

Margaret Alderson

The centenary provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the women who have lived out the values of the Soroptimist movement and who embody all that being a Soroptimist entails. Margaret Alderson, an honorary life member of Soroptimist International, and member of SI Tynemouth, Whitley Bay and District, is such a person.

For many years, Margaret has given her time, knowledge and skills to the grass roots work of Soroptimism, as well as serving Soroptimist International at club, regional, national and international level. Margaret joined SI Tynemouth in 1977 and has been Club President twice, Programme Action Officer, Secretary and Treasurer. At regional level, she has been a Regional Representative, International Liaison Officer, Programme Action Officer and Regional President. Margaret was the Federation Programme Action Representative from 1989-1991 and Federation Advisor for Education Programme Area 1991-1995, a post which no doubt drew on her professional background in educational management. This commitment to education was again evident when she served as SI Programme Co-ordinator for Education from 1995-1999. Margaret was also a member of the board of directors for Number 63 for many years.

Those who know Margaret recognise her passion for promoting gender equality, education for girls and women and equality of opportunity, and her approach to this was always an active one. In 1996, writing in the *International Soroptimist*, she urged Soroptimists to be prepared to set the agenda in relation to such issues rather than just reacting to it. This was put into practice during her role as SI Programme Co-ordinator for Education and she travelled widely supporting and encouraging clubs' educational projects, speaking at conferences and working to build up communities and families by developing policies which supported and empowered women worldwide. Margaret also attended the UN on several occasions between 2000-2007 and was part of a group of Soroptimists who worked hard to establish equal participation in decision-making processes and more presence in leadership positions.

Margaret's formidable role at all levels of Soroptimism has perhaps been informed by her willingness to listen and learn. As a new Soroptimist in 1977, she recalls learning from members who had given their lives to promoting the ideals of Soroptimist International. She in turn has put these ideals into practice, through 43 years of service and leadership. As with all good leaders, Margaret has always nurtured and encouraged the talents of others and valued the contribution of shared expertise and teamwork. She remains committed to the club and continues to mentor and support members. Her extensive knowledge and experience are invaluable assets and Margaret is an inspiration to old members and new. In 1995, as she prepared to undertake the role of International Coordinator for Education, Margaret wrote that she would make every effort to justify the faith that fellow Soroptimists had placed in her. This commitment has surely been very well met and the strength of Soroptimist International lies in women like Margaret Alderson.

