edmonton on October 9, 2012 the club decided they wanted to create a unique award to recognize a woman who has made a significant effort to end human trafficking, a primary program of service in our organization. Carell volunteered to seek permission from SIA Headquarters for a club award, to craft the parameters and wording for the new award and to explore possible names for the award.

 SI Edmonton has had a supportive relationship with Maple Leaf Alberta Projects since 2008 because of our shared interest in stopping human trafficking. Both groups actively circulated and collected thousands of signatures on a petition to the federal government encouraging them to adopt the “Swedish Model” into law. With the support of people across Canada who signed the petition and who wrote letters to their MLAs, MPs, and Senators, Joy Smith, MP for Kildonan-St. Paul took action in the House of Commons.

On October 26th, 2012 Maple Leaf Alberta Projects hosted their 4th Annual Fundraising Gala where MP Joy Smith was the keynote speaker. Mrs. Smith announced the establishment of the Joy Smith Foundation which works to ensure that every Canadian man, woman and child is safe from manipulation, force or abuse of power. Eight Edmonton Soroptimist, friends and spouses (Carell Wingrave, Denise Wingrave and husband Allen, Anna Der, Doris Goetz, Whitney Haynes, Jaynne Carre and husband, Lu Carbyn) were in attendance. After the guest speaker a lively discussion took place at the Soroptimist table about our proposed new award and its name. In the course of the discussion, it seemed perhaps appropriate to name the award after Mrs. Smith. Anna mentioned the line in our Pledge, “The Joy of Achievement” and a murmur of consent went around the table.

Table centerpieces at the Gala were elegant glass chalices with a single red rose that were donated by Emily Demkiw of ABC Weddings as a fundraiser for the Gala. Emily is a former Soroptimist and a current member of Maple Leaf Alberta Projects . Upon hearing this Mrs. Smith and her son decided to purchase all of them and gift them to the person at each table with the birthday closest to the Gala date. At the Soroptimist table it was Jaynne who took home the prize.

At the regular Soroptimist meeting on November 13, 2012 the award was discussed, letting members know that permission had been granted forms SIA Headquarters to go ahead and about the name discussion held at the Gala. Unanimously members voted to adopt Joy Award as the name of our new award and to name Mrs. Smith the first winner of this recognition. Jaynne had brought along the chalice for our monthly raffle but it was not claimed so it remained with Jaynne.

Looking at this beautiful item on her desk daily and seeing its elegance Jaynne was reminded of a beautiful trophy and the idea to donate it as the physical Joy Award was born. On a suitable base there would be room for years of winners’ names, and a smaller version could be given to the winners as a keepsake.

It remained for the club to gain permission from Mrs. Smith to have to award named after her to which she graciously agreed on January 9, 2013.

What began as a program of service in the unfamiliar territory of human trafficking in 2007 has led to liaisons and collaborations, advocacy, awareness and action in directions we never knew could happen. The Joy Award is a tangible symbol of all the work being done by so many to halt the modern day scourge of human trafficking and we, Soroptimists, are proud to be a small part of the solution.