

STARTING A MOVEMENT

SOAM is a community service oriented club. Its members volunteer their time on and off campus to a variety of causes.

“Honestly, it’s just being a part of everywhere,” said SOAM President Cecilia Diaz. “We go out into the community. We’re a part of the campus. Last semester we did tree planting here. Some of the girls got a chance to go and plant a tree. It was messy and dirty, but it was very, very fun.”

Last year, the club volunteered with local nonprofit Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality—or RISE—also sometimes known in the community as Rise and Dine. SOAM members served food and sorted clothes for RISE.

“That was fun,” Diaz said. “I was working with clothes. It was chaotic but still very, very fun—very fulfilling. You get to know people there, and conversations spark up so, like, unexpectedly and suddenly. I was glad I

resolved to move ahead with it as usual. It’s an important event because it provides seed money for the club to start its yearly activities. It’s also an important way for the club to promote its presence on campus—and attract new members.

With several of the club’s current board members preparing to graduate in May, recruiting new faces this spring will be crucial. And SOAM’s members want other women on campus to know that while the club’s roots are as a black women’s organization, it’s open to women of all colors and creeds.

“It’s for all women, for sure,” Thomas said.

“But we do have a lot of women of color here, which is great,” Black said.

“Especially here, on this campus, just because the diversity here is a little lacking,” Diaz added. “I think it’s just feeling that you aren’t the only one. At the same time, it’s also just that you get to see people who look like you.”

For SOAM members who come from places with greater racial diversity than Reno, the club has provided some sense of normalcy—or at least belonging.

“SOAM was one of the first clubs I joined,” Thomas said. “When I heard it was a women’s club, I was like, ‘What? This is so cool. I was hesitant to come to the first couple of meetings, but I’m so glad I did, because these girls here, like—they’ve become a very important part of my life.

... It’s very important to have

something like this on campus because, as women of color, as women in general, we don’t really get much representation—in politics or media or anything like that.”

“Coming to this university, I started off off-campus, so I lived in an apartment,” Black explained. “I wasn’t in the dorms, and so I didn’t really meet any people. And I found out about SOAM and was immediately like, ‘I want to join that.’ It was very difficult for me to adjust. It’s like, it’s such a white space with a black face. So just being able to engage with people who are like-minded and had similar experiences to me was really important.”

“We’re all women in college,” Thomas said. “We’re all going through it, so it’s definitely good to have something to come back to every Thursday night.”

For those curious about SOAM, the club’s members welcome new women to join them at their Thursday night meetings. Learn more by searching for “SOAM Nevada” on Facebook. □

Learn more about Sisters on a Move here: bit.ly/2tYJhT8.

“It’s very important to have something like this on campus because, as women of color, as women in general, we don’t really get much representation.”

FAITH THOMAS, SOAM director of events

wasn’t doing food, because I was starving and it smelled really good.”

“I think it’s mostly just getting a bunch of girls from different areas to come and give back to the community,” said Black.

SOAM was originally founded in 2002 at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. It’s another public, land-grant university, like UNR, and was founded in 1866 by black veterans of the Civil War. The club was established at UNR in 2010 by then-student Gregrette Perry, now Perry-Simmons. She received both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the university and currently serves as the advising, recruitment and retention coordinator for the UNR College of Business.

“Gregrette usually bakes the cornbread for our fish fries—and she’s usually the one gracious enough to come and fry the fish for us, because most of us are just like, ‘We can’t be there the whole time,’” explained Diaz. “We have classes and stuff. Also, I’m not confident in frying fish.”

SOAM hosts a fish fry on campus every spring. This year, the club’s members have been so busy they’d considered not having the event, but during this night’s meeting, they

A poster for the Cirque du Soleil show 'Corteo'. The background is a bright, cloudy sky. In the foreground, a man in a white shirt and grey trousers stands with his back to the viewer, arms outstretched. Above him, several acrobats in colorful costumes are performing various stunts: one is on a bicycle, another is hanging from a ladder, and others are floating or falling. A large white balloon is visible in the upper right corner. The text 'CIRQUE DU SOLEIL' is at the top in a blue serif font. Below it, 'Corteo' is written in a large, stylized blue font. Underneath that, 'GET CARRIED AWAY WITH LIFE' is written in a smaller blue font inside a decorative border. The dates 'MARCH 21 - 24' and the location 'LAWLOR EVENTS CENTER' are prominently displayed in a large, bold, orange-brown font. At the bottom, the website 'cirquedusoleil.com/corteo' is listed. A small box indicates the media partner 'NEWS 4 FOX 11 NSN'. At the very bottom, it says 'Show created by DANIELE FINZI PASCA'.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®

Corteo

® GET CARRIED AWAY WITH LIFE ®

MARCH 21 - 24

LAWLOR EVENTS CENTER

cirquedusoleil.com/corteo

MEDIA PARTNER

NEWS 4 FOX 11 NSN

SHOW CREATED BY DANIELE FINZI PASCA