

SIGBI President's December 2016 Blog

This is my first message as Federation President so I would like to thank everyone for your support in Malta, and for all the kind congratulation messages that I received in Malta and since whilst at home. Congratulations to Margaret Emsley and her conference committee on a successful conference. And how lovely it was to experience it all on the beautiful island of Malta.

Our conferences have had similar themes running through them in recent years – all of them about leading change, taking action and moving forward. I am continuing along the same lines and have chosen my theme **Step Up, Lead the Way**, to continue the focus on growing our organisation and securing its future. It is important that we continue to move forward and achieve our aim of doubling the membership by 2021.

I believe that the future of Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI) is every member's responsibility, and that we ALL have a leadership role to play in securing its future. Members of the Federation Management Board, Federation Councillors, Regional or Club Officers cannot do it alone. We must ALL play our part in attracting (and retaining) today's women to our Organisation.

My theme **Step Up, Lead the Way** equally applies to Programme Action and our project work. As a Federation, our status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has ensured that our voice is heard and that we have an important role to play at events like the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** in New York. Once again, members of the Federation will be attending CSW next year when the theme is about Economic Empowerment. This fits well into our objectives as an international organisation and gives us the opportunity to showcase our project work and advocate for change on issues affecting women and girls.

Our place on the world stage is one of our unique selling points and its only possible because of the projects that you complete at a local, national and international level. Our influence at the United Nations comes from your Programme Focus Reports. You can see how important they are!



There are many areas of work and specific projects that I could mention in relation to my theme for the year **Step Up, Lead the Way**. The one that I want to comment on is our project work on Anti Human Trafficking. Whilst I have no intention of suggesting any new project work for us to focus on, I would ask that you continue to work on Anti Human Trafficking which remains such a heinous crime in modern day society. It is a really good example of how we can work on a significant world issue alongside partner organisations and governments to change the lives of women and girls.

I thank you wholeheartedly for all that you do to support women and girls. Each project at Club level, however small, can change the universe especially when you put our collective project work together on a single issue.

On my return from conference, I gave a talk to my own Club about Conference and we had an enjoyable evening discussing the speakers and the whole conference experience including "Pink by the Pool". I hope you will do that with your Club members too – conference is a great opportunity to learn about the bigger picture of Soroptimist International and understand that we are a global movement of women working together to improve the lives of women and girls.



October and November were busy months for me in my role as Federation President Elect. Firstly, I attended SI Smethwick's 65th dinner to support a long-standing friend who was partly responsible for me becoming a Soroptimist twenty-five years ago. A week later, I attended the 60th anniversary celebrations of SI Aberdare in my own region Wales South. Over the last 18 months, I have had responsibility for the Growth plan, so it was interesting to attend a Communications workshop in Wales South, where members from across the Region were discussing the creation of a roadshow to promote membership. It is interesting to see how Membership Month, the Development Days and the Growth Plan have created a focus on membership across the Federation.



My first event as Federation President was to attend the SI Yorkshire regional meeting and lunch, where I delivered the board's Vision 2021 presentation that highlights the achievements in 2016 and our focus for 2017. Members of the Board will be delivering the presentation across all Regions during the year, and your Federation Councillor can also come along to your Club to tell you about it. It is also available on the website.

Time is passing by, and it will soon be Xmas so I will finish by wishing you all a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Yours in friendship

Ann Hodgson