

SIGBI President's May 2019 Blog



Dear Friends,

I am writing this blog just after approaching the half way stage of my term of office as Federation President and I am amazed, as I am sure all previous Presidents have been, at how quickly the time has gone. At the same time, I am aware that other members are just beginning in their tenure of office as Club Officers. Congratulations! I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, especially those taking up roles for the first time, because without you (who undoubtedly will be outside of their comfort zone at some point in the year) we would not be the vibrant, successful organisation that we are.

There are many sources of information available to you to help you to shape your year. We have revised and refreshed the website content to ensure everything is in the right place for easier access. A new Members pack will shortly be available to you. There will be a short version to go to members as soon as they join and a longer version to dip into as and when you need to know anything. I still use this pack as I find it really useful to have all the information in one place. I hope you enjoy reading it too)

– www.sigbi.org/members/membership/new-members-pack/.

Please don't forget that you have the support of your members too. Our longest serving members are a font of information. If they don't have the answer approach Regional, National and Network Officers, Federation Councillors and our staff in the office at SIGBI HQ.

Please think about inviting your Federation Councillor along to a meeting to share our SIGBI Strategic Plan 2018-2021 presentation with you which includes everything that your Federation Management Board are doing to take forward our organisation. It's a great way to stay abreast of what we are doing.

Another way to be informed is to read our extended news briefing which started last month. We have had two editions so far and there have been many positive comments about the fresh new look and the wealth of information it contains. I hope you are also able to encourage your members to read it too.

During May we will receive our Soroptimist News in its new online format. A vibrant and exciting publication which is meant for our external partners to understand more fully the impact our work has on the lives of women and girls. Please share it widely by pressing "forward" to every organisation you work with. It's also a fantastic tool for members, as it truly does represent our international, national and local project work at its best. I hope you like this renewed focus on our project work and the dramatic modern cover, which I think is attention grabbing.



Soroptimist International was formed in 1921 so our attention is turning towards our centenary celebration in America in October 2021 (SIGBI was formed in 1934). We have a working group looking at ideas to celebrate the first 100 years of our organisation. They are working to ensure that the ideas you suggest, which are within our budget can be achieved. If you have any imaginative ideas we would love to hear from you.

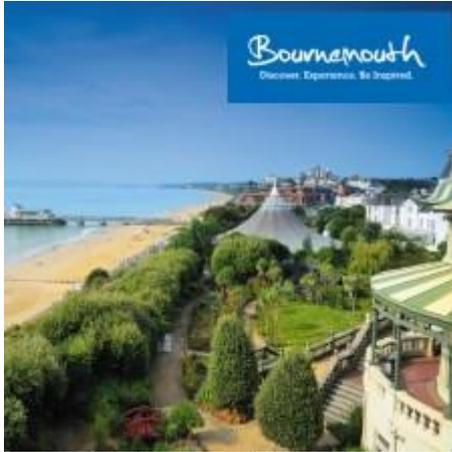
During the last few months I have attended many Soroptimist Celebrations, SI Sunderland and District inspired me in their 80th year for their work with an author, Nancy Ravell, to commission a piece of community art to recognise women in the ship yards during the second world war. I attended the Women in Scotland lunch which focused on mental health and inspired me to learn more about how I could support others to have good mental health. The joint North-South Ireland conference focused on mental health and the theme "Think On It", close to my heart. There was an opportunity for members who attended to gain a certificate in suicide awareness, a great way to promote our understanding of the challenges some people face every day. SI Bingley entertained me as a member of SI Yorkshire, Lesley Berry, gave an irreverent account of the club's year as it celebrated its 70th year. SI Middlesbrough planted a dynamic S shape of bluebells in the town's Albert Park to mark their partnership with Daft as a Brush, who provide outpatient's with custom made transport to and from treatments. Did you know that bluebells signify humility and gratitude? I think that sums up the work of Soroptimists! I think these are great ways to Celebrate Soroptimists work which is our Focus in May for membership.



Of course, as part of my theme 'Think On It' I have asked that we paint our Soroptimist Federation green from May 13th to 19th. The focus is on body image, something which can affect women and girls at any age. Please let your imaginations rip and let's see if we can be really innovative in the way we publicise this on social media. Please look at www.mentalhealth.org.uk for more ideas or indeed our own [toolkit](#) or buy one of our new green badges to wear to signify your support for every person who goes about their day to day lives whilst coping with mental health issues.

Recently, your Board have begun to develop its Communication Strategy for 2019 and onwards. One of the big goals of this strategy is to try to address the age old issue of our organisation being the 'best kept secret'. There is no short-term fix to this one and it will take all of us using every means possible to build on our reputation and help get our message heard more widely. We are well known at the UN and at a local level but at a national level the picture is patchy depending on where you live in our Federation. We are not yet a household name or the 'go to' organisation to speak about women's issues. That is why I am sharing the draft widely amongst all of the staff, Federation Councillors and Past Federation Presidents for comment as many heads are better than a few! Once our first version is complete it will be ready to share more widely.

In June, many of us will attend the development day which launches phase 3 of our growth plan. There will be exciting and informative workshops and a theatre group acting out scenarios for us to consider. If you haven't booked a place yet please consider this as essential for our future and [book a place now!](#)



There are just around 200 days to this year's conference in Bournemouth. Have you registered, got your hotel and travel arrangement planned or are you just about to decide whether to attend? If you have booked, thank you, it promises to be very informative conference around mental health, discussions about our future Board structure at the general meeting and of course, plenty of time to catch up with friends. Please do look at the [Conference website](#) to see which speakers we have, as I am sure that will make up your mind to attend! Don't forget that the last time for early bird registration is the 30th June.

I am incredibly lucky to meet Soroptimists around our Federation and beyond, and to see the work that is taking place is truly humbling. I do not take this position lightly and encourage you to contact me if you want to share a positive story or to 'bend my ear' about anything that is giving you a less than satisfactory experience as a Soroptimist. I look forward to hearing from you and to continuing to work with, and for you, to ensure that our wonderful organisation becomes a household name.

In Friendship

Sue Williams
SIGBI President 2018-2019