

Jennifer Loughridge

Jennifer Loughridge (Jen) has been a member of Soroptimist International, Bangor since 1996. She held the positions of Club Secretary, Membership Secretary and President, when fellow member Joan Smyth was International President and the SIGBI conference was held in Belfast. Jen was a great support to Joan, and much involved in the running of the Conference which was acknowledged to have been most successful.

After being elected Regional President for Northern Ireland in 2008, Jen visited all the Clubs in the Region, and arranged a popular musical evening of 'Autumn Arias' and hosted the International President, Marguerite Woodstock-Riley, during her week's visit.

Jen applied, and was successful in being awarded a Grant of Friendship by the Australian Soroptimists, visited and stayed with members of Clubs in the Melbourne area. From this International experience, she found that the challenges Australian Soroptimists experienced were the same as in our Region. She brought and shared this experience at home.

In particular, Jen was an innovator and Convenor of a novel project "Talking News," which brings news and information to the visually impaired throughout the local community. After comprehensive discussion and training, this initiative was started by SI Bangor in 2011. Each week teams of Soroptimists (and recently others) buy and read local newspapers, record news, puzzles, poems and magazine items onto discs, and distribute them to 120 visually impaired persons in the local community. This is warmly welcomed by the recipients as it makes them feel less isolated and more involved in local activities. Jen organises teams of readers and technical recorders, and has done so since the project's inception. There are about 25 Bangor Soroptimists involved in our recordings.

Jen has actively sought, and was granted support for the Talking News project from such charities as the Dean of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast Christmas Sit Out Collection. These donations show the regard that Jen's work has attracted.

As the Soroptimist Representative on the Northern Ireland Road Safety Board, Jen attended their meetings and reported back to the Regional Executive.

PUBLIC BODIES and VOLUNTARY

Jen was Northern Ireland Organising Secretary for the Arthritis Council for Research (ARC) for 16 years. She supported 15 branches of volunteers, attended meetings, represented the organisation at various Civic events, and ensured that the Council was made known. She opened and oversaw two successful charity shops, one of which brought the highest income to the Council in UK.

Jen initiated and ran a Community Office in a shopping centre, which dealt with the problems shop tenants' experienced and any customer complaints.

She is head of the Women's Group at Newtownards Reformed Presbyterian Church, and compiles the group's yearly programme. She also acted as their Child Protection Officer.

As a Guide for 4 years for the National Trust at Mount Stewart House, Newtownards, Jen informed visitors and school groups about the history and features of this historic property.

