



# Save our Sanity

SI:MK founded in 2015 with support from MK Community Foundation



31 Dec 2023

MK Soroptimists

Newsletter 56

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## Editorial Welcome

**Soroptimists – Standing up for Women and Girls**

**I hope everyone has had a lovely festive time and a chance to recharge. Wishing you all a Happy New Year and all the best for 2024.**

Firstly, a quick reminder. Our 16 January meeting has been moved and will now be held at MK Snap from 5.30pm. We have invited our charities to come along and tell us about the challenges, they have faced this year and what they think will be the challenges for 2024. It is always good to hear from them and it helps us with our planning day on Saturday 3 February where we can discuss what we want to achieve in 2024, how we can go about this and what type of fundraising we can host to support this work and our charities. **This means this month's editorial is a good opportunity for us to look back at what we have achieved in 2023.** And I hope it will help you all to get thinking and creative in readiness, we want your ideas and suggestions.

To prepare for both these meetings, please see below SIGBI's Vision and Mission statement, our club's Mission, and visions statement and our Values. It is always good to re look at these each year to see if we need to update them:

We are part of an international women's voluntary organisation working to improve the lives of women and girls at a local, national and international level.

**Vision** - Women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

**Mission** - Soroptimists transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

Our Mission is: *SI: Milton Keynes seeks to improve the lives of women and girls by initiating, supporting and promoting programmes leading to social and economic empowerment*



**Our Values:**

We are  
Caring, Determined, Committed,  
Loyal, Friendly  
and Inclusive

**Our Vision:**

Women and girls in Milton Keynes' area have the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential and live their dreams

**2023 Calendar year in pictures**



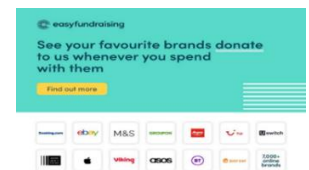
**January** – we welcomed Sue from MK Act; Lorraine from MK YMCA and Kathy from UnityMK to our branch meeting to hear updates on their year and the challenges going forward. It gave us an opportunity to thank them for all their hard work and provide them each with a £200 donation and we also donated 7 toiletry boxes to our charities.

We also held our planning day in January, celebrating our achievements, which included donating over £17k, to our charities and projects in 2022, a big chunk of that was the Vodafone sim cards we got for the Afghan families in MK. And we showed our continuing support for the UN Orange the World campaign to End Violence against women. January ended with a big sort out of toiletries ready for distribution to our charities.



**February** and we welcomed a new charity under our wings. The Ukraine Appeal 22 supporting Ukraine families living in MK.

We dropped off 5 blankets and 3 boxes of toiletries to UnityMK, which were much appreciated and we registered for easyfundraising, so don't forget when shopping online, why not go via easyfundraising. It's easy to set up your account and nominate Milton Keynes Soroptimists to donate to. It all helps us to be able to do more for our projects.





**March** – our 2<sup>nd</sup> International Women’s Day event at MK Snap with two great speakers, Debbie Brock the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire and Viktoriya Shatenko from Ukraine Appeal.

A great day raising over £800, we donated to the projects SI Krakow are doing in Poland with Ukrainian families and to the Ukraine appeal supporting families in MK. And at our branch meeting we met Ben Thomas, the new CEO at Citizens Advice MK to hear about the amalgamation between them and Works For Us and welcomed Debbie as a new member. And one of our members dropped off some clothing and sleeping bags to UnityMK, who are always despartet for these items all year round.



**April** – Rowena a special Soroptimist friend presented us with 16 of her home-made quilts which we donated to the residents at the YMCA at their monthly community lunch.



**May** – A great AGM meeting where we were also able to celebrate confirmation of our official club link with SI Krakow, which we hope to develop in the furure with joint projects.



**June** – saw us celebrating our 8<sup>th</sup> birthday and welcoming two new members, Draha and Angela. It also saw the publication of the SIGBI report on Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts (SDAC) which we contributed towards.



And can you believe we started collecting tins of food in June towards the MK Foodbank Guinness World Record attempt.



**July** – a great meeting Sarah Flain and learning about the charity Mummy’s Star helping women and their families dealing with cancer during pregnancy. We also attended the Ukraine Appeals Thank you Britain event. And this month we dropped off 16 Clean Start Buckets to MK Act, YMCA and UnityMK to help their families and clients.



**Aug and Sept** – started with a car load of bed linen, towels, glases, crockery and other small kitchen goods delivered to MK Act for the families moving out.



**On the 19 Aug** – Fish and Chips Quiz at Simpson Church, was great fun and raised over £500 of which, £400 was donated to MK Act towards their summer activities for the children and families during the school holidays. They have a target of £10,000 so we can still do more.



**Aug** – saw us co-sponsor MK YMCA’s community lunch, a great event, lots of wonderful food cooked by the residents representing their home countries.



**Aug** – continued with our annual summer party. A time to relax, have a good chat, eat lovely food and just be with good friends.



**And in Sept** – we held our first Orange Café at MK Snap. A new initiative by soroptimist clubs to raise awareness about the UN campaign to End Violence Against Women and also an opportunity to raise our profile and hopefully encourage new members. And we continued to collect food tins from all our friends.



**Oct** – thank you Heart and Music Choir for a great Music event at the Mead Centre, raising over £700 for our charities.



And we followed that by taking part in MK Foodank Guinness World Record attempt. It was a marvellous community event. The record was broken and now stands at

102,447 cans in a continuous line instead of 44,966. Sorooptimist Milton Keynes are now officially Guinness World Record Participators. All of us, our families and friends did us proud and we nearly collected 1,000 cans, enabling us to help both MK Snap and YMCA MK reach their targets too. And when we signed up, we were worried we wouldn't reach 350. What were we worrying about. It was a great team effort.



**But we were not finished in Oct** – we held our 2<sup>nd</sup> Violet Awards celebrating women of action, unsung heroes helping vulnerable women in the charities we support. Thank you, Jan Flawn, for sponsoring the event and Zoe Raven, our inspiring speaker but most of all it was about the nominees and saying thank you to them for all they do.



On the last day of Oct, we held our first Orange Café at Dobbies Garden Centre and are now scheduled to hold them monthly except for February and September when we will be holding the café at MK College in Bletchley. We are hoping to work with the College to raise awareness amongst all students. And it was lovely to welcome Summer, our newest and youngest member this month.



**Oct** – went out with a bang with us distributing another 9 boxes of toiletries to our charities.



**Nov** – started with a trip to the annual SIGBI Conference which took place in London this year. There were great inspirational speakers and lovely to see so many clubs from across the Federation attend.



**Nov** – is now becoming a tradition that we lay a wreath, wonderfully produced by the MK Snap learners to commemorate women who have served and died in war conflicts.



And a big thank you to our sewing and crafting members, for stocking us up for our two Xmas craft stalls, the first at the Mead Centre in Newport Pagnell and the second at MK Snap. We raised over £265 pounds for our charities.

**Orange the World and White Ribbon Campaign to END ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

**Helps at Hand**

If something doesn't feel right in your relationship or you are fearful of somebody, there is an array of help out there for you – contact any of these organisations or use the helpful apps.

- **UK Age Refuge** offers specialist domestic abuse advice and support through their helpline, online chat, and face-to-face visits as well as an emergency refuge for women and children: 0800 773 000 from 10am to 10pm weekdays (uk.age.refuge.org.uk)
- **UK Women's Aid** offers specialist domestic abuse advice and support: 0800 549 4040 from 10am to 10pm weekdays (womensaid.org.uk)
- **Victim Support** – for victims and survivors of any abuse or crime: 0800 356 911 weekdays (victimsupport.org.uk)

**Helpful apps**

- **Right to My App** – safe and easy app for those concerned about domestic abuse – https://righttomyapp.org
- **Police e-Consent** – app recommended by the Police provides real life advice and reassurance – https://econsent.org
- **Oris** – app: helps victims access to resources – https://orisis.com
- **HomeSafe** – app: helps victims access to resources – https://home-safe.org.uk
- **Welfare** – app: helps victims access to resources – https://welfare.org.uk

**TAKE A PHOTO OF THIS POSTER AND KEEP IN YOUR PHONE**

Brought to you by:

**Nov** – also sees us campaigning to raise awareness of both the UN Orange the World Campaign and the White Ribbon Campaign to End violence against women. This year we have been working with MK City Council, Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council and have developed “Helps at Hand” book marks and poster with useful local and national agency information.

Our newest member, Summer attended a meeting with the Youth and Deputy Youth Mayor's and she is now in discussion with them and the MKCC Youth Council to see how we can distribute the bookmarks in the schools and how we can work more closely in the future with the Youth Council, to link with their projects and hear views from young women in our community. We are also hoping to work with MK College and will be holding two Orange Cafes next year in February and September, start of terms to raise awareness amongst the students.

Copies of this poster have already started appearing along the High Street in Newport Pagnell. And hopefully members will be able to get more put up in local shops, community areas, GP's, churches etc. If members need, more copies can be made available.



**Dec** – is another hectic time for us, which we kicked off with donating food for the xmas buffet lunch for the clients at Unity MK. Then we wrapped over 120 toys we purchased for the Ukraine Xmas party on 9 December. For all the families at MK Act we donated £560 worth of Food vouchers and made a full xmas turkey lunch for the supported living residents at YMCA. Our Xmas projects alone cost us over £2,000, all donated by our members and friends.

We couldn't have achieved all of this if it wasn't for you our members and also all your family and friends who you encourage to help us. A very big thank you.

A busy year. And what shall we get up to in 2024? As I stated at the start, we will be listening to our charities at our January meeting and then I do hope you will all be able to attend our planning day to come up with ideas for 2024 and also 2025 which will be our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we need to think big for that year.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

- 1 NO POVERTY**: How we're working towards this goal: We are supporting those people in greatest need in the UK to eat well and have access to good food.
- 2 ZERO HUNGER**: How we're working towards this goal: Our work supports greater access to high quality nutritious meals for all, produced through a fair and sustainable food system.
- 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**: How we're working towards this goal: We are preventing diet related ill health and supporting farming systems that are much better for the health of farm workers through reduced exposure to pesticides.
- 4 QUALITY EDUCATION**: How we're working towards this goal: We promote, support and deliver education on healthy and sustainable food and farming.
- 5 GENDER EQUALITY**: How we're working towards this goal: We enable gender equality by encouraging greater uptake of Fairtrade produce, which actively supports gender equality.
- 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION**: How we're working towards this goal: We enhance access to drinking water, encourage water saving, and support farming systems that reduce contamination.
- 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY**: How we're working towards this goal: We support and encourage organisations to save energy and make use of renewable energy.
- 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**: How we're working towards this goal: We support local economic growth through good procurement practices and connecting farmers and food businesses with access to local markets, creating social value and supporting local jobs.
- 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**: How we're working towards this goal: We facilitate farmer-led innovation which helps to future-proof the food systems.
- 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES**: How we're working towards this goal: We work to a vision of Good Food for All. Everyone has access to good food, whoever or wherever you are.
- 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**: How we're working towards this goal: Our work promotes and facilitates economic, social and environmental networks and partnerships through good food.
- 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION**: How we're working towards this goal: We support responsible management of natural resources through our schemes.
- 13 CLIMATE ACTION**: How we're working towards this goal: We deliver and promote food and farming practices that strengthen resilience against and help to mitigate the climate crisis.
- 14 LIFE BELOW WATER**: How we're working towards this goal: We support marine conservation through responsible sourcing, and help develop more sustainable models for aquaculture.
- 15 LIFE ON LAND**: How we're working towards this goal: We facilitate sustainable farming and forestry that supports healthy soils, wildlife, and the natural world.
- 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**: How we're working towards this goal: We hold institutions accountable to mandatory standards around food and democratic and citizen led approach to action around food.
- 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS**: How we're working towards this goal: We work in partnership with other organisations and share learning where possible through international projects, connections and conferences.

And don't forget, all of this work will get reported back to SIGBI through Programme Action Reports. The Programme Action reports are set up to enable clubs and SIGBI to show how we are working towards achieving the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)**. There are 17 UN SDG's and they are grouped under the 5 P's:

- People – SDG's 1-5
- Prosperity – SDG's 7 – 11
- Planet – SDG's 12 – 15
- Peace – SDG 16
- Partnership – SDG 17

We work through Education, Empowerment, Enablement (3 E's) supported by Awareness (raising), Advocacy and Action (3 A's).

All our work is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals whether it's local, national or international.

Here are some links for you to read prior to our January and February meetings.

SIGBI – What we do [Click here.](#)

SIGBI - Our Projects. [Click here](#)

SIGBI – People [Click here](#) Prosperity [Click here](#)

Planet [Click here](#) Peace [Click here](#)

Partnership [Click here](#)

**And now looking forward, please put the following dates in your diary.** Please note the International Women's Day Afternoon Tea and Cake event date is now confirmed at Wednesday 6 March. Please ensure it is in your diary and if you can come along and help on the day that would be great. Many thanks

Dear Diary Dates	
Tue 16 January	Branch meeting. 5.30pm, <b>Venue change to MK Snap</b>
Tues 23 Jan	<b>Orange Café 10 till 2.00pm Dobbies, Bletchley</b>
Wed 31 January	<b>Friendship Lunch</b> 12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA
Tue 20 Feb	<b>Branch meeting. 5.30pm</b> , Acorn Training Centre, Westcroft
Tues 27 Feb	<b>Orange Café 10 till 2.00pm MK College, Bletchley</b>
Wed 28 Feb	<b>Friendship Lunch</b> 12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA
Wed 6 March	<b>International Womens Day Afternoon Tea and Cake</b> <b>3.30pm till 5.30pm at MK Snap, 20 Bourton Low, Walton, MK</b>
Sat 16 March	<b>Soroptimist International London and Chiltern Regional meeting</b> <b>International Women's Day celebration London Details TBC</b>
Tue 19 March	<b>Branch meeting. 5.30pm</b> , Acorn Training Centre, Westcroft
Wed 27 March	<b>Friendship Lunch</b> 12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA

2024 Regional and SIGBI Conference Dates	
Sat 16 March	SILC Int Women's Day Celebration 10-4pm in London
June	SILC Region Conference TBC
<b>12 Oct</b>	SILC Region Conference AGM/Conference,. Details to be confirmed
<b>1-3 Nov</b>	<b>SIGBI Conference Edinburgh Details to be confirmed</b>

As I sign off for this editorial, I just want to say how it is a privilege being a Soroptimist and being apart of this group. We have achieved so much this year and helped our charities. It's true that volunteering is not only good for your own wellbeing but for all those you help in the process. I had a lady come up to me at the UnityMK to thank us for a clothes donation we made, she was so grateful. That's what giving is all about.

May I take this opportunity to again say thank you every one of you for all your time and efforts in what we have achieved in 2023. Happy New Year and all the very best for 2024.

Happy reading everyone.

**Soroptimists standing up for Women and Girls**  
**Sue Key, Chair**

## MKCC Xmas and New Year 2023/24 collection dates

**Changes to waste and recycling collections over Christmas and New Year**

If your usual day is...	It will become...	There's no green bin collections from 25 Dec to 2 Jan   so we can collect red AND blue recycling those days
Monday 25 Dec	Wednesday 27 Dec	
Tuesday 26 Dec	Thursday 28 Dec	
Wednesday 27 Dec	Friday 29 Dec	
Thursday 28 Dec	Saturday 30 Dec	
Friday 29 Dec	Tuesday 2 Jan	

Revised Xmas collections continue until 15 Jan. Full info on our website

Please see the Xmas and New Year 2023/24 waste and recycling revised collection dates.

**Click here** to see the Xmas 2023/24 collection dates

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## French and Saunders: How they proved that women are funny



Dawn French has a new BBC documentary coming out soon and talks about their partnership and how French and Saunders showed women could be funny.

To read the full Guardian article [click here](#). (picture BBC Studios)

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## “Notch on a Bedpost”: Inside the Red Arrows



This warning from a male colleague to a young woman when she joined the Red Arrows was ominous: “Be careful.... You could be a notch on a crew member’s bedpost”.

Now Sky News documentary hears from other female victims of their experiences of a toxic culture in the Red Arrows.

To read the full Sky article [click here](#). (picture Sky News)

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## Women’s voices barely heard in Boris Johnson’s No 10, Covid inquiry told



Boris Johnson’s Downing Street was so “macho and egotistical” that women’s voices were heard for as little as 10 minutes in five hours of meetings during a key week of coronavirus policy, the Covid Inquiry has heard.

To read the full Guardian article [click here](#). (picture Leon Neal/AFP/Getty image)

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## MK City Breakfast Club Festive special celebrates MK Act’s work in the community



MK City Breakfast Club this December held a Festive Charity Special in recognition of MK Act’s exceptional work combatting domestic abuse in MK.

To read the full MK Chamber of Commerce article [click here](#). (picture MK Chamber of Commerce?)

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## Afghanistan: Taliban sends abused women to prison - UN



The Taliban government of Afghanistan is putting women abuse survivors in prison and claiming it is for their protection, according to a UN report.

The UN said this practice harms the survivor’s mental and physical health. There are also no more state- sponsored women’s shelters as the Taliban sees no need for such centres, the report noted.

To read the full BBC article [click here](#). (picture Getty)

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## Hundreds of women and children trafficked to UK to shoplift



**Hundreds of vulnerable women and children are being trafficked to the UK to shoplift for Eastern European crime groups, the BBC has learned.**

One company in Scotland told BBC File on 4 it had identified a gang with 154 shoplifters stealing high-value items in bulk to sell or ship abroad.

[Click here](#) to read the full BBC article. (Getty Images)

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## From 3 bed house last Xmas to homelessness this year - the family of 4 whose story is becoming all too familiar



**Almost 139,000 children in England will wake up this Christmas with nowhere to call home and an uncertain future – as the number of homeless families in temporary accommodation reaches a record high.**

To read their stories brought to you by Sky News [Click here](#) (pictures Sky News)

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## Rebecca Welch to become Premier League's first female referee



**Rebecca Welch became the first female referee for a Premier League fixture when she officiated Fulham's match against Burnley on 23 December.**

Rebecca, 40 began refereeing in 2010, and in January became the first women to referee a men's championship game.

In July, the Football Association laid out plans to recruit 50% more referees from "historically under represented" backgrounds by 2026, targeting an increase of 1,000 women referees and 1,000 black pr Asian referees at all levels of football in 3 years.

[Click here](#) to read the BBC sport article. (picture Getty Images).

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## SIGBI latest News/blogs



[Click here](#) to read all the latest news articles and blogs. Includes:

- Human Rights Day – 10 December
  - International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development – 5 Dec
  - Global Voice Newsletter
  - Introducing our new President Ruth Healey
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## Soroptimist International Blogs - read the latest



**Read the latest Soroptimist International Blogs including:**

- SI Youth Forum: Young Activists Summit
- A Vision of Education in the service of Humanity and Peace
- Artificial Intelligence and Gender Based Violence
- AI as a tool for Mental Health Care
- Introduction to 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence
- The Ethic of Neurotechnologies

[Click here](#) to see all the blogs.



## Soroptimist International Voices Webinars and Podcasts



**Click here** to listen to the latest SI Voices webinar from the SI Youth Forum, which was set up in 2023 as a way for younger Soroptimists to meet and engage. This webinar is “Green Horizons” looking at how climate change is impacting on your work and advocacy and what are your adaptation or migration strategies.

The SI also publish Podcasts. To listen to these Podcasts **click here**.

## Inspiring Women - Be Inspired



Glenda Jackson (photo by Alamy)

“I have been disappointed many times but never defeated”.

**Glenda Jackson 1936 – 2023. Actor, Labour MP from 1992.**



Kolam, a complex geometric drawing art form using rice flour or chalk relating to philosophic and religious motifs, widely practised by female family members, in Indian, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand Brought by WomensArt1, Twitter page link is <https://twitter.com/womensart1>

## UN International days and Awareness days - January 2024

International days/weeks are occasions to educate the public on issues of concern, to mobilize political will and resources to address global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity.

**UN International Days** - Just a few dates for your diary. **Click on each subject to learn more about each of these UN Days/Weeks via the UN Website.**

4 Jan	<a href="#">World Braille Day</a>
24 Jan	<a href="#">International Day of Education</a>
26 Jan	<a href="#">International Day of Clean Energy</a>
27 Jan	<a href="#">International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust</a>

## Our Twitter feed and web page - don't forget to have a look



**Click here** to see our Milton Keynes Soroptimists Twitter feed and what we are currently talking about



**Click here** to see our Milton Keynes Soroptimists web page and what we are currently talking about

**Click here** to go Back to the top

## SI:MK support these local charities:

