

Women inspiring action, *transforming lives*

Introduction from Regional President Judith Carder

As Soroptimists we do our best through our Programme Action work to 'transform' the lives of women and girls.

But what do we actually mean by this?

The Cambridge Dictionary definition says : 'to change completely the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved.'

As I read about the achievements of all clubs in Midland Chase, I never cease to be amazed. Everyone should feel so proud, especially as the pandemic has affected so much over the past two years. Within our clubs we have all adapted and risen to the various challenges and the seventeen sustainable development goals have provided an essential focus for our project work. It is always "Progress not Perfection" as we work in our teams with kindness and respect for each other. There is also the fun element too which is vitally important.

Thank you to Chris Corless for her continued commitment and leadership within PA in our region and for producing this wonderful newsletter. Enjoy reading it but remember this is NOT and never should be a competition between clubs. We are all volunteers who do our best and choose to do this life changing work.

I am so proud of everyone and feel very privileged to be your Regional President. You are truly 'Women inspiring action' and most definitely responsible for 'transforming lives'.

Reports on the following pages highlight some of the work carried out by Region clubs in recent months which corresponds to the theme of this newsletter, 'Women inspiring action, transforming lives', the SIGBI strapline.

The reports have been ordered by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which seems most fitting for each particular project. However, it would be very easy to include all the projects mentioned under the banner of a number of different SDGs.

When we complete a Programme Focus Report, we are encouraged to include all the relevant SDGs – and also the United Nation's 5 Ps (People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnerships) – let's not undersell ourselves! The information on the Programme Focus Reports is fed through to the Economic and Social Council and contributes to the maintenance of our consultative status at the United Nations. We have to reapply to the United Nations every four years and have to evidence the work we have done. This is where the Programme Focus Reports come in – they are vital to the maintenance of our consultative status.

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SI Bilston & District

Bilston club has been supporting Di's Kitchen in Wolverhampton for some years now. It is a charity that provides a hot meal every week to vulnerable people in Wolverhampton. Members have responded to requests for dried food, toilet rolls and for whatever there has been a need.

During the lockdown and since the numbers have risen tremendously and now the charity is providing hot meals every Thursday for over 500 people, 238 of whom are children. So at the Dinner meeting before Easter, members donated Easter Eggs with the result that approximately 70 large eggs were delivered to Di's Kitchen.



SI Cannock & District



Again, members, friends, neighbours have turned up trumps either with tinned foods or monetary donations.

President Jackie and Trish M delivered their donations to Vicky, manager at the Food Bank, who was so grateful for our support. Aren't people generous? And isn't it wonderful to be in a position to be able to help?

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SI Stafford

Tackling injustice

For the last eighteen months we have been very aware of the increased cost of food, limited schooling and the reduction in school meals and holiday clubs to feed children. In 2020 main media reports indicated that there were two million children in the UK living in food poverty. Members continue to donate regularly to the following food banks:

House of Bread, Salt Box, Salvation Army, Sanctus St Mark's, Staffordshire Women's Aid, Rising Brook Baptist Church.



SI Cannock & District

Well-being events

The final two events in the year were great fun! The February event saw participants singing for their supper! There was more laughter than singing – definitely lots of well-being.

President Jackie held a coffee morning as her final event, this gave a super opportunity for all members to get together, chat, laugh – and eat cake!! Lisa Shephard and Gez Hill from Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, who have provided all of our events free of charge, joined us. A bring and buy raised funds which will be presented to IHL to enable them to provide well-being sessions to others.



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SI Stafford

Supporting the Dignity and Freedom Network (DFN)

We have continued to support DFN UK and MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières through a successful first Zoom 'on-line' auction, our first Zoom quiz, and a garage sale and cake sale.



Our impact:

- DFN set up a Covid care ward in India
- Established small Covid care facilities in clinics
- Distributed Covid care kits through DFN's community health care workers, including medicines and lifesaving pulse oximeters
- Advocated on behalf of at-risk women and girls in Telangana
- Distributed nutritionally balanced food packages to poor and marginalized people such as the Dalit communities.

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SI Tamworth

Befriending phone line

Tamworth Soroptimists operate the befriending phone line every Friday.

13 Members are on the rota and each member usually does two x 2 hour shifts per month. Approximately 50 - 60 lonely and vulnerable residents are contacted each week.

This is Programme Action at its true level, weekly service to the community.



SI Lichfield & District

Quiz for Talking News



Eleven Teams attended the Annual Lichfield SI Quiz held at Shenstone Village Hall this year, to support Lichfield Talking News.

The battle was intense between the teams. A Fish and Chip supper was a welcome break to rest our brains, trying to name photographs of 40 inspirational women.

£450 was raised to support the Talking News to continue to provide a superb service to those with eyesight problems in the area. Our funds help to support them in a variety of ways, often the costs of the technical equipment needed to continue to provide the service to an ever-increasing number of people needing it.

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SI Burton upon Trent and District

Quilts for Care Leavers

Here are photos of the 4 quilts our member has made, ready for Quilts for CareLeavers. They go to young adults leaving the care system via Lemn Sissay's charity. The Christmas Dinner is an annual project founded by the poet, Lemn Sissay OBE for communities to provide an amazing Christmas Day for care leavers aged between 18 and 25 – one day they'll never forget.

Each dinner is organised locally by a steering group of people who come together to make the Christmas Day magic happen.

The quilts are made from recycled material.



Project Linus

Cot blankets and Quilt made by two of our members for Project Linus, a volunteer organisation which aims to provide a sense of security and comfort to sick and traumatised babies, children and teenagers through the provision of new homemade patchwork quilts and knitted blankets and give volunteers across the UK the opportunity to contribute to their local community.

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SI Stafford

HMP Drake Hall, Eccleshall

Through the last eighteen months SI Stafford has continued to support the women in HMP Drake Hall, Eccleshall.

We donated wool and the women knitted cardigans, jumpers, and baby clothes including matinee coats, hats, mittens, etc., for newborns, crocheted baby blankets, and blankets for refugees, and hats, scarves, and gloves for the Salvation Army for the winter. Our impact includes giving the women:

- Purpose to their work
- Improved self esteem
- Opportunity to contribute
- Opportunity to feel valued members of our society
- Opportunity to give them a better chance on leaving prison
- Knowledge that others care about them-Angel Tree donations in December 2021, we donated monies to enable the Chaplains in Drake Hall to buy presents on behalf of the women for them to give to their children.



Our impact:

- Helps the women build relationships with their children and supports them when they leave prison because it is helping to strengthen their links to their children
- Helps the children know their mums care about them and love them
- Improves wellbeing knowing others care about them
- Helps to break the cycle that leads to offending.

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SI Cannock & District

The Book Team burst into action, securing donation points in Rugeley, Hednesford, Burntwood, Penkridge and Cannock over two weeks which included half term and World Book Day.

In all, 3,888 books were donated in this period! Beverley, at Rotary Books4Home, was overwhelmed! She gave us each a Little Miss book to hold – wonder if you can guess who got which title??



SI Bilston & District

Like other clubs Bilston members were inspired by Beverley from Books4Home so we decided to collect children's books over a short period of time.

The books came flooding in from many sources, members, friends, neighbours making a grand total of 1600 books. We are so pleased to be able to help those children who don't own even one book and hopefully they will be distributed to deprived children in Bilston Schools.



Books packed ready to be delivered.

SI Cannock & District

Providing a library for the refuge run by Staffordshire Women's Aid (SWA)

Now that Books4Home has a good stock of books we were able to request some ourselves – well, Staffordshire Women's Aid refuge to be exact!

Beverley provided 100 books for children, suitable for toddlers through to teens and 100 books for their Moms- 50 fiction and 50 non-fiction, including cookery and self help books. Dickie James, CEO of SWA, was so grateful and delighted the library would be in use in time for the Easter holiday!

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SI Cannock & District

Making our streets safer

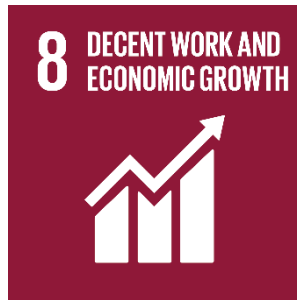
At our meeting on 8th March President Jackie gave a presentation on 'Just Be Lads', a project highlighting the role men and boys can play to help women feel safer on our streets.

Discussion led to the formation of a working party to investigate any project we can put forward in the Cannock Chase area to help women feel safer.



Pictured are members at the meeting adopting the Break the Bias pose

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SI Lichfield & District

Suited for Success

SI Lichfield & District have supported the charity Suited for Success since 2017. Suited for Success collects and provides free interview coaching, interview clothing and employment preparation skills for job interviews. They believe helping unemployed men and women with interview skills and a suitable interview outfit will give them the confidence they need to for a job interview.

Many of Suited for Success clients have been long term unemployed and from challenging circumstances including being victims of abuse, drug or alcohol dependency. They receive coaching and a lot of support prior to the interview stage and many have had their lives changed as a result of getting that all important job which will give them economic independence.

SI Lichfield & District have donated over 250 items of clothing, shoes, bags and accessories that have enabled women to feel more comfortable and confident in themselves in an interview. During lockdown we were unable to continue with our normal annual collections, but now we have a large stock of items that will shortly be delivered with over 100 additional items.



Before and after being kitted out with suitable interview clothing

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Interesting to see who is on the BBC's list of 100 inspiring and influential women from around the world for 2021.



This year 100 Women is highlighting those who are hitting "reset" - women playing their part to reinvent our society, our culture and our world. Among them are Malala Yousafzai, the youngest ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Samoa's first female prime minister Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Professor Heidi J Larson, who heads The Vaccine Confidence Project, and acclaimed author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Women from Afghanistan make up half of this year's list, some of whom appear under pseudonyms and without photos for their own safety. The resurgence of the Taliban in August 2021 has changed the lives of millions of Afghans - with girls banned from receiving secondary education, the ministry for women's affairs being disbanded, and women in many cases told not to return to work. This year's list recognises the scope of their bravery and their achievements as they are forced to reset their lives.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-59514598>

SI The Wrekin have highlighted a number of Inspirational Women around the world working to #Break The Bias in 2022

SI The Wrekin

Selection of Inspirational Women around the world working to #Break The Bias in 2022



Carolina Garcia, Director Netflix

"These last few years have rocked us all, but life is short - why spend our precious time in fear? As my grandma says, 'life must be lived', and it's time we listened to my grandma"

Mia Krisna Pratiwi, Environmentalist

"In the spirit of the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, let's bring back the balance and harmony to our Mother Earth. Maybe we were the cause of the pollution"



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SI The Wrekin

Selection of Inspirational Women around the world working to #Break The Bias in 2022



Malala Yousafzai, Girl's education activist

"Hundreds of millions of girls are out of school today. I want to see a world where every girl can access 12 years of free, safe, and quality education; where all girls can learn and lead."

Oluyemi Adetiba-Orija, Criminal Lawyer

"For the world to be reset, we all have a role to play! Speak, advocate and support good causes, ensuring freedom and safety for the world."



Jos Boys, Architect

"We need to centre the diverse experiences of disabled and other marginalised people over the last year, recognising this as a creative generator to reset our built surroundings as spaces of collective care and interdependence."

Mohadese Mirzaee, Afghanistan Pilot

"Don't wait! No-one will come and give you your wings if you don't stand strong. I fought for mine; you will fight for yours, and together we are unstoppable."



Mina Smallman

Two of her daughters were murdered in 2020: Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry were stabbed to death by a 19-year-old man in a London park.

"As a teacher and a priest, I have dedicated my life to raising boys and girls that people looked down on. I'm asking each of you to speak up when you hear discrimination. We CAN change."

Nasrin Hussein, Veterinarian

"Afghan women and girls are terrified, and the current situation seems hopeless, but there is always a way. As Bob Marley said, "You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice."

