



President's Message



The Soroptimist International website is attractive and informative – an excellent shop window for our organisation, and a site to re-visit regularly. One section explains to the world 'who we are', and includes a summary of our values. As you would expect, these principles include human rights, peace and women's opportunities. However, the final element on the list made me stop and think: volunteering, diversity and friendship.

Why are we Soroptimists? Because we choose to be. It's a leisure activity – even though, for many, it's a deeply-engrained part of daily life. We give of our time, talents – and money – because we want to be part of a movement that makes a difference to the lives of women who need assistance (in whatever form that takes).

We all have different skillsets that we volunteer in our Soroptimist lives. Our backgrounds, career, family, community and country ensure that Programme work is varied yet focused, imaginative yet firmly grounded. Furthermore, networking within Soroptimist International is enormously important – we have a broad-based talent bank to call on, as well as the challenge of extending our membership even further.

So, in assessing what we do in our club, region or beyond, we need to bear in mind that we are all volunteers and that we will approach our work in different ways. The 'right way' so often turns out to have many routes. It can be productive when we balance the tradition and customs of Soroptimist International with innovation and creative thinking. With unity of purpose as our foundation we sometimes need to dare to be different. Succeed or fail – it will have been a learning process, both for ourselves and for those who come after. In the meantime, the principle of friendship will ensure that our honest efforts are counselled and supported.

We lay great store by friendship. We work as Soroptimists because it is a practical means of demonstrating an alliance with women we may never meet. We develop strong bonds of personal friendship with other members. And we demonstrate goodwill by making the effort to be courteous and considerate in our dealings with everyone.

As President I have been privileged to find out about many of the ways in which our members put awareness, advocacy and action at the service of others. Clubs have been generous in their hospitality, welcoming and so very friendly. At first hand I have seen Soroptimist International's principles in practice. Thank you for giving me that opportunity.

In Friendship

Jenny

FUN - FRIENDSHIP AND FOOD

SI Oldham and District met up with members of SI Rossendale at The Sykeside Country Hotel, on Tuesday 6th September, to share in food, fun and friendship.

Members of our club had been invited by Rossendale President, Irene Divine who



is a former member and Past President of the Oldham Club.

Eight members of SI Oldham and District, joined fourteen members of SI Rossendale for a most enjoyable evening, doing what Soroptimists do best, eating, drinking and talking.

The guests were made most welcome by Irene and her fellow club members, new friendships were formed, old acquaintances re-ignited and a lot of news and views discussed.

We are now looking forward to offering our hospitality to the Rossendale club.



OUT AND ABOUT IN THE REGION . . .

ST HELENS

President Andy Perry set her year off to a great start with food and drink related events.

A "Welcome to my Year" Cheese and Wine Evening set the tone and raised a very nice joint income of £690 along with sales of Zambags purchased by Andy and sent from Lubwe Zambia at the Joint Regional Conference at Blackpool's Herons Reach Hotel. Andy has also purchased and sent out medical supplies and two pallets of dressings and bandages for the Lubwe Mission Hospital, courtesy of the Synergy company.

This was closely followed by seventy four people attending our Annual Charity Lunch which successfully raised £1350. The speaker Sheila Brown OBE, spoke of the work her Charity "Newlife" set up by herself following the birth of her own son, does to assist families in need and provide them with much needed equipment with children born with disability.

Environmentally, we collected seven hundred and fifty kilos of clothes, shoes,

bags, belts, blankets etc raising a surprising £640. Local schools have been encouraged to plant Sunflower seeds to encourage bees with quite a few schools joining in. Members enjoyed an Environmentally friendly walk at Fir Tree Farm, home of Edwina Abbott, one of our own members and saw the wonderful wild flower meadows and heard the evening song of the birds, followed of course by a delicious supper.



The food theme carried on with a bright summer outing to The Swan at Aughton, run by Marco Pierre White – lovely food and friendship in abundance. £2700 raised - A good start to the Soroptimist year.

WIDNES

In July SI Widnes held a Summer Fashion Show in aid of "Nightstop", a local charity set up for safe accommodation of young people aged 16-24 years old.



The Fashion Show was hosted by Rosalind Fashions of Crosby, owned by Hilary Collings. The first half of the show was a presentation of the summer seasons' fashions and the second half showed a preview of the new Autumn Fashion Range.



Summer Fashions were available for purchase on the night at discount prices, together with a large range of jewellery and accessories and items from the autumn range could be placed on order. All attendees were given a discount voucher of 10% for use on purchases from the Autumn Range.

The event was well attended and the sum of £783 was raised.



BOLTON

SI BOLTON had an educational stall at the Bromley Cross Summer Fayre, held at the Last Drop Village in May. With posters showing price comparisons of healthy food compared to fast food, a salt content display showing the salt levels in processed foods and "Easy Peasy" recipes to take home there were no shortages of discussion with the passing visitors. SI Bolton were placed opposite the W I cake stall and although their cakes went well - SI Bolton engaged more with people and used the opportunity to get over some strong messages about eating healthily and cheaply.



A kid and adults "Healthy Eating Quiz's" brought lots of people to the stand. ninety two adults completed the quiz and one hundred and forty two kids. It was lovely to see families helping each other with the answers. The prizes of tomato plants for the kids and fresh pineapples for the adults went down really well. SI Bolton plan to run similar events in Bolton in July and again in August, when they will have a stand at the Bolton Food and Drink Festival on August 29th.

Photo left: Sue Whitter awarding a Pineapple prize to a local estate agent. Top picture: Chris Dixon manning the stand.



... WITH NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

LEIGH

The club had an active June and July. On 17 June the club held a Theatre Supper, raising £450 for Prostate Cancer Care; one week later President Bev Beenham and four other members took part in the Manchester Midnight Walk for St. Ann's Hospice, registering as SI Leigh. They had such a good time that they plan to do it again next year, and are wondering if any other clubs would like to walk also, thus having a regional representation for SIGBI to raise our profile?

The club is also continuing its Bra Collection Campaign in aid of Breakthrough; in 2010 – 2011 over 8000 bras were collected.



Pictured are five members of the club (left to right Aruna Kotecha President Elect, Elaine Seddon, Wendy Heydon, Phyllis Bayley and President Bev. Beenham) after completing the Manchester Midnight Walk in aid of St. Ann's Hospice on Saturday 25th June. Thanks to all who supported them helping them to raise over £1000

ASHTON-under-LYNE

"COOL TIES FOR SOLDIERS"

The talented trio of Brenda, Mildred and Susan from Ashton Club held a Sewing Bee in June which produced another much needed batch of 30 ties which are now on their way to our troops in Afghanistan.

Sharron, the Manchester representative of Support our Soldiers, was thrilled when Susan contacted her as she had just received an urgent request for ties and with our help was able to complete the despatch immediately. The ties are made using donated 100% cotton material and filled with water-retaining granules. Sharron said they can be a lifesaver when temperatures soar.

This is an ongoing PAC Project for Ashton Club and Susan said that another Bee will take place within the next few months.

MANCHESTER

Members of S. I. Manchester were proud to join their oldest member, Hilda Swindells, when she celebrated her 100th birthday on 1st July 2011. Hilda joined the club in 1953 and was a very active Soroptimist, attending conferences all over the world. She became Club President in 1965.

At the age of sixteen she took a secretarial course. By the time she was twenty, her father (an accountant) had bought a bakery in Hyde which Hilda and her mother managed. She attended night school and obtained a 1st Class City and Guilds qualification in bakery. Her parents died shortly after one another when Hilda was twenty six, leaving her to manage the business and care for her sister who was only eleven at the time. She sold the business and started working for the Gas Board, appointing and training demonstrators, and continued her education. She obtained a teacher's Certificate in cookery and taught evening classes at Salford Technical College for many years.

She coped well with the difficulties of those times as a woman in a man's world (rising to the position of Chief Home Economist in the Northwest of England), and during this period she spent many years teaching people to cook, holding demonstrations everywhere from prisons to primary schools, and creating dishes showing people how to make the most of their wartime rations. She wrote a cookery book with her friend, Marguerite Patten, and once served dinner to the Duke of Edinburgh. She met other royals frequently at gala parties, including Princess Margaret. In 1960 she was awarded an MBE for services to the gas industry.



Hilda never married. She lived with her sister, Claire, who was 15 years her junior, and whom she had brought up after her parents' deaths. She continued to travel extensively and had a vivid social life, but maintained her interest in her local church, holding annual Strawberry Teas and writing a cook book to raise funds for the Gee Cross Church restoration fund. She continues her interest in antiques and was a member of local flower clubs. Club members all recall her elegance and style, and her down-to-earth wit and indomitable spirit. The picture shows Hilda with members of S. I. Manchester at a party to celebrate her 100th birthday.

Right to left: Kathleen Beavis, Yvonne Mullen, Margaret Cropper, Peggy Howarth, and current President Val Moss.

BOOTLE



President Sheila visited our very special, oldest member Mrs Dorothy Wilson, who is 101 years old and had just celebrated forty years as a Soroptimist. This delightful picture was taken when Sheila presented Dorothy with her long service certificate as a member of SI Bootle. Although she cannot attend meetings any longer she still gives her input and looks forward in anticipation to her newsletters.

SOUTHPORT CLUB

The Southport Club installed its new President, Carol Cookson, in April at a splendid 79th Charter Dinner. Carol's background is in education as an English teacher and she has chosen this as her theme in her Presidential year – **“educated girls = educated mothers”**.

Her year began in style, when we hosted the annual ‘Three Clubs Meeting’. SI Southport joined up with our sister clubs of Crosby and Bootle in a celebration of Shakespeare's birthday. Elizabethan style food was served by ‘wenches’ from the Social Committee and this was followed by a one-off performance of an extract of ‘A Midsummer Night's Dream’, featuring the untapped talent of our Club's thespians. A good time was had by all.

The photos below show Regional President Jenny, with the Presidents of Southport, Crosby and Bootle clubs and “the Elizabethan Serving Wenches” who are members of the Social Committee.



In July, we welcomed Norman Armstrong-Kersh, the Founder and Chief Executive of ‘Life for a Life’ Memorial Forests to our Programme Action Meeting. Norman told us of this not-for-profit non-denominational charity which involves the planting of tree or trees to commemorate the passing of a loved one.

We are currently having a break for the summer, but we are nevertheless enjoying the company of our fellow members in a number of activities and trips. These include weeding in a local eco-garden, some more litter picking, visits to Gawsorth Hall and the Cartmel Races and supporting the ‘Southport in Bloom’ campaign, of which our secretary, Dorothy Lee, is Chair. SI Southport have sponsored the plants in the border of the Mermaid Fountain in the centre of town and with the ‘Britain in Bloom’ judges visiting last week, we thought we would tidy the beds.

The photograph shows President Carol, Secretary Dorothy, together with Executive Members Carmel Preston and Kim Harris and the Mermaid in the background.



OBITUARY

It was with great sadness that SI Crosby reported in August the passing of Tricia Fahey, an honorary life member of their club, at the age of 72.

Tricia had been a committed Soroptimist having been Federation President in 1995/96 and prior to that had been Regional President 1988/89 and Club President in 1985/86.

She believed that SI gave women “A Global Voice” and was quoted as having said, “If women's voices are not heard then the world is deprived of the caring, loving humanitarian approach to its problems.”

A very keen bowler she set up the South Lancashire Region Bowling tournament and one of the trophies is named after her, which is a very fitting legacy to her.

SI CONVENTION MONTREAL

THE THEME FOR THE CONVENTION was **Women: Leaders in Civil Society**. This was chosen because Civil Society is the buzz word of our time, quite often used, and often misunderstood.

For me there were two outstanding speakers:

Dr. Samantha Nutt whose subject was **‘Women as Catalysts of Change in Human Rights’**. Dr. Nutt is a medical doctor with more than fifteen years experience working in war zones. Committed to peace, human rights and social justice, she has worked with War Child Canada, the United Nations and non-governmental organisations in Darfur, Iraq, Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Burundi, Northern Uganda, Ethiopia and the Thai-Burmese border. She has spearheaded efforts to provide direct humanitarian support and long term programming to war-affected children and their families, and to promote greater awareness of the rights of children everywhere.

The other excellent speaker was **Maude Barlow** whose theme was **“Women as Stewards of the Environment”**. Maude is the National Chairperson of The Council of Canadians, Canada's largest public advocacy organisation, and the co-founder of the Blue Planet Project, working internationally for

the right to water. She is also a Director with the International Forum on Globalisation, a San Francisco based research and education institution opposed to economic globalization. She is a Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the United Nations General Assembly. Maude gave a very thought provoking presentation informing delegates that in the future we will have a great global water crisis.

Dorothy Lee

The photo below shows the delegation from South Lancashire

