

# SI MIDLAND CHASE NEWSLETTER JUNE 2009 (4)

Well, I hope that everyone is enjoying the spring weather - sometimes almost summer but often more like winter! The Region has been quite active of late with lots of Charter dinners, lunches and other social events. The Regional Quiz, held at Drayton Manor last week was a great success and was a really good social occasion for everyone who attended. Lovely food, good questions and lots of raffle prizes! Do remember that the easiest way to circulate your event is through the envelope system at a Regional meeting. This is sure to go to the intended Club and of course saves postage. The other effective way is to email the various Club secretaries who put it into their pile of information for the next meeting of their Club. In Staffordshire Moorlands we use a system whereby all events across the Region are put onto one page and are then sent out with the minutes. This ensures that we have all members informed of the opportunities and also enables members to select where they can possibly attend at any given time when consulting diaries.

I am happy to come out to any of the Clubs to look at their plans for activities and methods of achieving communication amongst the local community that you are based in. Please do contact me if you feel I can help.

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## **BILSTON AND DISTRICT**

The Bilston Camels are on the move again! St Luke's Primary School welcomed the exotic toy visitors to launch a scheme to encourage literature loving pupils to participate in this year's World Book Day. The Cannock school welcomed the 'Camel Library' to begin their initiative to get books to children in Africa. The camels will transport books to children in remote villages. Headteacher Jane Roberts has set a target of £500. This will not only buy a camel to transport books across the Sahara in Kenya, but also support Book Aid in purchasing books. Bilston Club have been awarded the International Best Practice Award for the year 2009 recognising a significant contribution and commitment to the community and service work. Members have raised sufficient funds to buy hundreds of books and a female camel through Bookaid International. The mobile Camel Library seeks to improve literacy rates for the nomadic tribes in sub-Saharan Africa. Jan Grey is the newly elected President of Bilston and District Club and teaches at the Mary Elliot Special School in Walsall.

## **CANNOCK AND DISTRICT**

I have received a copy of Cannocks brilliant SOROPTIGRAM. I would ask that perhaps Cannock bring a few copies to the Regional meeting from time to time. It is a really good read and ranges from fund-raising activities to news about members who are unwell, coming activities, different appeals, birthdays, regional dinners and lunches etc etc. It is a really useful folded A4 double-sided paper. I love receiving it and hope that it will continue into the future.

## **NEWCASTLE AND DISTRICT**

Newcastle and District Club gave long service awards to Founder Member Celeste Holtham for 45 years service and to Anne Aslett for 40 years service. The pair were presented with certificates by President Shirley Machin at the Borough Arms Hotel, Newcastle

Cheques for the sum of £1900 were presented to Dr K T Khoo, Consultant Physician, University Hospital of North Staffordshire and to Margaret Westwell, Area Organiser of Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. Funds were raised at various events which included a Fashion Show and a Tapas Lunch.

## STAFFORD CLUB

The Stafford Club held a very successful evening in celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Charter. One hundred and twenty five guests, including the Mayor of Stafford, joined President Judith Carder to celebrate the occasion in style.

The speaker for the evening was Tricia Stewart, one of the original Calendar Girls, whose character was played by Helen Mirren in the film. Tricia entertained the guests with hilarious stories of how the calendar was made, how the original photographs were taken and the subsequent storm in the media both in the UK and the USA.

The two main charities supported by Stafford Club, Staffordshire Blind Association and The Oak Tree Farm Project, were presented with cheques to the value of £875 each.

To mark International Women's day members raided their purses to donate their loose change in the form of one, two and five pence pieces to raise another £32 for 15 year old Faviola. The Stafford Club has been sponsoring Faviola through her school life. Members keep in touch through exchanging gifts and letters. A total of £180 is raised each year through fund-raising events. The group started sponsoring Faviola 11 years ago.

## STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS

The final quarter of the 25<sup>th</sup> Charter anniversary was run by joint Presidents Christine Botham and Margaret Matthews.

Two main activities took place during this period - namely a BIG QUIZ NIGHT and our CELEBRATION SUPPER.

These two events raised the sum of £600 which was equally divided between Click

Sergeant and the Donna Louise Trust. We visited the Donna Louise Trust which is a home for end-of-life care for young people between the age of 0 to 19 years. It is the most amazing place we have ever visited. Both Christine and myself are determined that we will continue our connection with the Trust. The Donna Louise cares for children from across the whole of Staffordshire and South Cheshire. I wonder if we might all hold a Donna Louise day in each of our Clubs in order that we can support the children who may be our neighbours without us knowing it! Please do contact me on 01538-384324 if you feel moved to help. They have 8 care rooms which are all fitted out completely with wonderful furnishings, toys, equipment etc. The trouble is that they can only afford to keep 4 of these rooms open for these end-of-life children. They have no debt, the money is needed to pay for the upkeep of the building and for nursing staff. We would like to think that through Soroptimist International that we could enable all 8 rooms to be used for these children for whom their days are numbered. I can arrange a visit if anyone would like to do this, Monday morning is the preferred day as it is the change-over day for children who have come in for respite care. Other children come in for end-of-life care with their parents, siblings, grandparents etc. There is accommodation to suit family requirements and it is all provided free of charge. Please do see if you can help.

## SUTTON COLDFIELD

February brought an interesting speaker to the supper meeting at the Masonic Hall. President Gill Bailey welcomed Eugene and Margaret Schellenburg to speak about the bakery they set up at Ifakara, Tanzania. On a visit to see their son, a doctor specialising in tropical diseases and his wife an

epidemiologist, and their young grandsons they had a chance meeting with a Sister Josepha, a nun which led to an invitation to lunch at her convent. The lunch turned out to be an expensive one because the nuns were desperate to set up a bakery to supply daily bread to the townspeople. Mealie bread, made from locally-grown maize has little nutritional value and the harvest often failed completely due to drought or flooding. There were no bakeries in the district and nobody could afford to buy bread which had to be brought in. Eugene worked for an industrial kitchens business and Margaret was a dietician. After learning about the endemic malnutrition in the area and the many babies too small at birth to survive, the Schellenbergs asked to see a business plan. The nuns had one waiting when they arrived back from safari. They needed to raise £30000 to pay for machinery, oven, equipment and transport including clearing charges. They approached all the famous food charities expecting help. None came, so having promised a bakery the Schellenbergs decided to raise the money themselves. They approached friends and local charities, including their local Rotary Club and the Cadbury Trust for help. Word of the challenge spread and by September 2001 the bakery was under construction. They went back to supervise the installation of the machinery, generator and train the nuns to make the bread. Output soared quickly soon 100 loaves each day were being produced and sold at about 17p per loaf, so making the business self-supporting. This should have been the end of the story but contributions continued to come in for the project and as production quadrupled the Schellenbergs started a 'free bread fund' to supply bread to the Ifakara Hospital patients and the relatives looking after them.

Today the Leprosy centre, the Ifakara Orphanage and the Bethlehem Centre, a training school for children with learning difficulties, also benefit. Whenever they visit Eugene and Margaret supervise the work of the bakery and pay all of their own expenses. They make no charges for their talks, but are grateful for any contributions which go directly into the Free Bread Funds.

At the annual International party, members sample the cooking and culture of an undisclosed country. The country under the spotlight this year was Turkey and the meal featured lamb and apricot stew, cous-cous and salad with feta cheese and olives followed by baklava. Coffee was accompanied by Turkish delight. After dinner local dance teacher Debbie Williams brought a touch of Eastern glamour with an enjoyable display of Turkish dances.

A charity concert was held at St Michael's Church, Sutton Coldfield on 7<sup>th</sup> March when the sum of £1730 was raised which will be equally divided between St Giles Hospital for the terminally ill patients and for the EMBO Project in Durban, South Africa, benefitting AIDS Orphans and their grandmothers who care for them.

## **TAMWORTH CLUB**

SI Tamworth's final fundraising event for a Special Needs Nursery and other local charities was a Glen Miller evening. Some of the guests 'got in the mood' by dressing in wartime style. There were some very nostalgic costumes.

The Club ended their Diamond year with a very successful international evening where President Lisa Hardy presented cheques to the charities supported by the club. The main charity was Tamworth Special Needs Nursery. Members of the nursery staff were invited guests and they took along a

wheel chair which had been presented by the Club in a previous year. President Lisa presented the nursery with a cheque for £2500 to buy another chair or a piece of equipment. A number of other cheques were presented to recipients who included Project Sierra and the SI Benevolent Fund. Cheque presentations amounted to £8450.

SI Tamworth members were delighted to be put on the Supporters of Cecily's fund website. The editor explained about Soroptimism and then wrote - "The Tamworth branch of SI have been loyal supporters of Cecily's Fund for many years, raising several thousand pounds which has helped hundreds of children go to school. They have done this by holding events like Jazz in the Park, A Georgian Night, complete with period costumes and a Georgian butler - International dinner nights and lots more. Two of their members visited Zambia to meet some of the children we support.

(Cecily's fund: Educating Zambian Children Orphaned by AIDS).

A recycling day was recently held by Tamworth Club, Clothes, shoes, foreign coins, books, CDs, videos, spectacles, cutlery and tools were collected together. Chocolates, biscuits, jigsaw puzzles, board games and books were also collected to send to the Servicemen's charity, Purple Salute. Mem-

bers provided elevenses and lunch for the helpers and visitors who went along to the home of Viv Khan where the event was held. Diets were forgotten as people tucked into super sandwiches and delicious cakes.

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