

## Santosh Kundi

I have known Santosh Kundi for 27 years.

We met through Soroptimist International Leamington & Warwick which is a club within the Midland Arden Region of SIGBI. Soroptimist International is a world-wide organisation founded in 1921 for women who work to transform the lives of women and girls. Membership gives the opportunity to:

- Undertake local, national, and international projects to educate, empower and enable women and girls to reach their full potential
- Enjoy service, friendship, and fun with women locally
- Lobby, influence and make a difference to women at home and abroad
- Meet women from different countries and cultures

Our club has just celebrated its 80th anniversary.

During her 29 years as a member, Santosh has twice been club President, first in 2006/7 and then in 2014/15. In 2006/7 she chose the British Heart Foundation as her charity and under her leadership the club raised £4,382 for the cause (including £2580 - one third of the sponsorship raised from the club's annual Swimathon).

Drawing on her interests in multi-culturalism, inter-faith communication and education, she devised a most interesting programme of talks and activities for the club. Amongst the most memorable were the talks by Dr. Najmi Quereshi on heart disease in women and Dr. Shrine Boardman on diabetes particularly within the Indian community. Other speakers included the Birmingham Poet Laureate and Clenton Farquerson on disability discrimination.

Under her guidance members visited the Ridgeway School for physically and mentally handicapped children where she taught.

On a lighter note, she invited members to a Divali celebration at her house with wonderful story telling, dancing and food. Her curry evenings are famed among Soroptimists across the Region for fundraising, fun and friendship. She is also a willing and excellent host for other club events and has often provided bed and board for Soroptimists visiting from elsewhere in the country and abroad.

During her 2014/15 Presidency Santosh raised money for Warwickshire Young Carers, an organisation for which she volunteers. It provides support for young people caring for parents and/ or siblings. She raised £4,000 through club events including the 17<sup>th</sup> Swimathon (an annual event raising money for good causes). She further raised the profile of Young Carers by putting forward Matt Deakin (a member of the Young Carers Support Team) for the Warwickshire Citizen of the Year award in September 2014.

She also recommended an 18-year-old young carer from Rugby for the Region's Inspirational Women's Award. This young woman has supported her mentally ill mother from the age of three and now mentors other young carers whilst studying part time at university.

Santosh arranged a visit to the local Sikh Temple so that Soroptimists from our club and neighbouring ones might learn more about the Sikh religion. She also introduced us to African drumming and Sitar playing.

Santosh has for many years been a Governor of Shrublands Primary School in Leamington and through her good offices members of the club have become involved in a project to assist children with their reading skills.

Early in 2013 the club sponsored the provision of a water well in the Siem Reap Province of Cambodia under the auspices of the charity Cambodian Child's Dream. Santosh visited wells sponsored both by the club and the Region whilst on a Far Eastern trip in 2014 and on her return sponsored two further wells. She continues to keep in touch with the work of the charity.

Her involvement with the local Faith Forum, education and multicultural awareness contributes positively to the life of the club and is very much in the spirit of Soroptimism. In 2014 with the help of a group of club members she instigated classes in English language and culture for a group of elderly Indian ladies. In spite of living many years in the United Kingdom they know relatively little of its language and customs. Interaction with these ladies has also raised issues of health and harassment. She has arranged visits from Warwickshire Vision Support (covering vision aids for ladies suffering from poor eyesight) and advice from a member of the local branch of Victim Support and more assistance is planned.

In March 2016 SIGBI introduced the Meru Women's Garden Project, a three-year project which supported some of the poorest women-led households in Kenya. It focuses on providing opportunities to women and girls who may never otherwise be given the chance to earn an income and gives them a status within their community. Drawing on her time spent at school in Kenya Santosh held an evening of Kenyan culture to raise awareness about the country and its culture both for club members and those from a neighbouring club in Kenilworth.

Throughout her time as a Soroptimist, Santosh has fully contributed not only by taking office but also by becoming involved in the club's activities which assist people (especially women and girls) at home and abroad. She fully lives up to the ideals of Soroptimism. Given her health problems this is even more noteworthy.

Mary Sue Stathe B.A; DMS, Retired Solicitor  
(Secretary and a former Club President) on behalf of the club.