

## ELIZABETH HUGHES MBE

Elizabeth was born and brought up in Rochdale. As a teenager she assisted her mother in her Resettlement Programme for European Displaced Persons brought here from concentration camps, the start of her life long commitment to asylum seekers and refugees.

Her professional career quickly took her through the ranks to becoming head teacher with the British Families Education Service (BFES) to the NATO school in Liege Belgium, and BFES Celle School in Germany. She spent the last 17 years before retiring as head of a local primary school in Ilkley, supporting the local authority's initiative to include special needs children in main stream schools, therefore influencing the lives of hundreds of children.

In 1972 she joined SI Ilkley taking on various roles in the club including President. She soon realised that she had found what she had been looking for since those early years working alongside her mother. A structure that would enable her to continue and further her innate internationalism, to speak and act for those without voice or power, to help open the door for those who cannot reach the handle.

In 1986 she became SI Yorkshire's International Liaison Officer and later Region President. She represented Region on the Federation Programme Action Committee and correspondent for Thailand. She was also Federation Advisor for International Goodwill and Understanding and Deputy for National Association of India. In 1995 she worked with SIE, notably SI Szeged (Hungary) taking aid to Csongrad Bosnian Refugee Camp. She served as Federation Liaison for the International project SIAM, went on a study tour to Thailand. She travelled extensively in the UK and in India promoting SIAM. She was also International Co-ordinator for International Goodwill and Understanding.

In 2000 she represented SI at the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances in Durban.

In 2004 Elizabeth instigated Yorkshire's support for Only Sanga, a refugee from Zimbabwe. She was personally supported in gaining her refugee status, going to college, becoming a British citizen and getting her degree at Bradford University.

Locally Elizabeth was also very busy. She represented SI Ilkley on the town committee and instigated the Ilkley Talking Newspaper in 1983, which is still supported by the club. She also served on the Good Neighbours Committee and reinstated the Insight Group, a support and friendship group for visually handicapped people whose age, frailty and disability often make them become socially isolated.

She joined SIYAMS (SI Yorkshire Anti Modern-day Slavery) and is active in this work today raising awareness of grooming, trafficking and prostitution.

In 2009 and in co-operation with SI Keighley, Elizabeth set up the SAME group (Soroptimists and Mothers at Eastwood) a friendship group for Soroptimists and Asian mothers of children at Eastwood Primary school, building bridges between communities.

Elizabeth says that SI has given her the opportunity, support and inspiration to go forward with confidence. And the journey still goes on.....

