

## Judith Stirk - SI Durham

Judith has made an outstanding contribution to many areas within her community and beyond. She was invited to the Queen's Garden Party in 2019 for this reason. She is an outstanding Soroptimist and gifted speaker who enthuses other women to act.

As Club President in 2001, 2016 and 2017, Judith used her ability to link differing groups to fulfil a common purpose – that of improving the lives of women, girls – and boys! The Alpaca Project is one example, bringing together Prince Bishop Alpacas' owner, Carole Burn (who is also an author and experienced in behavioural support), Girlguiding and Trefoil, a local Special School and a school for autistic children in Saudi Arabia.

Children visited the alpacas several times. The animals' therapeutic effect on the children with complex needs was amazing. SI members participated in linked activities in school such as felting using alpaca fleeces. Story sacks which included Carole's values-led story books, knitted alpacas and finger puppets, were made for use in the school and the school in Saudi, with text translated into Arabic.

SI Durham and Girlguiding Durham South worked closely together to create a set of challenges to be completed by members of both organisations to gain a 'Shared Vision' badge. This reflects the very similar mission and aims of both. This interwoven, multi-faceted project won the SINE Reach for the Stars award. Judith's chosen charity was MNDA – this was included in the challenge badge, raising awareness and funds to support sufferers in the local area.

Judith worked in education for 36 years, 21 of them as Headteacher of a Primary and Nursery School within an area of high socio-economic deprivation. She engaged with parents, particularly mothers, in order to secure home school learning, raising aspirations in both children and adults through an 'open door' policy of welcome and a 'can do' attitude. The school gained Artsmark Gold on three occasions and through Creative Partnerships became a National School of Creativity.

For 20 years Judith has been a board member and a Trustee of The Forge, a participatory arts organisation which works with schools, young people and communities locally, nationally and internationally.

A member of Girl Guides since Brownie age; Judith has continued her involvement as a leader, Division Commissioner and County Commissioner, receiving her 40 years' service award several years ago. Judith is currently Chair of Durham South Trefoil which numbers 116 members across 8 groups.

Judith is a member of Teesdale Marie Curie Fundraising group. She undertakes collections and helps to organise and run a variety of events. When new to SI Durham, she participated in successful fundraising for a bone density scanner in Durham. The club's on-going support is for four women's refuges across the county and, in partnership with Durham Constabulary, provision of New Start Bags for trafficked women.

Judith volunteered in the Visitors' Centre at HMP Durham once a month and visited one prisoner weekly, for several years and until the closure of the female wing.

Judith is a member of the Women's Institute and also of the lay worship group of St Mary's Church, Staindrop.

