

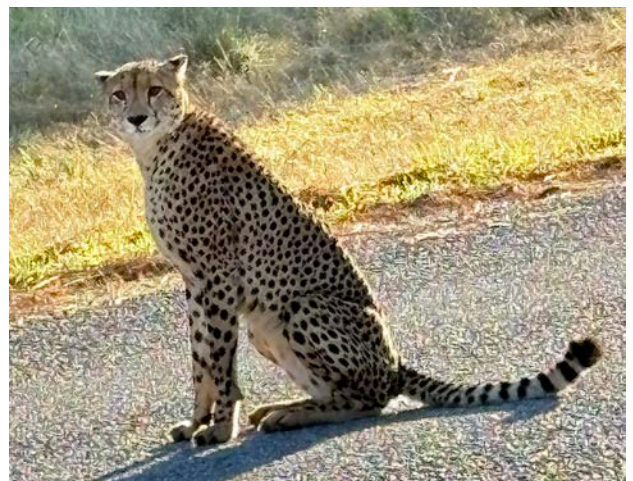


ZEBRAS, CHEETAHS, AND CROCS...OH MY!



Six members of the Suitcase Sisters traveled to Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa in early May, experiencing close-up encounters with animals, breathtaking views of Victoria Falls, and a tour focused on apartheid.

First in Botswana, the travelers stayed at two lovely safari camps and visited both a private animal reserve and Chobe National Park. We saw lionesses, cheetahs, storks, and elephants, as well as zebras, red-billed buffalo weavers, fish eagles, kudu, baboons, magpie shrikes, vervet monkeys (cheeky little food thieves), woolly-necked storks, crocodiles, water buffalo, southern ground hornbills, a leopard, giraffes, hippos, and more. Whew! Each day, we left camp at 6:30 a.m., and our incredibly knowledgeable guides made us coffee every mid-morning. We enjoyed a "sundowner" each evening as we watched the sun go down. (Yes—as shown in the picture—the mornings were a bit chilly!)



SUITCASE SISTERS CONT.



Next, we visited Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. We were there during high water season, so at times we couldn't even see the falls through the spray. Beautiful, loud, and magnificent. Three of our members took a helicopter ride and brought back even more stunning views.

Finally, we traveled to South Africa, where we visited several apartheid museums and Nelson Mandela's home. It was a humbling and emotional experience that reminded us to be kind and recognize our shared humanity.



Overall, it was such a fun trip. For 2025–26, we already have a trip to Peru booked—including a riverboat adventure on the Amazon—and we're in the early stages of planning a trip to Eastern Europe. Plenty of room for others to join!

Come be part of the adventure! The Suitcase Sisters meet the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at El Paisano. Come for the fellowship (and stay for the food—not required, but highly recommended!).

A LIVING LEGACY: BOOK CLUB AT THE FACULTY HOUSE



Fifteen women gather on a Thursday afternoon at the SIU Faculty House, seated around square card tables, coffee and dessert in hand. Laughter and conversation fill the room. It's clear—this isn't your ordinary book club.

Our chairwoman clears her throat gently, and the room quiets. "Just a few items before we get to discussing the book." One can imagine that the original chairwoman, Mrs. Harold Kaplan, would be proud of today's vibrant group and our diverse selections.

The SIU Women's Club Book Club traces its roots back to the 1955–56 "Book Circle," which emerged as the Club transitioned from its Newcomers Group origins in the late 1940s. Early invitations read:

"Have you read the latest? No? Well, here's your chance, for we've prepared a list of books, worth more than a glance. We'll each buy one and pass them around, so we can read them all. Your time's your own, the pleasure great; join Book Circles this fall."

Today, members download books to devices, borrow from libraries, order online, or pass along treasured paperbacks. Though one of the Club's longest-running groups, we are far from a "dusty ole book club."

This year began with over 50 book suggestions, narrowed to a curated reading list. Members bring not only their books, but their insights, experiences, and friendship. Our notebook of past reads holds over 40 years of titles—a testament to shared stories and good conversation.

Selections span fiction, nonfiction, and various genres. Whether you're new or seasoned, every voice matters when the discussion begins. For us, finishing the book is just the beginning—of connection, curiosity, and conversation.

Join us the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at El Paisano. Come for the fellowship (and stay for the food—not required, but encouraged!).



Get Involved: Join an Interest Group!

SIU Women's Club Interest Groups are a wonderful way to connect with fellow members through shared interests, friendship, and fun. To join a group, simply reach out to the Interest Group chair listed on the Membership Application. Scan the QR code to view the list. We hope you'll find a group—or two—that's just right for you!

SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT STATEMENT: **Leslie Duran, Aviation Flight (2024-'25)**

Dear SIU Women's Club,

My name is Leslie Duran. I am a first-generation student from Elgin, IL. I am currently studying aviation flight and management. I chose to study aviation because I love to travel and challenge myself.

I want to express my deepest gratitude for your generous contribution that made the Leadership and Empowerment Scholarship possible. Your support means more to me than words can adequately express.

Receiving this scholarship, especially from an esteemed organization like the SIU Women's Club, is truly an honor. Knowing that it comes from a group dedicated to empowering women fills me with a profound sense of pride and appreciation. Your belief in the potential of women to lead and effect positive change is not only inspiring but also deeply meaningful.

Your donation will not only assist me in pursuing my educational goals but also serve as a reminder of the importance of supporting and uplifting one another. It reinforces my commitment to empower fellow women, specifically in their aviation endeavors, and contribute positively to our community.

I want to assure you that your generosity will not go unnoticed. I am determined to make the most of this opportunity and strive for excellence in all my academic and personal pursuits. I promise to pay it forward by empowering others as you have empowered me.

Once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support. Please know that your kindness has made a significant difference in my life, and I am incredibly grateful for your belief in me.

Sincerely,

Leslie Duran



Support Student Scholarships

Your generosity can help empower SIU students to achieve their dreams and create lasting change in their communities. Make a gift today by visiting **siuf.org/give** and entering **SIU Women's Club Scholarships Fund** in the designation field. Or simply scan the QR code with your smartphone to give directly.

SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT STATEMENT:

Jillian Taylor, Mortuary Science and Funeral Service (2024-'25)

To the SIU Women's Club,

I am Jillian Taylor, a junior in the mortuary science and funeral service program at Southern Illinois University. Originally from Belvidere, Illinois, I chose Southern Illinois due to its Bachelor's program in mortuary science. While I sometimes feel this profession chose me more than I chose it, this field merged my passion for science and anatomy while also allowing me to serve my community. I'm so incredibly fortunate to be in a position where I can support others in their time of need, and utilize my skills and interests to make a meaningful impact in people's lives.

Without going into detail, I support myself not only through college but in life as well. This scholarship relieves a tremendous financial burden and allows me to focus on my education. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to pursue higher education, and scholarships are a reason I can do so.

Without my time in college, I wouldn't have had the opportunities, friendships, experiences, and personal growth that have shaped me as an individual. I am extremely proud of the professional and personal connections I've formed, the work I have done in my major and fraternity, and my time at Southern Illinois in general.

After graduating from Southern Illinois, I aim to successfully pass my boards and begin my apprenticeship. I've been fortunate to make professional connections during my time in college, and I look forward to contributing to my community in whichever location I ultimately settle upon post-graduation. In the future, I would love to complete my Master's and use my knowledge and love for the profession to teach the next generation of funeral directors.

I am extremely honored to receive this scholarship, and I want to express my appreciation for this incredible opportunity. Your belief in my abilities and support for my education means a great deal to me, and I'm eager to represent the SIU Women's Club, and Southern Illinois to the best of my ability.

Sincerely,

Jillian Taylor

SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT STATEMENT:

Hannah Brown, Computer Science (2024-'25)

To the SIU Women's Club,

Thank you all for granting me this opportunity to envision a bright future and bring it to fruition. My name is Hannah and I have been living in Carbondale for much of my life. I have grown to appreciate the pleasantries of this town. One of the main things to appreciate is Southern Illinois University.

I am studying Computer Science in hopes of making my dreams come true, and the university and its resources have allowed me to excel as a student. What inspired me to this area of study was its combination of arts, math, and the sciences. With these three skills at my disposal, Computer Science was the next best fit. I am a dedicated student with many goals in mind. I want to excel in my classes, learn as much as I can, give back to others in need, and graduate with a bachelor's degree. My deepest gratitude for helping me make this possible.

I attend school and also rent my apartment. In doing so, I have built a resilience toward working multiple hours in the week while coming home to study and also taking care of personal responsibilities. I managed to coordinate my time without assistance from my parents or friends.

As a result, I have been looking for scholarships to help tie loose ends to allow me to meet my educational goals. With less worry about finances, I can focus more on studying for my courses than paying for them. Time is one thing that is crucial when it comes to managing multiple responsibilities. Therefore, having a scholarship to help pay for school, will free up more time invested into delving into my studies. I have learned and developed a routine, and have also learned to be flexible. The college itself is a major factor in my success.

One of the main things I enjoy about the college is the walkability of the campus. I enjoy getting exercise from time to time, and the walkability of the campus allows me to enjoy the sunshine and even the rain. I also enjoy the class sizes and the professors. The people here seem immensely passionate about what they do, and I am proud to be a Saluki.

In my free time after class, I usually like to get involved with community events like the Salukicon, I am a member of the TRIO program, I get involved with job fairs and events, and an internship through the university's handshake platform. I am so grateful to the college and its resources for helping to ease the burden of finances and making it easier for me as a student to pursue my goals.

SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT STATEMENT: **Hannah Brown, Computer Science (2024-'25)**

When I graduate from SIU, I hope to obtain a work visa and travel abroad. I would like to help people all around the world and promote the values I have learned from SIU to others I may encounter. I would like to do research and development in computer science and artificial intelligence, paving the way for people to work effectively with machines.

I would like to participate in the innovation of the future and work on challenging projects that will make life easier for everyone involved. I would like to use software to help people with various neurodivergence with daily tasks and life balance. I would also like to inspire others to achieve success by removing barriers to success and using AI to even the playing field for all. I would like to devote my life to studying neural networks to create a brighter future for all.

Thank you for all of the work you have done for students behind the scenes and on the front lines. You have worked tirelessly to ensure students have a bright future, and I know you are dedicated to seeing people succeed. I want to take the time to appreciate all of the hard work, hard times, and happy moments you have all experienced with one goal in mind.

You have never wavered from the dream of seeing a bright future for the students and the next generation and I am grateful for all of the hard work. Thank you to the team for working tirelessly to ensure the success of those of us who will be the next dreamers, inspires, and innovators.

Sincerely,

Hannah Brown



Support Student Scholarships

Your generosity can help empower SIU students to achieve their dreams and create lasting change in their communities. Make a gift today by visiting **siuf.org/give** and entering **SIU Women's Club Scholarships Fund** in the designation field. Or simply scan the QR code with your smartphone to give directly.

SAVE ^{THE} DATE

Afternoon Tea

1:30-3:30 p.m.
Thursday, October 2, 2025
Alumni Courtyard Tent

The SIU Women's Club invites all members to our annual afternoon tea, hosted by Mrs. Laura Mahony, First Lady of the Southern Illinois University System. This event is free to all members, compliments of the SIU Office of the President.



**RSVP using this QR code or contact
Vanessa Sneed via email
vsneed@siu.edu**

MEMBERS MATTER: REMINDER TO RENEW YOUR SIU WOMEN'S CLUB MEMBERSHIP!



As we prepare for another year of connection, service, and fun, we want to remind our valued members that the SIU Women's Club membership renewal cycle begins **October 1**. Your involvement makes all the difference—and we truly appreciate you.

If you joined before June 1, 2025, please complete a renewal form and submit your membership fee to stay active for the 2025–2026 year and be included in the new Member Directory.

Because members matter, we want to make it easy for you to stay connected. Renewing ensures continued access to everything you love—Interest Groups, special events, and the friendships that make our club so special.



Renew online by clicking JOIN at womensclub.siu.edu or scan the QR code to renew online.

Prefer a paper form? Email siuwomensclub@siu.edu to request one by mail.

Thank you for being part of the SIU Women's Club. We're grateful for your membership and excited for the year ahead!