



MORE WOMEN BENEFIT FROM P.E.O.'S SUPPORT Thanks to Chapter's Relationship with Area University

by *Bobbie Gervais, P.E.O. International Peace Scholarship Fund Board of Trustees*

In 2015 when Beryl Ann Owen, Chapter IW, Horseshoe Bay, Texas, agreed to be her chapter's International Peace Scholarship (IPS) Fund chair; she never could have imagined that seven years later her efforts would have resulted in over 36 international women receiving an IPS award. Imagine what impact your chapter could have by contacting schools near you—it could lead to helping women from all over the world!

When Beryl Ann became her chapter's IPS chair, she knew very little about the project so she began doing research on the P.E.O. International member website. Once armed with a general understanding of the IPS project and wondering how this opportunity was publicized, Beryl Ann took a bold step by sending an email to the dean of international students at several universities.

At Texas State University, her email reached a man who recognized the name P.E.O. ...his mother was a P.E.O.! Knowing that P.E.O. is a reputable organization, he forwarded Beryl Ann's email to Dr. Andrea Hilkovitz, External Funding Coordinator at Texas State University. Dr. Hilkovitz didn't know about P.E.O., but because of Beryl Ann's sweet "persistence," Dr. Hilkovitz ventured to work with one international student to apply for the IPS award. SUCCESS! With that, Dr. Hilkovitz invited Beryl Ann and her chapter to the campus to meet the IPS student and provide additional information about each of the P.E.O. projects.

Sisters from Chapter IW set in motion a wonderful relationship between their chapter and Texas State University. With each email exchange or phone call, Dr. Hilkovitz realized the wonderful opportunity the IPS award provides for international students.

Today, seven years later, Dr. Hilkovitz has developed an inviting and supportive environment to encourage international students to consider the IPS award. At the same time, she provides other women graduate students who are citizens of the U.S. and Canada with information



Dr. Andrea Hilkovitz, External Funding Coordinator at Texas State University



Beryl Ann Owen and IPS recipient Marvellous Akinlotan



Chapter IW with their first Partners in Peace student, Aisha Sadiq from Pakistan

about opportunities such as the P.E.O. Scholar Awards, the P.E.O. Educational Loan Fund and the P.E.O. Program for Continuing Education.

Every fall, The Graduate College invites every eligible woman at Texas State University to its "Funder Focus" gathering. Dr. Hilkovitz and her colleague, Dr. Brian Smith, provide information about our P.E.O. projects. Dr. Hilkovitz emphasizes that the students themselves complete the application, but The Graduate College's external funding coordinators set up appointments along the way to provide feedback on drafts, answer questions and encourage the students to meet the P.E.O. deadlines. According to Dr. Hilkovitz, "The biggest hurdle is international students are often very skeptical. They have trouble seeing themselves in the award. The school works with them, encourages them and guides them through the application process."

This very special support system has resulted in IPS recipients from every academic college at Texas State. With over 10 recipients each year for the last three years, Dr. Hilkovitz and Dr. Smith provide these students with the opportunity to meet each other and form a support group. That support, along with the support each of these women receives from their Partners in Peace chapters, makes the IPS award much more valuable than the dollar amount awarded — these students now have a family to care for them.

Who knew that one sister's initiative could result in so many international women benefitting from P.E.O.'s financial and encouraging support? Who knows what your chapter might set in motion by reaching out to a university near you? ★

See www.peointernational.org under **P.E.O. Projects> International Peace Scholarship Fund>Chapter Resources** to find information and a poster to present to college or university fellowship advisors.