

President Grace's message

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



AS I WRITE this on the Summer solstice, the steady rain and cool temperature are playing havoc with the second batch of vegetable seedlings (the first lot didn't survive the cold April). A minor loss in the scheme of things, but bringing the effects of climate change to our own doorsteps now.

As Soroptimists though, our loss is greater, and felt more keenly, as this month saw the death of SIGBI Federation President Johanna Raffan MBE. Johanna was a dedicated and hardworking Soroptimist, drawing on her vast experience to lead our Federation. Embracing the new technology of online meetings, webinars and conferences, she visited many clubs and events both here and in other parts of the world, all the time increasing her knowledge and passing it on at every opportunity. Our monthly meetings with all the Region Presidents were always enjoyable but more importantly, beneficial to all of us to discuss issues with our peers throughout the Federation. The Board of Directors are doing a terrific job of taking over Johanna's engagements (Nisha Ghosh will be joining us in her stead at the June Region meeting) but I have no doubt that she will be sorely missed.

This month has seen me attend two very special celebrations: 60 years of wonderful Soroptimist service from Canterbury club and 75 years from Medway and Maidstone club. It was a real pleasure to attend these celebrations and acknowledge the huge variety of work, projects, events and support given by many members over a considerable timespan. I will shamelessly quote Rachel who spoke at the Canterbury club, comparing the years worked by women to be several more than those worked by men, in a similar way to one human year being equated to 7 dog or cat years (if that makes sense!).



I will also remember to do a bit more training *if I ever have to cycle up those hills out of Rochester again!*

Wishing you all the best for events planned for the SIGBI Day of Action in July – I'm looking forward to hearing about them all.

Mother of Millions Foundation



LEWES SOROPTIMISTS KICKED off an appeal for football boots and trainers on behalf of the Mother of Millions Foundation in Zambia at their May zoom meeting where Faith Kalungia, founder of the project, gave an inspirational talk.

The project supports the children of women incarcerated in Zambia. These children are imprisoned alongside their mothers and are left without schooling or leisure activities.

Faith started this project to teach and care for those children, some of whom have never seen life outside a prison. She also continues to support them when they leave the prison, while their mothers remain inside.

One of the activities Faith runs for the children is football but suitable footwear is in short supply and the children are often playing in bare feet.

Can you help?

We are collecting football boots and trainers (new, nearly new or very good used condition) in children and young adult sizes.

If you can collect boots and trainers from your community please get in touch with Vera Gajic at Lewes Club to arrange collection. Her email address is v.gajic@gmail.com

Photo: some of the boots and trainers donated by President Grace



Canterbury's 60th birthday celebrations attended by 65 guests from around the world

The event included our Inspiring Woman of Canterbury award, and a talk by Rachel Sanders of BoConcept who challenged us to double our numbers by attracting millennials!



SI CANTERBURY WAS FOUNDED 60 years ago and as part of their 60th Anniversary celebrations held a competition to highlight the exceptional achievements of women during this difficult time and bring them to public attention.

Nominations for the most inspirational woman were received from friends and colleagues, and on June 19 the winner was announced by Anne Dekker, Sheriff of Canterbury (above right).

This year's Inspirational Woman is Zoe Bell (above right), Director of East Kent Rape Crisis Centre (EKRCC), which supports women survivors of sexual violence.

Zoe's outstanding professional and personal commitment to helping women has gained her the admiration of her colleagues and of the people she serves. Zoe has ensured that there is funding for the wide ranging services that EKRCC offers, as well as delivering services herself.

The choice of a winner was extremely difficult as the seven women shortlisted were all exceptional. They included:

Lisa Carlson, Chief Executive of Canterbury Business Improvement District, nominated for her promotion of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as well as her business activities.

Caroline Potts, who is an inspiration to the Wincheap community and the Worthgate Scouts. Caroline supports her local community as a highly effective leader, enabler and fund raiser.

Natalie Mbunga who volunteers for many organisations supporting ethnic minorities in Canterbury, as well as founding Clarence's Workshops. She was instrumental in providing Tablets for school children during lockdown.

Lucy Mummery, who has worked on the frontline of the NHS, working in an Intensive Therapy Unit for the past 14 months despite her own illness, nursing patients and inspiring her fellow workers by her empathy and dedication.

Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin who has been a leading activist for social change and and has worked tirelessly for the common good of all people.

Also nominated was a fitness instructor for her work promoting the health and fitness of thousands of families at the Kingsmead Leisure Centre, her motivation of her colleagues and her support of many local charities.

DAWN RYDER, SI CANTERBURY

Our 60th birthday weekend ended with evensong at the Cathedral. The Dean gave thanks for the Sorooptimists' years of service, locally and internationally.



Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists are proud to be celebrating our 75th anniversary



ON JUNE 05, World Environment Day, SI Medway and Maidstone members met to celebrate our 75th anniversary at a Garden Party held in member's house. Our original plans for a Friendship weekend of events involving our family, friends and Friendship Link clubs had to be put on hold until 2022 due to the pandemic restrictions.

We were pleased that Regional President Grace, whose theme this year is 'Our Planet, Our Future' was able to join us to celebrate in this way. She had travelled from her home in Croydon by train to Rochester and then cycled the last seven miles to High Halstow in the beautiful Kent countryside. She presented two of our new club members, Annette Davies (left) and Sandra Covington with their Soroptimist badges.

The setting and gardens for the Garden Party were stunning, food was excellent, with a great host and we were all so pleased at long last to be able to meet safely face to face outside.



The Kente sashes being held by members in the group photo are made in Ghana. Medway and Maidstone club work in partnership with our Friendship Link club, SI Accra, by selling the sashes on their behalf in the UK, which provides an income to the local weavers and any proceeds go to SI Accra's project work.

We also took advantage when coming together for members to bring along their empty blister packs, so they could all be taken to a local Superdrug taking part in the Terracycle Medicine Recycling Pack Programme that will benefit Marie Curie UK.

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,
SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



President Grace presented the club with a Soroptimist rose for our 75th Anniversary, which we intend to plant in a sensory garden later this year that is being developed at Rochester Esplanade.

A champagne toast (right) followed with a celebration cake to mark the occasion and we also remembered Penny Veness from SI Croydon who we sadly lost on this day in 2020.



Dunorlan Park Soroptimist Centenary Flower Beds

SOROPTIMIST TUNBRIDGE WELLS have planted two flower beds in Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells, to celebrate the Soroptimist International Centenary and also the club's 75th Anniversary.

The flower beds have been planted with Salvia Victoria Blue and Osteospermum Blue Eyed Beauty.

We also planted fun...



...friendship and aspirations...



...well-watered with laughter.



TUNBRIDGE WELLS SOROPTIMISTS '75 for 75' donations in celebration of their 75th Anniversary, continued in May with a donation of 75 boxes of tea to the Nourish Foodbank.

Clean Air Day, June 17

ON CLEAN AIR Day, Tunbridge Wells Soroptimists visited Woodbury Park Cemetery in Tunbridge Wells for a tree walk. Mike Taylor of the Friends introduced us to 29 species of trees, not all native to the UK. These included Irish and English Yew, Atlas Cedar, Tulip Tree, Lawson's Cypress, Coast Redwood and of course, a Giant Redwood (pictured below).

The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery were founded in 2006 and some of the key founding members were Soroptimists.

We did, of course, end the day with tea and cake in President Caroline's garden to discuss our findings.



Song of the Reed a new drama for radio



SOROPTIMIST SPEAKER, ELLA Dorman-Gajic, is in a new radio Drama on Radio 4, *Song of Reed*, starring Sir Mark Rylance, Sophie Okonedo, Molly Naylor, Zaydun Khalaf and Karen Hill. The photo above shows the cast; Ella is wearing the red hat.

Poet, script writer, actor and daughter of Lewes Club member Vera Gajic, Ella has been a regular speaker at clubs meetings. Most recently she hosted our International Women's Day Zoom meeting on March 08, and performed her poems.

Ella has recently recorded the Radio 4 drama about a nature reserve in Norfolk and its imminent demise, and fits with the Region's environment theme for this year. The drama is in four parts to be broadcast on each equinox of the year (the first part was on June 21). "Honoured doesn't quite cut it" says Ella, "what an incredible experience acting alongside these talented, wonderful, people on 'Song of Reed', a drama about ecology, biodiversity and butterflies, written by the incredible Steve Waters."

Vera Gajic, writes "I am very proud of my daughter. Five years ago, aged 19, she wrote, produced and starred in her one woman poetry show at Brighton Festival about a girl growing up today. Prior to the show, she show cased her poems at our club meeting so that we could give her feedback, which we were delighted to do. Our members follow her career with interest."

Canterbury members meet for the first time in 15 months

*How wonderful it was to be together, face to face,
sharing a picnic and cake.*

*We met in historic Dane John Gardens, a park
within Canterbury City's walls, dating back to 1551.*



The Forgotten Women of Canterbury



CANTERBURY MEMBERS Jane Mennell and Jan Tebbett researched the Forgotten Women of Canterbury and led a walking tour around the city.

Members hope to encourage the Blue Plaque committee to install more plaques to give these women the respect they deserve.

Bertha Queen of Kent Princess of the Franks AD 597 is pictured left, with club members shown below.



President Johanna Raffan

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of President Johanna M Raffan MBE who passed away on June 15, 2021.

Our thoughts are with Johanna's family at this very sad time.

Closing Date for the July issue of SEE News is Friday July 23, 2021

Email your text and photographs to Patricia at
pat.painting@btinternet.com 020 8668 2681

SIGBI Safeguarding Forum



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day – 15 June 2021

ON UN WORLD Elder Abuse Awareness Day, I was involved in a SIGBI Safeguarding Forum lead by SIGBI's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), Shirley Jones and facilitated by Jane Barnes. We were joined by Regional Safeguarding Officers (RSOs) from across the UK; Republic of Ireland, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago also attended and a wide-ranging discussion on safeguarding matters was held.

I was asked to share a short presentation adjusted from the safeguarding one on the SIGBI website. This had been used at SI Medway and Maidstone's club meeting the previous week with the theme of 'Safeguarding and Elder Abuse' to raise awareness of the issues.

Safeguarding older people took time to develop from safeguarding children and examples of abuse of people with learning disabilities and the excellent work of Action of Elder Abuse. It is their definitions of Elder Abuse, *"a single, or repeated acts, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person."* (This definition has been adopted by the World Health Organisation).

The use of a case study sparked off discussion and engaged all club members who had been involved in various project activities and/or in their personal life and witnessed poor practice and bullying behaviour.

This included Maidstone members' experience in a local hospital, supported by the Patient Experience Manager, observing and reporting failings in relation to food intake and medication, resulting in recruitment of two dementia specialists.

Illustrating how poor and lax practice can easily become abusive if not addressed by managers of services.

Reports from RSOs at the Safeguarding Forum demonstrated that the safeguarding message was being more effectively communicated to members when clubs had a nominated safeguarding lead. This message will be included in SIGBI DSO's report to the Federation Board on progress with raising awareness of Safeguarding with members across the Federation.

The importance of considering safeguarding issues when involved with domestic abuse, modern slavery and trafficking, was highlighted.

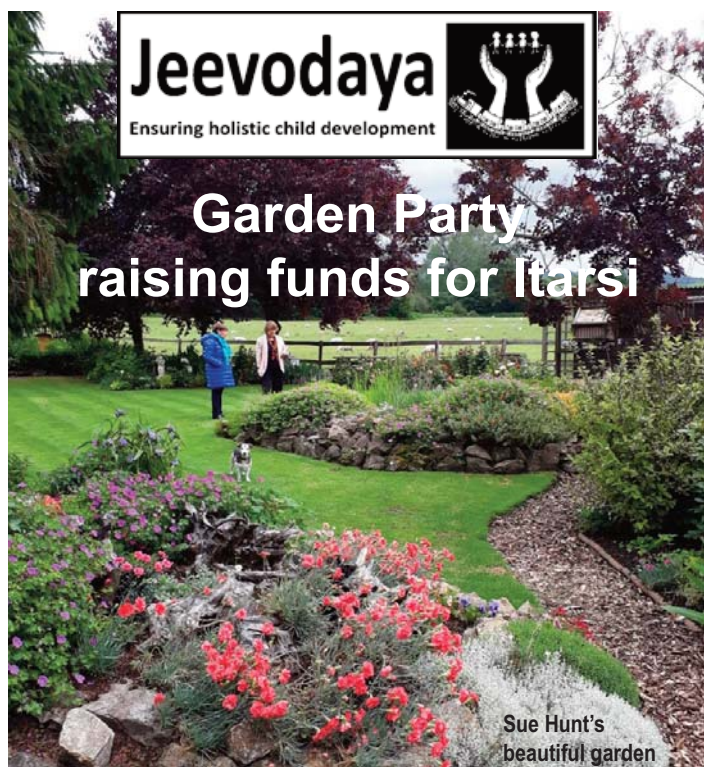
At the UKPAC study day there was a focus on modern slavery but no mention of safeguarding. The second session of the UKPAC study day on July 03 will focus on domestic abuse.

In our Soroptimist role as members of the community, and the programme action projects we undertake, we need to always consider how we might support victims. This may be physically by working directly with victims or by raising money to provide essential items. We need to raise public awareness of the issues and avoid blaming victims for their situations.

With the involvement of Jane Barnes, I plan to continue our bi-monthly Zoom Regional support sessions for club safeguarding leads and appreciate their continued involvement to raise awareness of safeguarding across our region and all members.

At our next session (date to be confirmed) we will consider the SIGBI Code of Conduct and the Dispute Resolution Policy and how they may interact with safeguarding.

CAROL MCKEOUGH, SEE REGION SAFEGUARDING OFFICER



FOR THE PAST 20 years, Maidstone Soroptimists have been supporting the Jeevodaya Centre in Itarsi and one of the annual fundraising events has always been a Garden Party. However, in recent years, due to health issues and the pandemic, it was not possible, but this year on June 22, sixteen Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists, including family and friends, were really pleased to join Sue Hunt at her home along with her husband Chris, and be able to see their beautiful garden and enjoy afternoon tea (socially distanced of course) with them.

The Itarsi project is dear to Sue's heart, and she remains committed to supporting them through such fundraising efforts.

Itarsi is in India, and it is a big railway junction that attracts huge numbers of children living on the railway platforms trying to eke out a living. Lasting memories of the platform children prompted a couple, Ashley and Jane Butterfield who ran a travel agency, along with tourist members of the railway journeys, to support Sister Clara who set up the Jeevodaya day centre for the children living on the platform at Itarsi Railway Station in 1999.

During the Covid19 pandemic Jeevodaya has reached out and supported hundreds of families and needy people. Mostly in Itarsi people were affected by the pandemic drastically as sudden lockdowns and insufficient support from the systems blocked their way of income. Jeevodaya as a sudden response by identifying their needs and supports them in various ways.

The Garden Party raised £224.20 through donations and the raffle, and these monies will ensure that we change children's lives in India.



Sue Hunt, Carol McKeough and Nellie Adjaye enjoying the food.



Litter picking utilising those high-viz!



SOROPTIMIST TUNBRIDGE WELLS took part in the Great British Spring Clean 2021, and pledged to litter pick for 75 hours during the time May 28 to June 13, 2021, to honour our chartering.

We completed 76 hours during this time frame! Plus we recycled all the aluminium cans we found.

As well as individual sessions we planned two walking outings. We met on June 05 to collect litter from High Woods Lane and Hall's Hole Road behind Dunorlan Park. It was no accident that we chose World Environment Day as the start of our pledge. To quote from Soroptimist SIGBI *"There is work to be done, damage to set right. Together we can achieve the extraordinary. The future matters because that is where we are going to live. The first step in the right direction is when we understand that on this spaceship planet, we are not curious passengers but instead the only crew force."* A great opportunity to be the crew in yellow high viz. It was very encouraging to receive support from passers-by in their cars who stopped to say 'Thank you'.

We were quite shocked by the amount of rubbish we retrieved and also by the actions of some dog-walkers who bothered to put their 'doggy bag' on the bonnet of their car and then drove off!

On June 12 we collected litter from Hurst Wood, Tunbridge Wells. Thankfully there was not much to collect we had a beautiful walk in stunning surroundings. Then back to Ann's for lunch and refreshments.



75th Anniversary Friendship Link Get Together



Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists



TWENTY SOROPTIMISTS FROM six clubs, plus Bhaswati Biswas, SIGBI Friendship Link Coordinator (left), joined a Friendship Link Get Together on Zoom on June 12. Members from SI Heswall and SI Medway and Maidstone in the UK, joined members from SI Voorburg (Netherlands), SI Osnabruck (Germany), SI Le Quesnoy (France) and SI Accra (Ghana). Jane Barnes, SI Medway and Maidstone was in Wales, and Julia Search who hosted the event was in Cyprus, whilst Bhaswati was at home in India, so it was truly an international event.

Two new members from Medway and Maidstone, Sandra Covington and Annette Davies, joined in for the first time – the year in which the club is celebrating its 75th birthday. Greetings and congratulations were sung by Sigrid from SI Osnabruck, and then followed by Annemiek, Cassandra and Melissa from SI Voorburg, which was a lovely surprise for the Medway and Maidstone members. Two SI Osnabruck members, Ilse and Marga were unable to join us and had sent messages of congratulations to Medway and Maidstone on their anniversary.

In a roundup of club news, it was great to hear that all the clubs are planting trees to mark the Soroptimist Centenary. SI Le Quesnoy are planting trees in three areas of France in conjunction with other clubs in the region.

SI Heswall had sent 15 letters written by their club members for Project Hope. This followed hearing about Project Hope at a previous Friendship meeting and our plans to write 75 letters to women prisoners. SI Heswall joined in Medway and Maidstone's

May club meeting when they heard, first-hand, how much the letters meant from an ex-offender. SI Heswall work with Tomorrow's Women Wirral, who provide items, such as toiletries for women released from prison, so they plan to see if the Project Hope scheme can be expanded to their area.

SI Voorburg organised a conference with the Police and Mayor to raise awareness of aggressive behaviour in society, raising €3000, which will be used to support a project helping mothers in Bolivia. €300 was also raised through an online yoga course, run by Melissa.

SI Accra work on various projects supporting young women and girls, such as providing reusable sanitary items. They have had a strong relationship with a Norwegian lady, who has recently died, but through their work they are sponsoring two young women to do apprenticeships. The Kente sashes, sold through Nellie Adjaye in the UK, are made by women in an impoverished area of Ghana. The money raised through sales go to the women and jointly to the two Clubs' charity funds as part of a partnership agreement. It was great to hear that SI Accra have set up a second club with younger members to ensure that their work continues – well done SI Accra!

Medway and Maidstone were proud that Dr Mary Buchanan, originally a Maidstone member and now an active honorary member of the club, was chosen as one of 100 Soroptimists in SIGBI's #WhoisShe centenary initiative who had made a difference in society. (See the clubs website for the full story.)

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,
SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Together Talks

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

SI Lewes

Monday, July 19, 2021 at 19:00

Stephanie Pech

'Boosting our Immunity through Nutrition' talk and Q&A

SI Lewes

Monday, September 20, 2021 at 19:00

Brighton Women's Shelter on how they provide domestic violence support for women and their children

SI Lewes

Monday, October 18, 2021 at 19:00

Ram Rajil co-founder of Bloom Nepal School to give us an update on the school and children.

**Region Meetings in 2021
are scheduled to take place on:
September 25
December 04**

**Following the Region Meeting,
Treasurer Barbara Fisher has confirmed
that the pro rata rates
for new club members
due to Region are as follows:**

£7.50	April to June
£6.00	July to September
£4.00	October to December
£2.00	January to March



The Comedy of Errors will be touring to the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury from Wednesday to Saturday, October 27 to 30, 2021. Public booking is now open.



AT MEDWAY AND Maidstone's May club meeting we were joined by members from two of our Friendship Link clubs, SI Heswall and SI Osnabruck. They were keen to hear the presentation on Sateda's Project Hope by Projector Co-ordinator, Mary Williams and Sateda Volunteer, Kirsty. Mary said Project Hope was progressing well and they have sent 1000 letters to prisoners in three prisons taking part so far.

We were given a unique insight from an ex-offender's perspective into prison life, the daily routine and what it entails. It was highlighted that two out of three women in prison have been through Domestic Violence.

In prison, the women need to grab hold of hope on a daily basis as this is massive to them to help them keep going. Receiving contact from someone outside ie, a letter/card or quote, especially since lockdown, helps to prevent loneliness and isolation. In closed prisons, the women are allowed two letters a week, and in open prisons, one letter a fortnight.

Mary has been organising writing packs to be provided to the women consisting of 24 sheets of paper, 12 envelopes, four second class stamps and a pen.

Following the presentation, members agreed to donate items for the writing packs and, as part of our 75th celebrations, also agreed to donate books of second-class stamps to the value of £75. On behalf of the club, Jane Barnes presented these to Mary, who was extremely pleased to receive them in addition to our support with the letter writing.

Members from SI Heswall have offered their support and have written 15 letters for Project Hope which means that, added to those written by Medway and Maidstone members, 80 letters have been written, exceeding our target of 75 letters set to mark our 75th anniversary.

