

# Save our Sanity



31 March 2024 MK Soroptimists Newsletter 59

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#### **Editorial Welcome**

Soroptimists – Standing up for Women and Girls

Welcome everyone to the 59th edition of our club newsletter, helping to keep us all linked together and informed of what we have been up to and to update you with some recent news around women's issues.

I hope everyone enjoyed the first bank holiday break and those who celebrate Easter didn't eat too many Easter Eggs.

March is an important month in a Soroptimist's calendar. It is the month where on the 8 March we celebrate International Women's Day. This year the UN's theme is "Invest in Women: Accelerate progress" to highlight the importance of gender equality measures. The International Women's Day website chose the theme "Inspire Inclusion" with the aim to break down barriers, challenge stereotype and create environments where all

women are valued and respected. It is about celebrating women's achievements but also raising awareness that there is still much to do to achieve gender equality and women's well-being.

And this year, we celebrated International Women's Day with our 3<sup>rd</sup> Afternoon Tea event, a sold-out event with two very Inspiring Inclusion women to celebrate. A big thank you to Louisa Hobbs, Operations Manager from MK Foodbank for agreeing to be our speaker. It was with great pleasure that we took part in their MK Can event last November to break the Guiness World Record for the longest continuous line of tinned food. That was a great day, a bringing together of all parts of the MK Community to help those in need, it created a great community spirit on the day but it also highlighted what you can do just by the power of getting people to work together. Louisa and the Foodbank did that. It was interesting to learn from Louisa just how long the planning for this event took and what lessons they learned for any other future events. Besides breaking the World Record, and we have the certificate to prove it, the main point of MK Can was to bring in enough food to keep the foodbank going for another six months, but in the end all that food lasted just over 3 months, such is the demand the Foodbank and other such like originations are seeing in MK. It was therefore fitting that we asked our guests if they could bring along food donations. Thank you, all our guests, we were able, to pass on food donations to the Foodbank.







And the second Inspiring Woman we were able to celebrate was Miss Quiz, as we all affectionately know her, but who in fact is Pat Hodges. Pat is the supreme Quiz mistress running Quiz's on behalf of community and charity organisations throughout MK and since 2011 has raised over £151,000 for 91 different charities. We are amongst those 91 that she runs a quiz for and has raised over £2,900 to date for which we are so very grateful. Which is why on this day we wanted to recognize her hard work and dedication and just say a big thank you for all you do to help others in need. I think Pat was a little surprised but was pleased.









As you can see above, there were smiling faces everywhere. A big thank you to all our guests, our speaker Louisa and to Pat. A very big thank you to everyone who contributed, worked on the day or just donated. This event made over £1,000. Our best to date and so I say again well done everyone, it was worth all the hard work. And the money raised has already been put to good use.



Easter Eggs were purchased for the women and children at MK Act to be able to celebrate the Easter holiday.

£450 has been donated to the Sunshine School run by the Ukraine Appeal charity here in MK to help provide art equipment for the children.

And £450 has been sent to SI Krakow who are planning an event for Ukrainian orphans on International Childrens Day in June.

Please find below a message received this month from SI Krakow thanking us for the previous funds we sent them last year.







#### **Dear Ladies**

Huge thanks for your financial support of the activities for the Senior Citizens of Ukraine, I would like to inform you that we have completed the planned activities. Here is a Summary:

In the Kazimierz Club - a branch of the Krakow Cultural Forum, from 5 January to 8 March 2024, thanks to the financial support of Soroptimist International - First Krakow Club in the amount of PLN 4,000, a series of events intended for Seniors from Ukraine took place. The following events were successfully organised:

Christmas concert by the band Korale on 5 January

Polish language classes on 11, 18, 25 January and 1, 8, 15 February

Art workshops 22 February

Handicraft workshops 29 February

Relaxation concert 8 March

Integration meetings 11 January and 8 March

Each of the concerts was attended by 35 ladies. A total of 120 people participated in the other activities.

The funds received were used for: honoraria for the artists and activity leaders, purchase of necessary office and art accessories, purchase of foodstuffs (refreshments). Please accept huge thanks from the Ladies - Seniors from Ukraine, who are very grateful for the opportunity to spend time together in a friendly and creative atmosphere.

What a lovely thank you note.







What else have we been doing this month. It is not just monetary donations we have been busy making.

Barbara and her friends donated some much-needed educational books which Barbara and Mala delivered to the Ukrainian children at their Summerfield School. Thank you, Barbara and your friends. Another of our members was able to donate a Smart TV with soundbar to MK Act in readiness for when a family set up their own new home. We hope they enjoy.

And we have already completed one of our "90 things" challenges. SIGBI is celebrating 90 years this year and Ruth Healey, our President set us the challenge of what 90 things could you do. Our first has been to collect 90 new or slightly used bras. These have been sent to the Charity Smalls for All. A charity that works in the UK and in Africa to get the bras to those most in need. Our next project is to collect 90 pants and 90 pairs of socks. Currently we are up to 61 pants and 15 pairs of socks. And so, a reminder if anyone else has anymore new pants and socks to donate, please bring them along to our next branch meeting on Tuesday 16 April.







Continuing on with our donations, we must thank Mala and her friends for the food they donated. Over 100 cans were donated to YMCA for them to take part in the MK Foodbank Easter challenge which was to collect food and make your logo out of it. We also collected food items

and you can (no pun intended) see our attempt at making our Soroptimist logo from cans and pasta. All food items were taken to the Foodbank in time for the Easter break.





What a lovely start to our March meeting, than to see this gorgeous handmade quilt by Laraine. Thank you, Laraine, for donating this to a lucky family at MK Act.

And it was with great pleasure that we were able to present to Zita her Soroptimist badge. We hope she loves being a Soroptimist and all that we do.

We enjoyed a good meeting at our new venue in the community room at Morrisons in Westcroft, behind the café. It is lovely and airy, all on one level so accessible for our members and the acoustics is good too. So a win win for us and thank you Morrisons for the use of this lovely facility. And it was a good meeting finishing off those couple of items we were unable to get to on our planning day and looking ahead to the rest of the year and starting to think about 2025, our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We now have a group set up to start looking at how we can celebrate our anniversary. Any ideas are welcome and if anyone wants to join the group you are most welcome.





This month we were delighted to attend the Regional meeting which celebrated International Women's Day with an Afternoon Tea event at Knebworth House. We heard how Knebworth House was once home to Lady Constance Lytton, a suffragette who helped to get women the vote. And we also enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea before all getting together to make the "Inspire Inclusion" theme for 2024. To learn more about Lady Constance Lytton, click here.



And we finished the month with our Orange Café at Dobbies, Bletchley, with a few discussions and some donations made.

Our next café is on Tuesday 30 April. We do need volunteers for this day due to a couple of members being away on this day. Please

**30 March is UN's International Zero Waste Day.** Humanity's unsustainable production and consumption practices are driving the planet towards destruction. Households, small businesses and public service providers generate between 2.1 billion and 2.3 billion tons of municipal solid waste every year – from packaging and electronics to plastics and food. However, global waste management services are ill-equipped to handle this, with 2.7 billion people lacking access to solid waste collection and only 61–62 per cent of municipal solid waste being managed in controlled facilities. Humanity must act urgently to address the waste crisis.

We know if all of us do a little bit each it will make a difference and it's not just once a year but every day, we can look at what we do and what we can change. Which is why at our planning day this year we revisited our "Green Pledge" we developed last year and reaffirmed we would continue to look at ways each of us could make a difference. Here is our updated Green Pledge. Please share with your friends and encourage them to do their bit.

Here are our 2024 pledges members have made:

- 1. Never buy plastic bags use for life bags or natural fiber lifetime bags or make own out of recycled materials.
- 2. Walk to the local shops or local places to reduce the use of the car where possible.
- 3. Buy from local suppliers/shops to reduce the carbon footprint.
- 4. Eat a meat free meal at least once a week.
- 5. Never buy plastic bottles of drinks use a recycled drinks container.
- 6. Limit shoes and clothes purchase to only buy when necessary.
- 7. Recycle everything possible, including clothes, books, DVD by giving to MK Charity shops and buying from them. Why not hold a pre-loved event to sell your clothes etc. and donate funds raised to a local charity.
- 8. Use the Ecosia search engine which has made the promise that by using them to search the web they will use their profits to plant trees https://www.ecosia.org
- 9. Switch to low energy bulbs to reduce the impact on the planet and on home running costs.
- 10. When holding events, try to use eco-friendly products where possible.
- 11. Plant a tree on our 10 Anniversary in 2025.
- 12. Reduce water usage when having a shower take the challenge have your shower in under 4 minutes.
- 13. Did you know using the cloud to store your pictures/files uses a lot of energy so think about reducing it if you can.
- 14. MK Snap learners to make a recyclable Wreath for our Remembrance Day celebration.
- 15. Recycle medical blister packs via Superdrug stores, or through Terracycle direct. Click here for more info
- 16. Repair and recycle rather than buy new. There are Repair Cafes/workshops near you to help.

And you are doing your bit. Zita helps out at the Repair Café in Leighton Buzzard. Jean has had a clear out of her wardrobes which will be recycled either via our Pre Loved Event or through our charities. Whilst Debbie was on holiday she took her won water bottle along to refill so that she did not need to keep buying plastic water bottles. And Mala has been telling us of the John Lewis makeup recycling scheme where you can take back 5 empty make up items and when you buy a new make up item you get £5 off. Let's keep up the good work everyone.

What a great month everyone. Well done. Don't forget, if anyone has any interesting articles they think the rest of us would like to learn about please send to me or if you want write an article for the newsletter, that would be most welcome.

As always, happy reading everyone.

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

#### Here are the next few months Dear Diary dates.

	Dear Diary Dates	
Tue 16 April	Branch meeting. 5.30pm, Westcroft Morrison Community Room (back of Café), Westcroft	
Tues 30 April	Orange Café, 10 till 2.00pm, Dobbies, Fenny Stratford, Bletchley	
Wed 24 April	Friendship Lunch	
•	12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA	
Tue 21 May	AGM meeting. 5.30pm, Westcroft Morrison Community Room (back of Café), Westcroft	

Tues 28 May	Orange Café, 10 till 2.00pm, Dobbies, Fenny Stratford, Bletchley	
Wed 29 May	Friendship Lunch	
	12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA	
Tue 18 June	Branch meeting. 5.30pm, Westcroft Morrison Community Room (back of Café), Westcroft	
Wed 26 June	Friendship Lunch	
	12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA	
Tue 16 July	Branch meeting. 5.30pm, Westcroft Morrison Community Room (back of Café), Westcroft	
Wed 31 July	Friendship Lunch	
	12.30pm at the Inn on the Lake, Mount Farm, Bletchley, MK1 1PA	
Tues 20 Aug	Summer Party - Details to be confirmed	

	2024 Regional and SIGBI Conference Dates	
15 June	SILC Region Conference SI Milton Keynes are hosting at MK Sanp	
	Further details TBC	
19 Oct	SILC Region Conference AGM/Conference. 10am to 1pm on Zoom. Details to be confirmed	
1-3 Nov	SIGBI Conference Edinburgh Details to be confirmed	

## International Women's Day: Why is it important?



For more than a century now, people around the world have marked International Women's Day on 8 March. But what is the day for and why does it matter?

How did International Women's Day Start? It grew out of the labour movement and the seeds were planted in 1908, when 15,000 women march through New Your City demanding shorter working hours, better pay and the right to vote.

To read the full BBC article **click here** (Getty Images)

#### Citizens Advice Milton Keynes - latest newsletter



The seventh Citizens Advice Milton Keynes newsletter is out.

Here about how busy they continue to be but also how they are bringing in more new services to try to help the community.

Read about the new grant received by Works For Us at the end of 2023 which will be funding their NewBeginHer project. An integrated program of specailised support aimed at women who have been excluded from the labour market. Aimed at parents aiming to seamlessly reintegrate into the workforce while balancing childcare commitments. The course starts Mon 22 April to Mon 13 May. For more details click here Click here to read the newsletter.

#### MK City Council investigates Banksy-inspired graffiti mural



MK City Council is investigating the matter of the Banksy-inspired mural that has appeared on a Grade II listed building in Willen,

Derek Edwards, co-founded Nadiya, a charity that supports refugees. As part of a campaign for the charity, he had Banksy-inspired art put on an external wall of his 400 year old home by street artist Bambi.

Nadiya has helped more than 1,000 people from multiple countries including Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan to find accommodation and has also helped find homes for struggling British families. Mr Edwards wanted to draw attention to the work of his charity and what he felt was the lack of support for refugees. Click here to read the full BBC article (picture – Nadiya Image).

## Help Ukraine BAMK Charity in MK saved by new landlord



Help Ukraine BAMK charity that was at threat of closing down said it had found a new home.

The charity, which says it is one of the last remaining hubs in the UK for Ukraine donations, used a warehouse in Blakelands, Milton Keynes. The owner of the building had to move out of the site, leaving the charity homeless, but a new location has been found in Stacey Bushes.

Since the war began in 2022, the charity said it has shipped about 140 tonnes of humanitarian aid to the people in the country. **Click here** to read the full BBC article (Images – Nicola Haseler/BBC).

#### Giant Redwoods: World's largest trees "thriving in UK"



One of the first projects the founding Soroptimist club in Oakland undertook was to save the Redwoods.

And today a study has found that the Giant Redwoods, first brought to the UK by the Victorians about 160 years ago, are flourishing and are growing at a similar rate to those found in their native range in California. To read the full BBC article click here. (picture BBC/Tony Jolliffe)

# How a few minutes exercise can unleash creativity - even if you hate it



Do you have your best ideas while running to the bust stop or walking the dog? You're not alone. Researchers are fining remarkable links between movement and blue-sky thinking.

Often when we hear about the benefits of physical activity, researchers are really referring to the benefits of fitness – the product of regular repeated physical activity. But there is a second benefit to be considered which is the creativity that appears to be enhanced through the act of moving the body.

To read the full Guardian article **click here**. (picture Tim Bouckley)

#### Abuse is main driver of mental ill health in women and girls



Abuse and violence suffered by women and girls is the main reason they are much more likely than men and boys to develop mental il health, Britain's psychiatrists say. Experiencing such behaviour an trigger very serious mental health problems in women and girls, including suicidal throughs and psychosis, according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Difficult relationships, especially those involving coercive behaviour, and dealing with home and family pressures, are also major drivers of poor mental health in women. To read the full Guardian article **click here**. (picture fizkes/Shutterstock)

#### My abusive ex-boyfriend was given a verbal warning



Lauren Hardie was assaulted by her boyfriend and says she flet so let down by the justice system she turned to social media to expose him.

The 24 year old nurse was left with bite marks, bruising on her arms, shoulder and eye and with many of the contents of her flat smashed to pieces. Frustrated by court delays, Lauren posted videos on line of an attack she had secretly recorded. Lauren's ex-partner was later admonished for his crimes, meaning he was verbally

warned not to offend again. The sentence which carries no other penalty was passed after he pleaded guilty to pushing Lauren, holding her down by the wrists, shouting, swearing and destroying her property. His guilty pleas resulted in two other charges being dropped. And the study showed this harassment was made by varying age groups. To read the full BBC article **click here.** (Lauren Hardie images)

#### Lives at risk due to Clare's Law delays



The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, known as "Clare's Law", gives people the right to ask police if their partner has an abusive past. It was introduced 10 years ago after a campaign by the father of Clare Wood, 36, who was strangled and set on fire by George Appleton in 2009.

But now the daughter of Clare told the BBC she was worried about the poor execution of the legislation by police forces "could potentially result in the loss

of more lives" A BBC investigation found some people had been waiting hundreds of days instead of the expected 28 day response target. To read the full BBC article **click here**. (picture Jasmine Lowe/BBC)

# France becomes first country in 50 years to make abortion a constitutional right



France has become the first country in 50 years to make abortion a constitutional right – with the country's government saying the move is in response to a tightening of laws in the US.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal told MPs and senators gathered for a special vote under the gilded ceilings of Versailles "We're sending a message to all women: your body belongs to you and no one can decide for you". Click here to read the full Sky article. (Reuters Image)

#### Rape victims given free access to Scottish court transcripts



Victims of rape and serious sexual assault cases in Scotland will be the first in the UK to have free access to court transcripts under a year long pilot scheme.

The Scottish government said the aim of the pilot was to improve victim's experience of the justice system. Rape Crisis Scotland said the access to court transcripts allowed survivors to understand what happened in their case and help to provide transparency in the justice process. Click here to read the full BBC article (pictures – BBC Images)

#### Canada introduces sweeping new online safety rules



Canada has introduced a new bill that aims to combat online abuse with steep penalties for hate crimes – including life in prison for inciting genocide:

The proposed Online Harms Act requires social media platforms to remove posts – such as those which sexualise children within 24 hours. The bill still needs to be voted on by Canada's Parliament. These proposals list seven

harmful categories that providers would be required to remove from their websites. Banned content includes posts made to bully a child or those encouraging self-harm. To read the full article, Click here (picture - Getty image)

# Labour plans "Raneem's law to protect victims of domestic abuse



Police forces will be forced to provide more protection to victims of domestic abuse under a Labour government, the party has said.

"Raneem's law", named after Raneem Oudeh who was killed along with her mother, Khaola Saleem, by Oudeh's ex-partner in 2018, will require police to respond faster to reports of domestic violence and to consider immediate use of orders to protect women.

**Click here** to read the Guardian article. (picture West Midlands police/PA Images).

#### Inside the ice cream van feeding Liverpool's families



Like most ice cream vans, it attracts quite a queue. More than a dozen people, many parents with young children, are waiting in the drizzle outside a charity show in Liverpool for the yellow truck to arrive.

Inside this ice cream van's chillers "are stocks of frozen food, its shelves have soups, toiletries and vegetables at lower prices than in the supermarkets. The van has made a massive difference to a lot of people. The van is the brainchild of Michelle

Roach,37, a single mum who set up community interest company New Beginnings, Improving Lives just before the pandemic. She also runs a community store, mental health support groups and an emergency food bank. The ice cream van idea, thought to be the only one operating as a food pantry in England, came about because it was felt is was more approachable that customers would be happy to go to it. **Click here** to read the BBC article. (picture BBC).

#### UK sees biggest rise in absolute poverty in 30 years



The energy price crisis caused the sharpest increase in UK poverty in 30 years, figures show.

This means the rate of absolute poverty in the UK now stands at 18% 0 a rise of 0.78%. The latest figures also date that a quarter of children were in absolute poverty. The number of children and working age adults in poverty each rose by about 300,000 people. The 2% rise in the rate of child poverty is the highest since at least the mid 1990's.

Click here to read the BBC article. (picture GETTY Images).

#### Soroptimist International Global Voice newsletter



The February 2024 issue of Global Voice is now available. Police forces will be forced to provide more protection to victims of domestic abuse under a Labour government, the party has said.

Click here to read the newsletter in full



#### **SIGBI latest News/blogs**

Click here to read all the latest news articles and blogs. Includes:

- World Health Day 7 April
- World Water Day 22 March
- International Women's Day 2024 Invest in Women, Inspire Inclusion

## Soroptimist International News and Blogs - read the latest



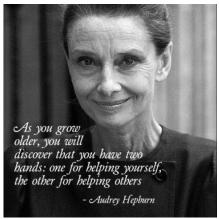
#### Read the latest Soroptimist International News articles including:

- SI take part at Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)
- Our voice at the United Nations: Nairobi
- A message rom Soroptimist International's President Siew Yong Gnanalingam to mark International Women's Day
- SI UN Representative Recruitment: Geneva

#### Click here to see all the Soroptimist International blogs, including:

- Youth centered future: Reflections from 2024 CSW Youth Forum
- CSW68 Closing the Gender Gap in 'education: Long Term barriers and emerging challenges
- CSW68 Access to Finances locally for women through gender budgeting
- CSW68 Socio-Economic empowerment policies for HIV prevention

#### Inspiring Women - Be Inspired



Audrey Hepburn 1929 - 1993 (photo from pintrest)

Audrey Hepburn was internationally famous for her elegance, beauty and charm. Her most memorable film roles include the Breakfast at Tiffany's, My Fair Lady and Charade. In 1988 she became a UNICEF ambassador



Embroidery by the first hunger striking suffragette, Scottish artist Marion Wallace Dunlop (1864-1942)

Born in 1864, at Leys Castle, Inverness. Wallace Dunlop became an active member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and was first travelling exclusively in the third world. To learn more click here.

arrested in 1908 for obstruction at the House of Commons. It was upon her arrest in July 1909 that she commenced her first Hunger Strike, the first suffragette to do so. This was adopted by other suffragettes after her success. It led to the British Government introducing force feeding in September 1909.

Brought by WomensArt1, Twitter page link is <a href="https://twitter.com/womensart1">https://twitter.com/womensart1</a>

#### UN International days and Awareness days - April 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.

<u>UN International Days</u> - 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.

2 April	World Autism Awareness Day		
4 April	International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action		
5 April	International Day of Conscience		
6 April	International Day of Sport for Development and Peace		
7 April	International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in		
	Rwanda		
7 April	World Health Day (WHO)		
12 April	International Day of Human Space Flight		
14 April	World Chagas Disease Day (WHO)		
20 April	Chinese Language Day		
21 April	World Creativity and Innovation Day		
22 April	International Mother Earth Day		
23 April	World Book and Copyright Day (UNESCO)		
23 April	English Language Day	Spanish Language Day	
24-30 April	World Immunization Week		
24 April	International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace		
25 April	International Girls in ICT Day (ITU)	World Malaria Day (WHO)	
25 April	International Delegate's Day		
26 April	International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day		
26 April	World Intellectual Property Day (WIPO)		
28 April	World Day for Safety and Health at Work		
30 April	International Jazz Day		

#### 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:









