



SI Medway Programme Action Report for AGM 2020

This year has once again been a mixture of new projects and others that we have been involved with over the years. Jane has submitted 24 programme focus forms between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, more recently using the new format reporting on the SIGBI database.

The SOS (Soroptimists on Sustainability) project has continued with litter picks and a beach clean at Allhallows. In July we had a stand at the Cherry Picnic in Rochester to raise awareness of plastic free ideas in the home. The Plastic Free Medway Steering group has been established with political sign-up that meets monthly with Soroptimists playing a key role and is chaired by Liz. Sharon takes the lead on schools and has spoken at Chatham Grammar School and Hill Top Primary with further visits planned.

As part of Federation President Sue William's theme 'Think On It', we met the challenge to get a better understanding of mental health issues. In May, we held a Charity Preview for 'Sitting Pretty' at MLT and £200 was raised for Meru Team Mum which with Government match funding equated to a donation of £400. A donation of £50 went to WaterAid who provide clean water and toilets in communities around the world. There was an interactive session in June introducing members to Dementia Friends - UK's biggest initiative to change the way people think, act and talk about dementia. Fourteen members signed up to become a Dementia Friend and agreed to take at least one positive action.

Our partnership agreement with Byron School, a UNICEF Rights Respecting school is well established with work progressing for them to achieve their gold award. Members have continued to send postcards from their travels and lend artefacts and have received thank you letters from the children. Wanda spoke to 16 classes about her travels to Zisize which they found extremely informative. Jane has been a regular member of the Byron Steering Group and with Julia ran the Christmas Toy Fayre raffle with the proceeds £335.66 going to the Zisize Feeding programme.

UKPAC recognised the use of partnerships agreements as good practice and so we formalised our work to support Zisize over many years and this was signed off by Julia and Niki. Julia held a successful Curry lunch at her home and raised £410, and an application to the Trust fund also secured funding support for the Feeding programme for the next 3 years.

In August we joined with SI Maidstone supporting their BRA-B-Q and Bra Collection Fundraiser in aid of 'Smalls for All' – contributing more than 200 bras to the 363 total.

Wanda also facilitated a respite day for young carers at Diggerland in August where 14 children attended and had a brilliant time on all the rides.

In September, 3 members attended a Knife Crime conference in Medway bringing academics, specialists and community leaders to work together to find solutions to tackle knife crime violence and signed a letter 'No Bloody Point' that was sent to the Minister petitioning for having rounded knife design to reduce number of fatalities.

Funding was agreed by the Trust for 5000 'of the Love me, love me not cards' to be printed and these are being distributed widely to stakeholders at the Domestic Abuse (DA) conference in December, Brompton Academy and Medway Youth Council. We also provided refreshments to the 125 people attending the conference and made a £100 donation to the Medway Domestic Abuse Emergency Flight Fund.

This year 6 members filled 80 shoeboxes for the annual Blythswood Shoebox Appeal at Angela's. 5 members also volunteered at the Collection Point in Gillingham providing in excess of 100 hours of service, where 18,008 boxes were checked volunteers and then transported to Romania and Serbia for Christmas.

Janet, Angela, Wanda and Jane with Caroline volunteered again this year at the G4 concert at Rochester Cathedral on behalf of Missing People and the bucket collection raised £904.35. This will go towards providing counselling for 30 parents of missing children.

We also provided Christmas hampers full of goods for distribution at the local refuge together with gifts for the individual children there.

In March, Jenny organised a 'March for Water' 5 mile walk at Capstone Park in aid of the Water Aid campaign and raised £140.

Each month members bring essential items for the Medway Foodbank which Angela delivers to them on our behalf and we also volunteer on their supermarket collection days at Tesco's.

We continue to read the Talking Newspaper for the Kent Association for the Blind (KAB) every six weeks with SI Maidstone members joining with us in this task. A decision was taken in March to suspend this service until the end of May, given the latest Government guidance. KAB is celebrating their centenary in 2020 and we had planned an evening at MLT to raise funds. This has not gone ahead however, many of those who bought tickets have kindly donated the monies for this worthwhile cause and to date the monies raised exceeds £216.

We continue working with Amnesty International via Wanda. They share our philosophy and we continue to support their petitions and their Write for Rights campaign.

I would like to thank everyone for their efforts in what has been a productive year for Programme Action.

Angela Howe

April 2020