

*Message from Denise Staplehurst,
Federation Director of Membership.*

It is April and time for another Membership Newsletter. I know many clubs are celebrating their successes and achievements at the end of the year. Now, you are looking forward, having had a time of reflection and so, here is a thought for you about your members:

Some make it happen

Some watch it happen

Some say 'What Happened?

Which are you?

My theme for this newsletter is:

**'Membership makes
a difference - when
everyone is involved**

Is your club:

1. Welcoming to all?
2. Everyone involved?
3. One with interesting meetings?
4. One with relevant speakers, linked to Soroptimism and does P.A. - with the exec doing the business?

When members leave the meeting, do they go away with the feeling they have achieved something and value the time they spent with their friends as Soroptimists; so they want to come to the next meeting?

One club decided they must move forward – here are their ideas:

With no President to take office, no new members for two years and every member getting older by the year we needed to do something radical.

From the beginning of last year, the Executive Committee started to plan for the club to operate without a President for a while. This meant that everyone had to pull together. Each month, a committee member would take a turn to Chair the meetings with the various club committees arranging the speakers.

We are moving to hold one main meeting a month to include both a speaker and essential business. At another time in the month, small groups meet informally to socialise

and discuss and plan club activities and projects.

Our Secretary, and newest member, is initiating a supper club where six to eight members share a meal together, getting to know one another, chatting informally about the club, SI and projects. The first supper was at her house and after that it may be at a restaurant or another member's home.

A craft group is planned, meeting during the day and this is linked to fund-raising activities.

With this new flexible approach, we hope to reach younger, working members who have found the set club meeting times incompatible with their work schedule. We hope to attract new members by having a friendlier, informal way of learning what we are all about.

To keep the club running smoothly, there will be an Executive Committee meeting each month and we will have a lively Programme Action plan.

Will this work? We think we have the recipe for revitalising the club but come back and ask us in a year's time! Ann Greenfield SI Tunbridge Wells and District.

In the UK, Regions have been supporting Clubs on membership and there will be an opportunity to apply for a further grant of £250 to support this work. A letter will be coming out soon.

Possible action by Regional Officers:

1. Arrange an appointment to visit a particular Club
2. Attend the Club meeting
 - A. Listen** to what they have to say
 - B. Acknowledge** their issues/problems
 - C. Explore/ examine** the options/solutions
 - D. Respond**
3. Gain agreement and commitment to an Action Plan in timescale
4. Complete Development Plan

5. Support the activities proposed where possible

6. Nurture the members

7. Monitor regularly

8. Interim progress report

9. Final Report on findings

10. Forward report to SIGBI

Club Health check

- Check profile of the Club members and numbers
- Meeting times
- Meeting Place
- Club finance
- Cost of membership
- Mentors
- Club website
- Media publications
- Programme Action Projects and reporting
- Progression routes

Please let us have the name and contact information of the member in your Region, National Association or Network who we can engage with as the main link to the Federation for membership issues. Normally, this would be your Membership Officer but, depending on how you organise your recruitment and membership work; you might prefer it to be your Councillor, your Membership Officer or your Development Officer. We are just looking for one name and her contact details so she can collect and pass information re membership through myself and Sally, Membership Officer at Federation Office.

I am also putting together a recruitment/membership tool kit on the website of useful information to support you. One idea is for recruiting members of different ages; this was based on the idea from SIA. Different people in different areas and of different ages think differently so need to be encouraged and supported in different ways.



Memorial Fund Award – As we only received one application by the closing date, we have extended it to 30th June; please look out for the club mailing on 20th April. If you live outside the UK and would like to attend Conference and have your fees paid and want to develop Soroptimism in your area, please apply.



MEMBERSHIP and WEBSITES

The Membership & Organisational Development section of the Member's area of the SIGBI WEBSITE has been reorganised into 4 sections:
Information for: 1. New Members, 2. Club Members, 3. Club/Region/NA/Network/Federation Officers.
4. Starting a New Club
We continue to add to the "Useful Examples" section, please send me your ideas.
Latest: Gravesend designed a leaflet, following a time of reflection, for an event for International Women's Day. To follow: Benevolent Fund

*The youngest newest member of the St Albans Club **joined via the internet** – when asked how she searched for us on the web, she looked for local women's groups on the Council website and found the local Soroptimist club under "Associations, Clubs, Friends, Groups and Societies".*

This shows that it's really important to have your club listed in places like Council websites. Is yours there?

Sally, in Federation Office, and I, have been looking at membership data. **104 out of 141 members** joined as a result of personal contact. Often we say: go and look at the website and find out more about us, so your **club website** needs to be up to date, **vibrant and dynamic**; showing how your club improves the lives of women and girls – locally and internationally.

Liz Batten (IPP) had the idea of **A-Z of recruitment** showing some innovative ideas – here is the A, B and Z – the rest of the document can be found in the Members' area of the SIGBI website.

Appointments pages in local papers are a great source of information about local women who have been promoted to new positions or have relocated to new jobs in the area. Make contact to congratulate them on behalf of the Club.

Bus stops are a great place to meet and chat to other women you may see every day - about our great organisation. Have you investigated the cost of local advertising on bus shelters or even on the buses themselves? C D E.....

Zumba, salsa, aerobics, Pilates, spinning, even ballroom dancing classes; all good places to meet other women and to chat to them about the wonderful experience of being a Soroptimist.

Prospective Clubs in Lewes and Brighton



Here you can see the prospective Lewes Club on a bridge in Lewes on 10th March for International Women's Day giving out leaflets to promote their new club.



meetings. You will also see members of

the Eastbourne Club that will be the mother club and members of the Regional team including the Membership Officer and Regional President. 2 ideas from the new club:

1. Encourage service projects which raise the profile locally and cost less money by not draining the pockets of members.
2. Encourage any women they know to attend meetings or an event – get them involved in club activities, they might become members later.

Readdressing Recruitment (or the Four B's Workshop)

A membership workshop held in Southern England Region during March set the participants the challenge of focussing on a potential new member they knew but had not yet introduced to membership. They were asked to consider why they had not yet recruited the woman – what were the **Barriers** and where did the ownership for those lie? They were asked to plot these on a diagram showing the circle of the functions of the organisation: Member, Club, Region and Federation. The diagram was then passed on to the next table who considered the barriers and gave their views on them. Next they were asked to consider how these barriers could be **'Bridged'** – for example the 'barrier' of costly subscription fee was 'bridged' by the suggestion of paying fees by quarterly or monthly subscription. After this they passed the diagram on again for the next group to suggest and plot the ownership points of the **Benefits** of membership to encourage the potential new member to join. Views were varied and included: worldwide contacts, meeting and working with likeminded women, new circle of friends, 63 Bayswater Road, making a difference and programme action. Participants lastly considered **'Bonuses'** or incentives that could encourage new members to join or existing members to help to recruit. Among the suggestions were: discounted capitation fees in first year of membership, discount cards as membership incentive, access to discounted services like will making services, insurance or travel. I am grateful to SI Southern England for allowing me to share their thoughts and ideas. Liz Batten, IPP SIGBI



You will have seen the **article in Soroptimist News** encouraging Clubs to have a membership drive – you may like to consider a profile raising event similar to Club's activities marking International Women's Day in March (also see Soroptimist News and News on the SIGBI website). What is your Club doing for 21st September International Day of Peace, or 10th December Human Rights Day and SI Day of Action?

Please take part in the **Membership Competition** by telling us the most innovative way you gained a new member.

Councillors in the UK have been phoning new members to encourage them and to try and stop the 'revolving door syndrome' of new members only staying a short time and leaving. 135 calls were made in the last quarter. Key points: 98% found clubs welcoming and friendly 70% had a mentor 5% would like a mentor (maybe you can check in your club and use the Easy Stages Guide to help you with this). 30% looked at new members pack on the website (I was disappointed about this percentage as there is a lot of useful information on it).

95% were involved in club projects Almost all were pleased with the support.

Interestingly, the majority had not attended Region and were not sure about this, which links into work being done by Ann and the Organisational Development Committee on the purpose of Regions.

They were asked – 'What are you enjoying about membership?'

*meeting friends, like minded people, diverse membership, networking

*Speaker meetings – variety gaining knowledge

*Interacting locally, community involvement

*National/International aspect UN role.

Other interesting comments:

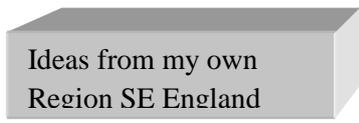
- *Own time constraint to attend meetings (2xmonth) and events – felt guilty not attending, or getting involved
- *Business meetings not needed in current format – should be doing action
- *Admin and bureaucracy a problem!
- * lots to learn! Info from Federation too much and confusing
- * One member felt club had lost its way!
- * Why do you need committees to do the reporting twice – more efficient
- *WI turned themselves round – can SI?

Councillors have been sent the next list of new members (between 6-9 months) and I will report any new ideas in the next newsletter.

As this has been successful in the UK the calls will be extended to **Councillors and Clubs outside the UK**. A letter will be going out from Federation Office in July and this will be completed once a year.

Latest Membership Figures: I am not including these this time as clubs are in the process of completing annual returns and they are not up to date they will be published in the next newsletter.

I have done analysis of the data on the new **Leaving Forms**, reasons given were: 19 illness, 14 other commitments, 7 lack of time, 4 cost, 3 attitude of members 8 other i.e. moving.



Is your Club having difficulty getting people to take office? If so, why? Is it because of any of the following:

- >Are the tasks too difficult?
- >Is the club expecting too much?
- >Are there opportunities to update/ review the roles creatively?
- >Is the member offered some training /preparation and help with the role?
- >What support are the club members giving the member taking office?
- Are all Club members taking on some tasks to spread the load for everyone?

We developed many support ideas to help our clubs:

- >Job share/ job shadowing

- >All members participate in projects
- >Computer training for members
- >Attend conferences/ region meetings to get the bigger picture
- >Work with a mentor
- >Coach/ consult other club members
- >Identify and praise member's skills
- >Adaptability; building partnerships; facilitating change; innovation; team support and vision

The Executive Committee or a special club team could:

- >Have a list of roles and when needed for handover/ induction
- >Determine which members could/ would fill individual roles (talent pool)
- >Planning will identify gaps to allow for proactive action rather than last minute panic!
- >Many roles do not need to be vested in an individual but can be streamlined or carried out by a team.

Our conclusion was that SE Clubs need to be adaptable and flexible. In particular, all club members have a shared responsibility for the running of their club and must not leave it to just a few people. Club reflection sessions allow time for discussing club development plans, progress and potential succession into roles. Hilary Robery – Regional President.

A Few Myths:

If you remember there was an article in Soroptimist News and we said we would continue to add ideas here:

Thoughts on Roll Call. Some young members were surprised when this happened and asked what was it for? A role call is definitely not needed at each meeting, however, you may decide it is nice to do when a new member joins or at the AGM annually, Club members can just say their names, categories are not needed and you should definitely not be saying retired.

I hope you have found this useful and if you would like to report in the **next magazine**, please get in touch on denisest@tiscali.co.uk. The closing date for information for the next newsletter is 15th June.

*Denise Staplehurst,
SIGBI Director of Membership*