**SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL NORTHEN IRELAND**

**34THANNUAL YOUTH AWARD**

**PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION**

The Public Speaking Final was held in Hillsborough Village Centre on Saturday 6th February 2016 at 12.00 noon.

We decided to start the proceedings a little earlier this year and coffee scones and shortbread were available from 11.00 am. It is important that refreshments are available as some finalists and their families and teachers would have come a great distance.

Topics this year consisted of:-

* E-voting to replace the ballot box – positive or negative?
* Is there a limit to what the NHS should cover?
* Does the Paparazzi help or hinder the purpose of a free press?
* Preventing human trafficking is the responsibility of?
* Striving for perfection – is it healthy?
* Who should pay for my pension?
* Climate change is more political than scientific?

We started promptly at 12 noon and each girl delivered her speech in an eloquent and professional manner. Five of the seven topics were covered with 4 girls choosing E-voting and Striving for Perfection, 3 girls chose Preventing Human Trafficking and Limit to NHS Cover, and 1 picked the Pension option.

The Extempore Speech followed and the girls were given the topic **‘My Ambition is’** - preparation time is 5 minutes and the speech is to last more than one minute but not more than two minutes. There were lots of interesting thoughts presented.

While we served afternoon tea, the adjudicators Jo Egan, Playwright, Ms Nisha Tandon and our own Dr Joan Smyth started the momentous task of selecting prize-winners. Needless to say this took quite some time as the standard seems to get higher each year.

I was delighted to welcome Andrea Begley who kindly agreed to present the prizes. Andrea Begley is the local girl who won BBC1’s television show ‘The Voice’.

The prize winners were as follows:-

1st Caoimhe Quinn from Aquinas Grammar (Belfast Club) - NHS

2nd Amy Parke, Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt, (Ballymoney Club) – E-voting

3rd Alice Bennett , St Patricks Academy (Dungannon Club) – E-voting

4th Ellen Hannaway, Sacred Heart Grammar (Newry & Mourne Club) - Pension

The competition attracted a total of 52 schools and 196 competitors.