**Celebrating the Contribution made by Soroptimists in our Local Communities**

*"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."*

Eleanor Roosevelt Chair of the Drafting Committee of the UN Declaration of Human Rights

During its 100 year history Soroptimists have never shied away from a challenge. Rooted in the vision that women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, our advocacy work and on-the-ground projects have sought to drive the realisation of our aspirational founders to ensure that women and girls have an equal voice in creating strong and peaceful communities, now and in the future.

Working locally for the good of our communities has really been demonstrated in the last two years as we have experienced the great challenges posed by the Worldwide Pandemic. Soroptimists from across the world have risen to the challenge and have been working in their own local communities to provide help and support to those at risk

Examples of service commonly given include:

* Retired healthcare professionals responding to the government request to return to work to expand the workforce and helping to address the massive increase in workload
* Members volunteering at Vaccination Centres ~ everything from being vaccinators to carpark attendants
* Sewing scrubs and face coverings for health and social care practitioners ~ thousands of items of Personal Protective Equipment have been produced and delivered
* Joining the NHS Covid Telephone Helpline to support individuals who are frightened about what the future holds, promoting mental wellbeing
* Joining local initiatives to collect and distribute essential goods to those at risk and self-isolating at home ~ not just delivering goods but proving a social lifeline to those who were isolated and lonely
* Joining community gardening schemes, helping provide a safe haven for local residents to enjoy, thereby boosting moral
* Volunteering for local catering and community larder schemes
* Volunteering at local Foodbanks and collection centres
* Providing ongoing support to our own members by keeping in touch by telephone and in person to ensure they are safe and in good health
* An increased number of applications to the Federation Benevolent Fund have been acted upon

In her book,The History of Soroptimist International published in 1995, Janet Haywood included words written in 1939 during World War II, by a British Soroptimist:

*“Two things are clear to us in the midst of the bewilderment and distress of these present days. One is that, as a band of women whose aim is the furthering of international understanding, we must stick together and keep in active working order our Soroptimist organisation, the value of which is greater than ever before. The other is that when we emerge from this nightmare and the struggle is over, we must be stronger than ever to see that all our influence is used on the side of a just and lasting peace.”*

As normality returns to the lives in our communities perhaps we will be remembered as a group of practical women with plenty of common sense who stepped up to the plate for the good of our local neighbourhoods when it was most needed just as our Wartime members did

Approx. 4 mins.