

President Grace's message

Our planet, our future – let's get cracking!

Happy 100th birthday to Soroptimist International!



YES, OUR ORGANISATION is now in its centenary year. 100 years of service to women and girls, to our local communities, to international projects and all while caring for families and friends and following studies or careers. Each and every Soroptimist should be proud of all our achievements – let's find ways to celebrate!

As one day merges into the next, a new year gives hope of positive change. Good news is that from our last Region meeting, one of the guests has decided to join her local club. These meetings help to give newer members, those who haven't attended previously, and guests, a broader picture of our organisation – a level up from club level.

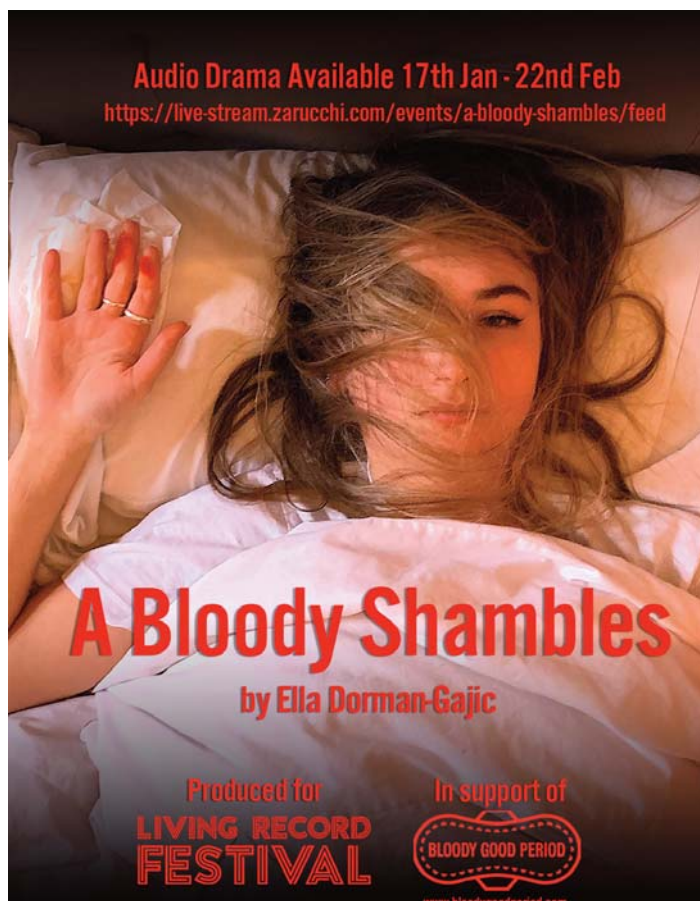
With the Llandudno conference now confirmed as an online event, there's no time like the present to save the dates, October 28-30, and encourage attendance. We will find ways to enjoy each other's company and friendship, even if that too has to be online.

Amongst all the positive news, I would like to temper this with remembrance for Catherine Broughton, Region President 1995/6 who died in September 2020, and Christine Easter of Bromley Club, who died suddenly in December. Full obituaries may be found on pages 03 and 05.

All clubs have now received small collection boxes which will be distributed to all members, to encourage and enable every member to contribute to the Region charity for this year – the Diamond Education Grant. The financial landscape has changed though, and while this 'seemed like a good idea at the time', it has been undermined by the current situation. Many of us no longer have small change, with many transactions taking place electronically. Feedback from club secretaries has been positive overall, with a variety of ways to support the charity with and without the collection boxes, ranging from one-off donations per club to contributing the cost of a Soroptimist fundraising meal or Region meeting that never took place. The boxes can be upcycled for years to come for other charities – it's amazing how quickly pound coins add up. All donations can be sent to the Region Treasurer via BACS (either individually or via club treasurers) before the conference in October.

It's been a real pleasure to attend meetings and hear speakers at Eastbourne, Folkestone, Lewes and East Grinstead Clubs since the previous newsletter. It would not have been possible to attend all of these in person and it is wonderful to see so many Soroptimists throughout the South East England Region. So if I haven't visited your club yet, send me some dates!

SI Lewes "A Bloody Shambles"



ELLA DORMAN-GAJIC recently spoke at a Lewes Club meeting and gave details of her audio play about period poverty and homelessness which is part of a digital drama festival featured in The Guardian, and which runs until the 22nd February.

This is something that Soroptimists have been talking about for some time and Lewes members urge you all to take the opportunity to tune in to this drama.

40% of the ticket price (tickets are £4) is being donated to the period poverty charity, Bloody Good Period.

"Not for the squeamish, A Bloody Shambles is an impassioned broadside against period poverty." The Guardian Stage.

**Congratulations to
SI Tunbridge Wells
celebrating 75 years of service.**

See page 02.

Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells is 75 years young 2021

To celebrate

We will be donating 75 items of one product range each month to Nourish Foodbank

January 2021

75 bars of soap (no plastic)

A central foodbank to provide short term emergency support to local people in crisis in Tunbridge Wells and South Tonbridge. <https://www.nourishcommunityfoodbank.org.uk/>

<https://sigbi.org/tunbridge-wells/>



SI Tunbridge Wells will be 75 this year.
Each month they plan to donate
75 items of one product
to the Nourish Foodbank.

Nourish is a central foodbank providing short-term emergency support to local people in crisis in Tunbridge Wells and South Tunbridge.

To kick off 2021, the Club donated 75 bars of soap (no plastic pumps!).



Hospices of Hope



WE WERE DELIGHTED to host our first club meeting in January on Zoom (again).

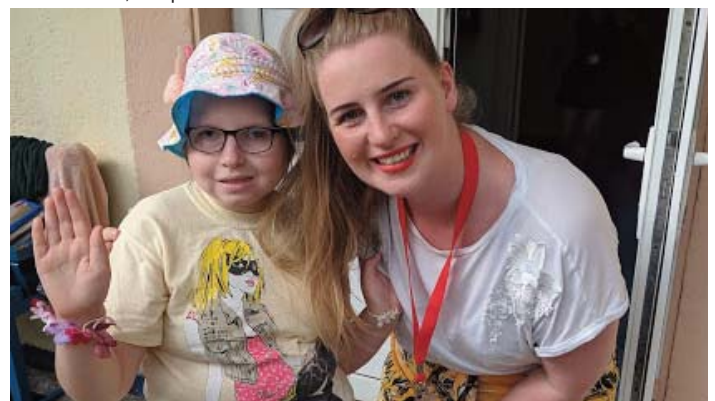
Our speaker was Anna Perolls from Hospices of Hope, the leading hospice development charity in South East Europe, in Moldova, Serbia, Romania and Albania.

The stories that we were told were heart-breaking, with the added impact of Covid resulting in a desperate situation for many where healthcare is not state funded, and people being ejected from hospital with no pain relief, to release beds for Covid patients. (<https://www.hospicesofhope.co.uk/>)

Joining us were members and associate members from our Region plus club members from SI Wiesbaden and SI Munich. We had stimulating and thought-provoking discussions about different projects across Europe which support women. Everyone agreed that Zoom had become a useful platform in terms of communication, networking and ideas.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT ELECT
SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS AND DISTRICT

Anna Perolls, Hospices Of Care



Remembering Catherine Broughton



WE WERE SADDENED to learn that Catherine Broughton, a former Regional President and former member of both Ashford and Maidstone Soroptimist Clubs, passed away in September 2020.

Catherine was married to Toastmaster Tom Broughton; they had twin daughters and three grandchildren. She lost her hearing during her 40s and while a Soroptimist, had assistance from Hearing Dog, Athena.

Catherine was an active member of Ashford club and South East England Regional President in 1995-96. Soon afterwards, she transferred to Maidstone to be nearer home.

First impressions of Catherine were of her professionalism and wisdom. Her gentle sense of humour resulted in many smiles and lots of laughter.

Athena was a great icebreaker and wherever they went, Catherine was always warm, caring, and helpful, and acted as an advocate for the Hearing Dog scheme.

In the late 1990's Catherine began the Regional Merchandising scheme, selling items such as brooches to promote Soroptimism and raise money for the Region.

Whilst at Maidstone Club, Catherine received a cochlear implant which helped her to hear what was happening around her and enabled her to take on the role of SIGBI Federation Director for PR Marketing and Development in 2001-2. At this time, she led on the development of the SIGBI Teams of Excellence (ToE) initiative with Sue Greener training up facilitators to deliver the modules.

Catherine used every opportunity to highlight the difficulties faced by people with disabilities, particularly those which are less obvious. She was resolute in asking and getting assistance at conferences so that anyone with hearing impairment could fully follow proceedings. This also increased awareness of other conditions that needed to be accommodated. Catherine spoke in a way which was firm but not belligerent and made you want to do better.

During her year as Maidstone President 2002-3, Catherine caught a severe infection from which she struggled to recover, and developed Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME). Despite her health problems, she retained her sense of humour and was a good friend.

She felt strongly that SI was an important way of making a difference and spoke passionately about our organisation and our projects. Tributes to her show that both as Regional and Club President she was an inspirational speaker, encouraging and mentoring new members and helping them to get further involved in Soroptimism.

Catherine became housebound as a result of the ME and was often bedbound, so she lost much of her contact with friends and colleagues. She left SI Maidstone during this time as she felt

she could not meet the commitments of being a Soroptimist, and she and Tom moved to Lorendon Park, a retirement complex in Hawkhurst, where they could be within a small community with some support. Catherine's emails said they were very happy there.

Much of Catherine's dwindling energy over the next years was focused on making herself heard by the medical profession rather than being dismissed as having an "imaginary illness". In 2012 she started a course of a drug which gradually resulted in her returning to almost full health. At the same time, Tom's vision was becoming very poor and Catherine took on much of their driving and domestic duties.

Catherine had a new hearing dog Beni, and was able to continue her role as an advocate for Hearing Dogs, giving talks to groups, visiting schools, and in 2015, appearing on TV with Ben Fogle (see photograph).

Over the past few years, Tom became deaf as well as being blind, but he continued to be very active and Catherine was enjoying life, keeping busy volunteering for Hearing Dogs. She found travelling as part of her speaking engagements tiring but very rewarding.

Just after Christmas, Tom informed us that Catherine had died on September 29, 2020, but he did not give the cause of her death. Those who knew her will remember her fondly as a good friend and hard-working, inspirational Soroptimist.

LESLEY RICH, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

SI East Grinstead In Memorium Tree Planting



ANNE RICHARDS PUT out a call for volunteers to help plant trees at Lingfield Nature Reserve in memory of two former members, Lillian Skinner and Janet Vanderhook. Thanks are due to those who turned up, wellies on and spades in hand, and although the rain had subsided, it made for slippery steps.

A few weeks later a work party embarked on another trip to the Lingfield Nature Reserve to help with the new hedge in Bloomers Field.

Going forward, SI East Grinstead will continue to plant trees throughout 2021.





“The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in the shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life.”

Rabindranath Tagore

Tree planting continues across the Region



ON A BRIGHT Tuesday in January, a lone, SI Croydon Soroptimist started digging two holes in the wide border inside the walled garden in Park Hill Park, Croydon. The exact spots had been chosen months ago when the two organic fruit trees – Oullin's greengage and Herman's plum – were selected to celebrate the centenary of Soroptimist International. Both are self pollinating, will mature to a medium height (for trees!) and yield delicious fruit in Summer.

The following Friday, two Soroptimists sallied forth with the young trees in hand, raising our voices to greet each other as we stood a long way apart. With careful positioning of the root and a little more digging around the edges of each hole, the trees were held in position, the soil was refilled around them and tamped down. A little watering-in later on and two happy Soroptimists, Susan Williams and Grace Onions, went back home for tea (all our favourite cafés are shut!).

A brass plaque with our club name and the centenary details will be added later in the year, when we can all get together in the garden for a proper celebration.

ps While we were there we thought we'd plant a couple of gooseberry bushes too.



Eastbourne Project Treebourne



AT THE START of winter, several SI Eastbourne members began the club's tree-planting project in a local recreation ground, and hope to plant more trees in January. Trees are going to be planted all over Eastbourne during 2021.



The trees were provided by Eastbourne Borough Council and the local Treebourne Project. Details about the project can be found on the <https://treebourne.org>

Claire and her grandson Rupert (below) looking very muddy!



Remembering Christine Easter



THE SUDDEN DEATH in hospital after a short illness of such a valued member has come as a real shock to SI Bromley members.

Many of us have been deeply upset by such distressing news. Chris was a very special person indeed and will be missed sorely by her family and numerous friends.

Chris had a high-powered job as secretary to the Ambassador at the British Embassy in various locations: Luxembourg, Hungary, South Africa, Anguilla, Burma and Washington.

Once her overseas travel ceased, she took various roles at the Foreign Office, the last being Executive Secretary to the Diplomatic Services Families' Association.

When once again London based, she was introduced to Soroptimism which added a whole new dimension to her life. Her sister June writes: "She loved the Soroptimists and all that went with them". One of her many skills was taking minutes (a gift of which SI Bromley certainly took full advantage). When the Open Houses scheme was initiated, Chris arranged special tours for club members, not only to the Foreign Office but also to see Big Ben – with access to normally restricted areas.

Chris volunteered at a local charity shop and here again our club benefited from her experience, as she was really "ace" at pricing items for stalls at various fundraising events and she was of the "could sell coals to Newcastle" ilk. Chris was heavily involved in all club activities, but especially keen on the social and fundraising side. She served twice as President, and was an excellent club secretary, very much engaged in membership and extension. Chris was a regular attendee at Regional Meetings and Federation Conferences, for which she often made all the travel and accommodation arrangements. Such good company at these events too – many happy memories.

Chris was a talented pianist and tremendous contralto. She loved singing both at church and latterly with the Carefree Singers, entertaining the residents in care homes and raising money for charity. She had a very compassionate nature and had shown much practical kindness to neighbours, especially during lockdown.

On retirement, Chris continued to keep herself very busy: at the church, with Soroptimism and also caring for others, including travelling regularly to Norwich (where she had grown up) to take her fortnightly stint at staying with and looking after her elderly parents. When she was no longer needed in this pastoral role, she decided to take the plunge and move house, but to our delight chose not to return to Norfolk but to remain in South East London where her network of friends (many of them Soroptimists) live.

Her sister should have the final words: "Chris was so happy living in her retirement flat in Bromley. So very sad it was only for a short time". Her family loved her dearly and are devastated by the news. RIP dear Chris.

ALISON DRISCOLL, SI BROMLEY

Christine Marie Easter (22.11.1944 – 29.12.2020)

Random acts of kindness



OVER THE HOLIDAY period, members of SI Eastbourne & District undertook 120 Random Acts of Kindness.

There were a wide variety of activities to support family, friends, neighbours, and ourselves, during one of the most difficult times we have experienced.

Apart from all the many things we normally do as women for our family and friends, our "Random Acts of Kindness" included:

KEEPING in touch by telephone, letter, cards, email, video links etc, especially with people who are self-isolating, lonely or suffering from health problems. Helping family and friends to update technology skills, including getting onto Zoom.

PROVIDING gifts for neighbours and friends facing difficult times.

PROVIDING 25 individually wrapped gifts and getting funding to buy many items for a large hamper of treats to thank staff on the Frailty Ward at our local hospital for the work they do helping people with dementia and also Covid.

HELPING people with shopping, and delivering items for them.

GARDENING, and digging a drainage ditch to divert water off someone's drive.

TAKING people to hospital for appointments.

MAKING blankets and twiddle muffs for our local hospital, and 'Teddies for Tragedies'. [See page 09.]

DONATING to local charities for the homeless, Salvation Army, Comic Relief, Friends of the DGH, helping provide a defibrillator for local people, and joining a charity Zoom quiz, donating to Eastbourne Foodbank.

SHOWING appreciation to people who have provided services during Covid.

COLLECTING litter, speaking to lonely people, feeding a swan and cygnets whilst out walking.

VOLUNTEERING in *Cards For Good Causes* charity shop and delivering hot meals for the homeless.

PROVIDING a lonely relative/friend with Christmas Day lunch.

PLANTING trees, giving a driving lesson, encouraging sea swimming, proof reading an essay for someone's HE course

BEING kind to our families: arranging a special one-to-one treat for children; buying flowers for a partner; baking a cake for a partner's parents.

BEING kind to ourselves: permission to spend a whole afternoon reading; long soak in a hot bath; going for a long walk.



SHORTLY AFTER THE UK went into lockdown in 2020, SI Canterbury started debating projects that we could support without compromising health and safety, and so our association with the charity Lendwithcare began.

Lendwithcare, part of CARE International, is a revolutionary way to help people in low income countries to work their way out of poverty with dignity. Lendwithcare allows anyone to lend as little as £15 to fund a small business, and once your money is repaid you can choose to recycle your loan to support another entrepreneur, or withdraw your money. Lendwithcare is currently working in twelve countries.

SI Canterbury opened a deposit account on the Lendwithcare website and allocated £180 to the project, being 12 months of £15 donations. After eight months, we have just received word that one of our first loans has already been fully repaid! Pictured above are the women of the Lua Luo Cooperative in Zambia who run a number of market clothing outlets.

Each month, we review the female entrepreneurs seeking finance on the Lendwithcare website. Each one has been investigated by the charity before details are posted and we then select one to lend our monthly £15 allocation to. It is similar to crowd funding and the total loan amount varies, as do the repayment terms. It usually takes only 2-3 days for each applicant to achieve their requested loan amount. Because it is a loan rather than a donation, the recipients are encouraged to be sensible and business-like in their financial management.

Typically, they operate small businesses such as grocery shops, market stalls, car repair, carpentry or other workshops, and in rural areas they tend to focus on food processing, agriculture and raising livestock and poultry.

Around two-thirds of microfinance clients worldwide are women. To date SI Canterbury has loaned money to women in Peru, Bolivia, Zambia, Malawi, Cambodia, Pakistan, Palestine, Vietnam and Rwanda.

Each month, SI Canterbury receives repayment instalments on our outstanding loans into our Lendwithcare deposit account. To date, our repayments have funded two 'free' months when we have not had to use our allocated budget, thus extending our project length. In time, the project could potentially be self-funding, helping countless women achieve financial independence.

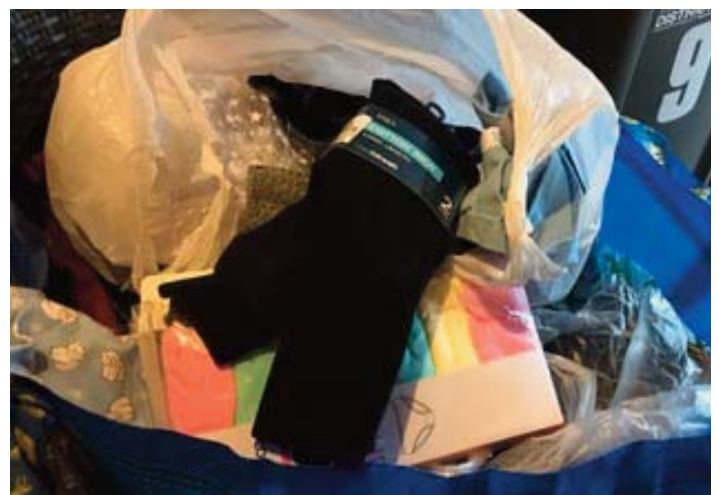
A Winter Grotto



SI EAST GRINSTEAD opened up a Winter Grotto in the President's garage for members to deliver their donations for Safe in Sussex Women's Refuge (Christmas shoe boxes) and Crawley Open House (food, underwear and socks).

By appointment and socially distanced, Club members dropped by over two days and their generosity was amazing. Food donations for Crawley Open House were so overwhelming that a further delivery has been presented in January 2021.

The call from the hostel for underwear was met with a great response and, as a year ago, we rose to the challenge and shopped for all types and sizes of underwear and socks for both women and men!





Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists are proud to wear our Pearls as part of worldwide women support Inauguration Day - 20 January 2021
#WEARYOURPEARLSDAY



JANUARY 20 WAS an important date as it marked the inauguration of a new President in the USA, and Kamala Harris as their first female Vice President and first woman of colour.

A campaign group on Facebook had started in December 2020 with the initial goal to give women a way to empower each other as they celebrate this milestone for womankind. Women were being asked to pledge to wear pearls on Inauguration Day to support the country's first female Vice President. It is about Empowered Women Empowering Women Supporting a Woman. They wanted as many women and young ladies to wear their pearls on the Inauguration Day, and this message reached

worldwide across many women's groups including Soroptimist International.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists wanted to show their support to empowering women and show solidarity by proudly wearing their pearls on Inauguration Day and this was captured and shown on our Facebook page.

It is also notable that in 2021, when Soroptimists from across the world will join together to celebrate 100 years of Soroptimist International and celebrate a 'Bright Past' and a 'Brilliant Future', that Kamala Harris, the new Vice-President, was born in Oakland California where the first Soroptimist club started in 1921.




It costs just
£15.90
 to feed a child for a school year!



Supporting Mary's Meals

Where Mary's Meals are provided, there is a rise in

- *school enrolment
- *school attendance
- *academic performance



SI MEDWAY AND Maidstone welcomed to their January Zoom meeting Annette Davies, Kent's Ambassador for Mary's Meals.

This was prompted by the "Double The Love" campaign Mary's Meals is currently running, in which donations will be matched by the UK Government up to £2 million until January 31, 2021.

This will enable Mary's Meals to reach even more hungry children in Liberia with life-changing school meals and the target is 43000 children to be fed through this campaign.

In Bong County, Liberia, there are high levels of poverty and food insecurity with families struggling to send their children to school. In the West African country, 64% of girls are out of school – the fourth highest proportion in the world.

For those children who are able to attend school in Liberia, many of them are so hungry that they have no energy to concentrate on their lessons. However, wherever Mary's Meals are

provided, there is a rise in rates of enrolment, attendance, academic performance, and children's happiness. The programme is community-owned, with schools and volunteers responsible for preparing and serving the food.

It costs £15.90 to feed a child for a whole school year with Mary's Meals. Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists donated £125 which will be doubled by the UK Government making a total of £250 meaning 16 children will benefit.

Annette gave an excellent presentation, which was most informative, and provided a wonderful insight into the organisation and the impact of the amazing work they do spanning 19 countries across the globe.

Annette asked if we could let clubs across the Region know that she is more than happy to give a talk. Her contact details are Email: bandagals@hotmail.com or Phone: 07944 270437.

Programme Action News

from Yvonne Freeman, SEE PA Chair and SIGBI APD Partnerships



2020 WAS INDEED a most challenging year and one the likes of which most of us will have never experienced before.

Despite all the nervousness and restrictions surrounding COVID-19, Soroptimists in our region rose to the challenge and carried out some amazing programme action work, which included making face

masks, supporting the NHS, working with foodbanks and delivering food parcels to those unable to shop and those with the most need, checking in on people who live alone, planting trees, carrying out beach cleans, lobbying the government on issues of concern, raising much-needed funds for charities and other local organisations, and organising Christmas gifts for children and adults, both at home and overseas. These are just some of the areas covered and, at the same time, we managed to socialise with each other, especially on the run up to Christmas, by having virtual parties.

The number of Programme Focus Reports submitted was very impressive. The total for period October 01 to December 31, 2020 was 78 with £6,746 funds raised and 13,597 beneficiaries. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, the SIGBI programme focus database is unavailable and so I am unable to give you the total for the year. However, I will include those details in my report to the next Regional Meeting.

Looking ahead to our forthcoming club year, I have been sent some useful links for possible speakers from Liz Dominey, UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) Chairman. As most, if not all, clubs are meeting virtually now, it means speakers can be drawn from a wider range of organisations and localities. I will be circulating details of these speakers to the club PAC Officers.

I was delighted when Penny Robbins from Sevenoaks Club kindly agreed to shadow me for the current year with a view to taking over as Regional PA Chair. Penny and I have already developed a close working relationship and we have been able to share some ideas for programme action work in our region moving forwards.

We both attended the UKPAC Meeting last November which, of course, was held virtually and not in Solihull as usual. Moving forwards, the Committee has agreed that at least one meeting a year will be virtual with the other two being held in Solihull, COVID19 restrictions permitting.

Penny will be representing our region at the virtual UKPAC Meeting on January 30, as it coincides with our Regional Executive Committee. However, I am hoping to be able to join the meeting once the Executive meeting is finished.

We are required to give a report from our Region to UKPAC on one project and, of course, it is not easy to choose just one. However, on this occasion, we have both agreed on the project to transport a Fire Engine to Support Women/Girls as Fire-fighters in Poland by the Kent Fire & Rescue Service (KFRS), which was presented at the September Regional Meeting and was featured in the December SEE News. The project ticks three of the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4: Education, SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 8: Work and Economic Growth.

Medway and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Clubs, each raised an impressive £500 making a total so far of £1,000 towards this project.

Mike Pitney Collaboration Officer with KFRS recently, has advised that despite the ongoing COVID19 restrictions they now have a total of £1,800 towards the £6-7,000 they need to convert the fire engine to be driven in Poland, the equipment and the training of the women/girl fire fighters.

It would be great if some of our other clubs could support the project. I am sure that someone from KFRS would be happy to join a club's virtual meeting to give further updates.

During this, our organisation's Centenary Year, the focus will be very much on climate change. Kay Richmond, Programme Director, has registered our interest in being part of COP26, which will be taking place in November in Glasgow. We will shortly be discussing how we can achieve this, and I hope to be able to share more information in due course.

In the meantime, please keep planting those trees, carrying out those beach cleans and encouraging others to stop using plastic!

Thank you for your continued support for our programme action work.



SI Bromley continues their support for the local foodbank

SI BROMLEY HAS BEEN supporting the local foodbank for several years, most recently helping with transport costs for distribution, and with practical help.

Club members have become increasingly concerned about food poverty in the area, and two members are currently working on assembling food packages.

On January 14, the foodbank packed up food for 55 people, mainly for families of four, and over 600 kilos of food was delivered. The photo shows a trolley load for one family.

It was busy there all week.

Sale of masks supports



SOROPTIMIST TUNBRIDGE WELLS has joined SI Medway & Maidstone by donating £500 towards transporting a fire engine to Poland to benefit women and girls as firefighters. So that is now two clubs in the Region who are supporting this project.

Our mask proceeds have enabled us to make a contribution to DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services) in West Kent, supporting women and men experiencing Domestic Abuse. The following thank you letter we have received gives an outline of the need for continued support for charities such as these in our area.

"Thank you to Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells for the donation of £500 to DAVSS. We are very grateful for this donation towards the training costs of our new volunteers.

"Our volunteers play a vital part in enabling us to continue to provide vital domestic abuse services in West Kent.

"Since the lock down domestic abuse has escalated and is more intense, more frequent, and more violent. This continues to be the case with many victims in enforced isolation with their abuser as many perpetrators are working from home and, sadly, we expect abuse to escalate further with the new lock down. Because of the escalation of abuse, cases are more complex and the average number of volunteer hours supporting clients has increased by 52% per referral, when compared with the same period last year. This enforced isolation has also made it more difficult for many victims to seek support. To help address this, we have doubled our helpline hours; and expanded our telephone service to provide support with a named volunteer for as long as needed by the victim, including support-to-court.

"Recent feedback from our clients shows the life-changing nature of DAVSS volunteer support services:

"Client: You guys are totally amazing. I absolutely know I would be in a worse place without you, surely dead. DAVSS in my opinion is the best organisation I ever heard of. I felt listened to for the first time in my life, supported and cared for. Thank you so much.

"Male client: It has been really refreshing to be able to talk to someone who is prepared to listen and offer impartial advice. This has been of tremendous value in a difficult situation and I really appreciate the help from all the people at DAVSS.

"Once again, please accept our heartfelt thanks to you and all at Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells for this donation, which will make a real difference. We could not continue to provide much-needed support to people experiencing domestic abuse without your support. Thank you so much."

We have invited a member of DAVSS to our October meeting to talk more about the volunteer training process and the continued need for support from the initial telephone call through to support-to-court for cases of domestic violence.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT ELECT, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Together Talks

All Region members are invited to join the following Zoom speaker meeting. Please register with the Club Secretary.

SI Tunbridge Wells

Monday, February 15, 2021 at 19:30

Our next speaker will be talking about the census 2021 in the Kent area.

Bonsoir Lille Soroptimists, bienvenue dans notre Zoom



ABLY ASSISTED BY a translator, SI Folkestone were joined on Zoom, by our Friendship Link Club Lille.

We spent time discussing how both clubs have responded to the pandemic by adapting meetings to Zoom, and how we had managed to continue and adapt our activities.

Lille's president Anne-Marie has invited us to Lille to recreate the friendship evening that we had in person in December 2019.

Lille have continued to support the women's refuge, and had hoped to donate some period products to our club for our refuge prior to Brexit and Covid. They had also organised a movie evening in November, to recognise International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women which, due to Covid restrictions, had to be postponed. They are hopeful they will be able to proceed with this in March.

It was good for all members to catch up and hear each others news, and keep them updated on what we have been doing as a club.

Both clubs discussed their initial plans for the centenary tree planting later in the year to celebrate 100 years of Soroptimists.

JACALYN WOOD, SI FOLKESTONE

Eastbourne's Teddies for Tragedies



SI Eastbourne Club President Lynn has knitted the first Teddy in support of 'Teddies for Tragedies' to encourage other members to take part in this project.

People knit teddies for children in third world countries who are suffering poverty, homelessness, civil war, famine or natural disasters and need a toy to love. Doctors who treat the children say they get better more quickly if they have a teddy to cuddle.

Federation Consultative Council Report

from Jan Doyle, SEE Federation Councillor



IN EARLY JANUARY, I along with other members of the FCC, attended the Federation Management Board meeting, remotely (due to current COVID-19 restrictions). We were welcomed by President Johanna to the first board meeting for 2021.

The following points are brought to your attention:

Women and Girls' Issues Working Party

- Amended Terms of Reference for the above Working Party were presented at the December 16 Board meeting. Following a lengthy discussion, it was agreed by the Board not to continue with a working party. If issues arose in future, SIGBI would use SI 'Where we Stand' Statements.

The Why Group

- President Johanna presented an update on the work of the Why Group.
- The initial 'Why, How, What' exercise that was completed by 22 members across the Federation and identified eight areas that required further research:

Coming Together

Leadership

Direction and Focus

Links across the World/Friendship links

Membership

Working with Like Minded women

PR/Marketing and communications

Framework/Structure, Programme Action, UN.

- A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for each area was then sent to 48 Soroptimists. These returns are currently being analysed and the next step will be to involve the Directors in the aspects that cover their specific area.
- A project plan for the next 18-24 months is in progress and will set out the timeline for the various milestones that need to be achieved by the end of the 24 months.

Governance

- The Director of Governance Sylvia Watson reported that her Standing Committee were currently reviewing all SIGBI's policy and procedural documents with working starting on standardising templates, guidance notes, etc.

Safeguarding

- The Partnerships Working Party had now finalised the role specifications for SIGBI's and Regions' Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- It has now been agreed by the Board that there is not a requirement for clubs to have their own Safeguarding Officer.

Federation Role Specifications

- Board members have now approved the revised Federation Role Specifications and a ballot for their approval would shortly be sent to FCCs.

Rota of Visits

- A draft Rota of Visits for the period 2021-25 had been circulated prior to the meeting and following a lengthy discussion,

when the value of the rota was highlighted, it was concluded that Board visits helped members feel more connected to the board and assisted with openness and transparency.

- It was felt that visits should have a specific purpose and that hosts should be consulted prior to a visit as to what they would like discussed.

SIGBI 2021 Conference

- President Johanna reported that as the Covid-19 restrictions are likely to be in place for some time, the decision has been taken that the 2021 Llandudno Conference will be virtual with a small team live in a studio. It is hoped that it may become possible to scale up the conference nearer the time.
- SIGBI must hold a General Meeting in 2021; Director of Finance, Ruth Healey, will explore systems available for online voting if members are unable to meet face to face.
- I recently circulated to all clubs a letter from President Elect, Cathy Cottridge, regarding a proposed resolution for consideration at the AGM relating to extending the term of office for the President and President Elect of SIGBI from one to two years. Some of you will remember that this was a hotly discussed proposal at the Bournemouth Conference. If you haven't seen the letter please ask your Club's Region Representative.

Conference Evaluation Working Party

- At the December Board meeting it was proposed that a small working party be set up to review the format of future SIGBI conferences, following the experience of the 2020 Belfast Conference Committee in producing a virtual conference.
- President Elect, Cathy Cottridge presented a report on the areas identified as needing further research.
- The Board approved the recommendations that the working party continue to research the cost of outsourcing the technical element of conference as well as the possibility of outsourcing conference planning to an external events company.

Programme – CSW65

- Programme Director, Kay Richmond, reported that the UN Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) which takes place annually in New York in March, will be an online event. SIGBI is usually limited to 16 places for attendees but as this year is now online, the decision has been made to open it up to anyone who wishes to apply.

Standing Committee and Working Party Updates

- The Directors are meeting regularly with their Standing Committees to progress their Work Plans.
- President Elect, Cathy Cottridge, reported that a sub-group of the PR & Marketing Standing Committee has been set up to plan the marketing of the Centenary, which includes an article in every edition of Soroptimist News during the centennial year.
- Work on the centennial exhibition is progressing with the intention to have it displayed in the Parliament buildings of each of the of the four Nations.

Do feel free to contact me at any time if you have any queries and I will do my best to find the answer.

I hope that at some point it will be possible for me to visit all clubs.

In the meantime, stay safe.

Christmas Hampers for Women's Refuge



At every December club meeting, SI Medway and Maidstone prepare Christmas hampers for the Women's Refuge with items donated by members. We knew that with the challenges of the pandemic and lockdowns the need for such support was even more important... *and we would need to do things differently.*

Members started shopping early in November for Christmas food items and toiletries to put in the hampers. On one of these shopping trips, a chance remark by one of our members to a friend from her church resulted in a message going out on social media to the Rainham Community Hub.

Within days the vicarage was inundated with bags and bags of toiletries, toys, bedding and towels. A Community Champion for Morrisons also saw the message on social media and offered to donate items if we could let them know what was needed.

[Photo above shows the members and community collection.]

All the generously donated items from our members and the Rainham community were collected and stored in quarantine at a member's home for 72 hours before sorting everything out and packing into nine hampers to be delivered safely in time for Christmas.

It was necessary for a second separate delivery to be made to the Refuge with a car fully loaded with all the donated items of festive foods, chocolates, nappies, bedding, household items, toys etc, from Morrisons. [See photo below.]

With all the donated items they received at the Refuge it meant there were Christmas gifts for all survivors of domestic abuse and their children, plus sufficient toiletry supplies for use throughout the coming year. In addition, the Refuge is a hub for a Young Persons scheme which houses 16–24-year-old homeless youngsters within the vicinity.

It was lovely to receive a 'Thank You' card in the New Year from the recipients of the hampers and donations.



East Grinstead looking back to happier times



AS WE START a New Year of challenges in how we meet, support our local communities, and fundraise, our Friendship Clubs are in our thoughts as we all tackle Covid-19 restrictions.

Looking back to January 2020, a group from SI East Grinstead travelled to India for the SI Pune Metro East 10th anniversary celebrations. [See March 2020 SEE News.]

The photo below evokes memories of beautiful scenery on the backwaters of Kerala and reminds us of the friendship we brought home.



Zooming across the miles



IT WAS WONDERFUL for SI Eastbourne members when we recently had a second zoom meeting with our Australia Friendship Link. We met at 09:00 UK time, as it is evening the other side of the world. We hope to do a couple of joint projects: Planting 100 trees for the 100 year celebrations and also, as a club, doing 100 acts of kindness. [See page 05.]

**Region Meetings in 2021
are scheduled to take place on:**
March 13
June 26
September 25

Burns Night



CANTERBURY CLUB MARKED Burns Night with a Virtual Supper and entertainment, raising funds for Justice and Care.

Until we did our research we hadn't realised that, before becoming famous, Robbie Burns was part of the slave trade when he worked on a Jamaican sugar plantation. He became an abolitionist, writing poems such as *The Slave's Lament*, hated injustice and was eventually able to return to Scotland. The abolitionists' badges contained the words:

Am I not a man and a brother?

Or as we sing with our Burns,

'that man to man the world o'er, shall brothers be for a' that.

More information can be found at

www.scotland.org/features/robert-burns-and-slavery.

It was a lovely evening with all the traditional elements together with joyful and poignant moments from poetry and song. We looked forward to being together again instead of singing *Auld lang Syne* on Zoom.

JANE WEBB, SECRETARY, SI CANTERBURY



**Number "63"
500 Club**



THE 500 CLUB was started by Anne Hudson in 1994, with the aim of raising funds for ongoing support towards the maintenance of "63". I have been given responsibility of continuing the legacy left by Anne.

Your support is needed more than before. Explanation for the clubs and new members needs to be highlighted once again.

You can buy one number for £12 for the year or £13 for setting up a direct debit. Bank orders should be set up for renewal once a year. The draw takes place on the last Friday of each month and two numbers get £50.

Clubs can buy tickets with a view of winning and raising funds. It would be wonderful if you could buy more than one ticket to increase your chances of winning. 50% of all contributions help with the continuing maintenance.

The treasurer of "63" has direct access to the account. 45% is issued as prize money and 5% is for admin cost. Each 500 numbers sold will contribute £3000 annually but I need to increase the number of participants in order to achieve that figure once again.

It would be my aim to get at least 500 members for 500 club. Please help me to achieve that for your own "63" club.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON AND DISTRICT

Helen Grant MP appointment as special adviser for girls education



Carol Infanti wrote to Helen Grant, congratulating her on her appointment as special advisor for girls education. Carol has received the following letter:

"Thank you so much for your kind congratulations and I remember our collaborations from 2016 almost as if it were yesterday – our impressively huge group photo was one of the widest shots I've participated in! [See photo above.]

"The empowerment of women and girls has been at the heart of my career and my politics all of my working life, firstly as a lawyer, and then as a parliamentarian over the last 11 years.

"I am passionate about the campaign for girls' education around the world and I was therefore delighted to be appointed as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Girls Education. This is a great opportunity to help 'move the dial' further and make real progress on the number of girls receiving twelve years of high-quality education across the globe.

"The need for concerted action has been greatly amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has caused the biggest disruption to education in history, affecting the learning of 1.3 billion children, many of them girls. My focus will therefore be on encouraging the international community to adopt a more ambitious and co-ordinated approach to girls' education; getting global leaders to speak out (as our PM has done) on the importance of educating girls and spotlighting all of the advantages; and working with/supporting the fantastic NGOs and other stakeholders working in this space all over the world, delivering projects on the ground to help girls get into school and then stay in school.

"The ongoing work that you are doing at SI is extremely important and I am glad to hear you are going from strength to strength with your recent merger with Medway. If there are opportunities where I think we can work together I will certainly reach out to you. In the meantime, I will be using Twitter to update everyone with an interest in this campaign; on my work, plans, priorities and events. If you are not doing so already perhaps you would like to follow me at @HelenGrantMP to keep track of this important journey.

"Thank you once again for your kind support Carol, it is appreciated more than you can know. Stay well and keep safe."

**Closing Date for the February issue
of SEE News
is Monday February 22, 2021**

Email your text and photographs to
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