

Anne Kavanagh

Anne still celebrates the day in 1972 when she was invited to become a member of the Dublin Soroptimist Club and remembers how happy she was to experience the richness of this extraordinary organisation. Anne was Club President on two occasions. During her Club presidency in 1993, the Dublin Club was invited to visit the European Parliament. Her year as National President in 1985 was very special to her.

While a member of the Dublin Club she was nominated to represent Soroptimist International on the National Council for the Status of Women (NCSW). She became their Secretary during International Women's Year, 1975 and was its Chairwoman from 1977 to 1980.

She presented the first submission on rape to Ireland's Minister for Justice in 1978. Elizabeth Shannon, the American Ambassador to Ireland, mentioned this in her book "Up in the Park". The Employment Equality Agency was set up in 1977 to work towards the elimination of discrimination against women in relation to work and to promote equality of opportunity between men and women in Ireland. The Minister for Labour invited Anne to be a member of this important agency.

In 1979 she was invited by the Soviet Women's Committee to visit Russia and the Ukraine with two other Irish women. The Irish participants spoke about the role of women in Ireland and, in turn, learned about what was happening in the USSR. One of the meetings was chaired by Valentina Nikolayeva Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut in space.

Anne was always interested in personal development, especially increasing women's confidence. Women were badly represented in most aspects of Irish life with very poor representation on State boards. There were very few women in Government and at Church hierarchy. At all decision making levels women's voices were rarely heard.

It was during her years as Chairwoman of NCSW that they published "Who makes the Decisions" which made it very clear that women didn't. During this time, they ran many workshops to support women in taking their rightful place. This led Anne to start training as a Gestalt Psychotherapist. This was a most fulfilling and wonderful experience for her.

Many years later she discovered the Family Systemic work of Bert Hellinger in Germany. His work had a profound effect on her. It changed the way she sees the world, the way she works and the whole way she sees families.

With two colleagues she brought this work to Ireland and they introduced this work to therapists. Anne's workshops "Healing through the Family Soul" are based on the innovative work of Bert Hellinger.

Anne is now a part of her Parish Funeral Team which supports families around death - supporting them to celebrate the life of their loved one.

To quote Anne – "Meister Eckhart said if the only prayer we said in our whole life was "THANK YOU", that would suffice. This I now say for friendship – to friends – and to all who touched my life."

