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**London Chilterns Region**

**President’s Update**

**Regional Meeting – Saturday 17th June 2017**

It’s been a busy few months, since we were all together at the Regional Meeting on Saturday 11th March. On 2nd April, I was delighted to be able to join SI St Albans and District for the closing event of the Diamond Charter weekend – we enjoyed a fascinating and informative walking tour of Verulamium and the Roman Theatre, courtesy of Hilary Ratcliffe and her husband, followed by a delicious lunch and good conversation at The Cricketers in Redbourn. On 6th April, I was warmly welcomed by SI Newbury and District where we heard an update on the progress of the Rosemary Appeal to build a new Dialysis and Cancer Care Centre at West Berkshire Community Hospital, which is one of many projects that the club is supporting and undertaking fundraising activities for. On the 8th April, I joined SI High Wycombe and District for their fundraising dinner at Flackwell Heath Golf Club. As well as fundraising for Rape Crisis Buckinghamshire, we enjoyed an informative, witty and downright scary talk by Brian Higgins, JP on cyber security. On 10th April, I ventured across to SI Lewisham and SE London to join their business meeting and was pleased to be asked to hand over some solar lamps for Harford Girls School in Sierra Leone. On 18th April, it was wonderful to attend the Kori Library Opening hosted by SI Thames Valley at the Odney Club in Cookham. A true celebration of fantastic programme action co-ordinated by the club and resulting in a fantastic library for the community. 19th April was our Regional Exec meeting, where we planned our next Regional Meeting and agreed a plan to support clubs in developing their websites and social media presence. On 24th April, I attended the SI St Albans & District Annual General Meeting, which was an evening of mixed emotions as we celebrated a fantastic year of action with their 60 for 60 initiative, and said a sad goodbye to Hilary Ratcliffe who was leaving the club to transfer to SI Sheffield. Before I knew it the 26th April had come round and it was time for my abseil down the 150 foot, 10 storey Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother building at St Mary’s Hospital Paddington – which was the scariest but most exhilarating thing I have ever done, and was definitely taking being ACTIVE to the extreme. After being harnessed up, we were escorted up the staircase to the 10th floor and shown through some offices onto the balcony with stunning views across London, excited to spot the London Eye in the distance.  After a safety briefing, it was time for me to climb onto the scaffolding platform and start my descent.  I must say stepping backwards off that platform was the scariest thing I have ever done, made worse by my determination not to look down.  After some words of encouragement and a moment to hide my fear and smile for the camera, I set off.  It took me a minute or two to find my rhythm as I could only just touch the wall with my feet.  Just as I let the adrenaline kick in, the wall disappeared to make way for a window....after a little spin around I reconnected with the wall and down I went....reports from my onlookers afterwards was that I flew down really quickly....I wasn’t stopping to write postcards on the way down!

Back on terra firma, I felt an immense sense of accomplishment and was delighted to have raised £260 for the More Smiles Appeal, including an incredibly generous donation from SI Aylesbury and District.

On 30th April, I was proud to lead the response to the toast to Soroptimists at the SI Newbury and District Charter lunch, where we heard about the amazing work of the Elizabeth Fry charity, which is also actively supported by the club.

On 10th May, I attended the AGM at SI Aylesbury and District and was grateful to receive a generous donation as sponsorship of my abseil. It was interesting to hear more about the programme action the club has undertaken over the year and especially the annual pantomime trip that they organise for the women and their families from the local refuge. I joined SI Greater London for their Drinks Reception at number 63 on 12th May as part of their 90th Charter celebration weekend. The Club were joined by their friendship links, International President Yvonne and friends from near and far. On 17th May, I attended SI Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead’s dinner and meeting and heard about the advocacy work in the field of Health, Food and Security from our own Rita Beaumont. Finally on 9th June, I attended the first of the two ‘Growing your Brand in the Community’ Workshops and was able to network with other members of Regional Exec over lunch to start to discuss our plans for supporting clubs to take this forward over the next 12 months.

Looking ahead, I still have two more club visits planned – SI Hertford and District on 30th August for the Diamond Engineering Awards and SI Milton Keynes on 21st September as well as my last Regional Executive meeting on 6th September and the 2nd ‘Grow Our Brand in the Local Community’ Workshop on 9th September.

***‘We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our Children.’ Native American Proverb***

Jen Simpson
Regional President Soroptimist International London Chilterns Region

Being **A**spirational, **C**ollaborative, **T**enacious, **I**nspirational, **V**ocal and **E**mpowering for Women and Girls globally.

Supporting www.moresmiles.org.uk to provide a 'fit for the future' expanded Paediatric Intensive Care unit at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington

**Distributed to all clubs after the meeting**