

## President Lynne's message

### Educate to Empower and Enable



THERE WAS A lot to take away from the recent SIGBI Belfast conference, "Climate for Change". The speakers were excellent and focused on gender equality and climate change, and the underpinning importance of education to achieve change.

It was particularly alarming to hear that according to a recent UN DESA report (September 22), achieving full gender equality could take close to 300 years if the current rate of progress continues. "Cascading" global crises such as the pandemic, war, climate change and the backlash against women's sexual and reproductive health and rights have meant there is no chance of meeting the UN's 2030 deadline for SDG5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Education was a key factor in getting more women into leadership and decision-making roles to help address these crises.

On a brighter note, SIGBI President Cathy Cottridge reported that during the last year, £462,021 was raised and 68,800 people were helped by SIGBI projects. I know several clubs are now planning events in support of the UN's "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls" and I am looking forward to attending SI Canterbury's Silent March on November 26 and Eastbourne's Silent Vigil on December 04.

I have just started my third round of mentoring for The Girls' Network and was delighted to have two members from the Eastbourne club join me. A new programme is starting up in Burgess Hill and inviting applicants for mentoring. TGN is aware that we have Region members waiting to be online mentors and I hope to have information soon on how this will begin.

Just a reminder of the next Region meeting which is on Zoom on Saturday, December 03. The Girls' Network and a mentee who has been through the scheme will talk about the charity and answer any questions you may have. We also have SI President Maureen Maguire talking about her international appeal, "Opening Doors to a Brighter Future". Hope to see you on Zoom!

**Women-Led Uprising in Iran**  
See report from  
President Lynne on page 03

## What's in this month's newsletter?



SI India visit East Grinstead.  
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and Nisha Ghosh, page 02



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## Members of SI India visit East Grinstead Club

FOLLOWING THE BELFAST Conference, the Club was delighted to welcome three members of SI India, Nisha Ghosh, Naina Shah and Shukla Chattopadhyay, to spend four days with some of our members exploring the area.

Nisha from SI Metro East is Federation's Outgoing Director of PR and Marketing and Communications (M&C) and Regional Incoming President for India. She first met East Grinstead members some years ago when we were presenting our project 'Every Little Girl Deserves a Dress' at Conference. Pune Metro East subsequently collaborated with us on the project sending some dresses made by their members. Our Clubs now have a Friendship Link and in 2020 four East Grinstead members visited India to share in Pune Metro East's 10th Charter celebrations and enjoy a joint tour to Kerala.

Naina Shah of SI Chennai Downtown, Assistant Programme Director (APD) from 2016-2022, joined Nisha on the Standing Committee for PR and M&C and is also part of the Centenary Tree Planting Committee.

Shukla Chattopadhyay from SI South Kolkata is President Elect of her Club, recipient of the Memorial Grant at Belfast and incoming APD for Prosperity on the Programme Team.

Our three guests arrived on November 03, staying at the home of Beryl Bartter, one of the East Grinstead members who visited India in 2020. Their first visit was to Seven Sisters Country Park to see the white cliffs and then the South Downs National Park. The following day saw members escorting the three ladies on a visit to East Grinstead Museum where, among other things, they were able to enjoy a guided tour and view an exhibition dedicated to Blond Mcindoe famous for burns reconstruction surgery. After lunch at the Pooh Bear Cafe (Pooh Corner) it was on to Hartfield Museum. The afternoon was spent walking around Briars Lodge Field Centre, enjoying the sunshine and observing our Club's environmental activities with schools and children's groups. A very busy day ended with a delicious evening meal in a typical English pub.

November 05 was rainy but members and visitors managed to dodge the showers whilst spending the day at Hever Castle and gardens, viewing the Anne Boleyn exhibition and taking lunch. The afternoon allowed more East Grinstead members to meet our visitors at Jane Griffiths' home where a lovely high tea was provided. An unexpected added extra was a firework display set off by neighbours and visible from Jane's garden!



On Sunday, the final day of the visit, the ladies from India cooked a wonderful Indian meal in Beryl's kitchen. This was shared with members of our Club and their partners and provided an opportunity for the Indian ladies to wear their amazing saris. Pat Dale of Croydon Club joined the festivities despite the rain and flooding and many gifts were exchanged. Among those gifts was a beautiful Indian table runner to our Club (seen above) and Soroptimist jewellery and pretty dried English flower posies (see photo on page 01), prepared by Helen Shortz, for our visitors – a wonderful ending to a most memorable visit.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## Soroptimist International South East England Region Secretary required from November 2023

On November 01, 2023, Carol Reed will have served as Regional Secretary for six years and so the Region Executive is seeking a replacement to take over this role at that time.

It would be beneficial for the new incumbent to shadow Carol during the remainder of her final year in post and Carol will, of course, be happy to mentor the new secretary when she takes over.

Details of the role may be found via the following link:  
[This Regions-National-Associations-Network-Role-Specifications-Ballot-of-the-FMB-FCC-CD-12-August-2016.pdf \(sigbi.org\)](#)

The time commitment includes four Executive meetings during the year, in addition to the Region meetings. Meetings are held on a Saturday.

Carol says "This role helps one find out so much more about our wonderful organisation. Each year is different as the President changes, and I have enjoyed them all."

If you are interested in taking up this role, and wish to discuss it with Carol, please contact her on 07753 502762 or email her at [secretary.sisee@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:secretary.sisee@yahoo.co.uk)

## Soroptimist Rose Flourishes in Suffragist Sensory Garden

ON OCTOBER 15, THREE members of SI Medway and Maidstone volunteered at the monthly FoRCE Gardening and Litter Pick Task Day at the Suffrage Sensory Garden, Rochester Esplanade.

We were fortunate yet again that the weather was dry and sunny although a little windy. Sue Daykin and Jane Barnes (pictured right) chose to do a litter pick with two other volunteers armed with their litter pickers and black sack each. They covered an area along the Esplanade covering a total distance of 2.5kms. Each filled a black sack with discarded items such as food takeaway cartons, plastic bottles, beer cans and bottles.

The third Soroptimist volunteer Stella Barnes chose to work with other volunteers on weeding the raised flower beds and planting bulbs.

After the long hot and dry summer there had been concern about whether the new planting in the Sensory Garden would survive. Thankfully, after all the work by the volunteers over the past year it was pleasing to see how much was thriving.

This included the Soroptimist Rose that the late Past Regional President Grace Onions had presented to Medway and Maidstone club on our 75th anniversary in June 2021. This rose flowers in flushes throughout the year and we could see it is



currently covered in tiny buds which will soon grow into lightly fragrant pink and creamy yellow flowers (see page 01).

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Arts Without Boundaries, and This Is Us Dance Company Event

TUNBRIDGE WELLS SOROPTIMISTS Cat Mennell and Angela McPherson, and Pauline from Sevenoaks, members of the Arts Without Boundaries group, attended the 'Be You 2022' inclusive arts festival held in October 2022 at West Kent College.

The day itself was fun, exciting and an amazing lesson on what people can achieve creatively when determined to overcome any difficulty life throws at them. In the main hall various workshops ran all day led by Arts Without Boundaries, Stopgap Dance Company, Square Pegs Arts and This Is Us Dance Company.

Arts Without Boundaries contribution consisted of poetry sessions led by Charlie Bell, during which the group wrote poems around Halloween themes based on fireworks and magic spells.

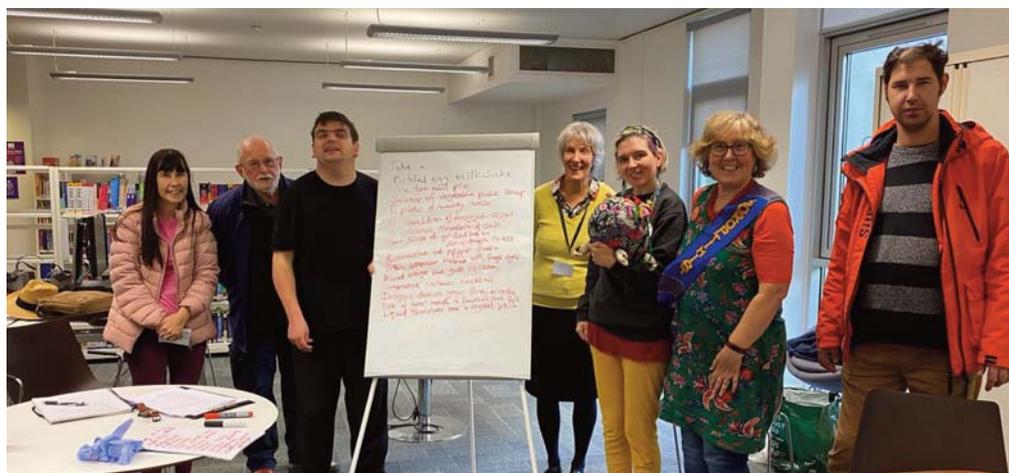
Two performances were held during the day, with contributions from all the performance groups present.

Arts Without Boundaries performed their poem (written earlier in 2022) titled Slubblebubble – Song of the Deep. To write the poem the group invented words that attempted to evoke sounds that might be heard by creatures living near the bottom of the oceans. We had great fun performing the poem in a round in a further attempt to imitate sounds below the water.

Other dance and music performances made the day creative, fun and fulfilling.

Arts Without Boundaries was our club charity April 2020-April 2022 but we continue to support them through various activities due to the special relationship we have developed.

ANGELA MCPHERSON, PAO, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



### WOMEN-LED UPRISING IN IRAN

I RECENTLY TOOK part in a very interesting NGO CSW/NY webinar entitled Women, Life, Freedom: Global Implications of the Women-Led Uprising in Iran.

It included some really moving testimonials from a panel of Iranian women who offered an analysis of the uprising in Iran. This was followed by an international panel of women active in the women's movements to discuss the global implications of this women-led uprising. The webinar shows how feminists from around the world are working together to build global solidarity in their advocacy for structural change.

There is a follow-up YouTube video recording of the webinar which is well worth watching at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk33q7cqfOo> (Women, Life, Freedom: Global Implications of the Women-Led Uprising in Iran)

PRESIDENT LYNNE CHISWICK, SISEE

## Soroptimists and Freemasons joint Quiz Night raises funds for local charity

SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS, in conjunction with The Freemasons of Holmesdale Lodge No 874 recently held a Quiz Night to raise funds for The Pickering Cancer drop-in Centre.

An independent, self-funded, volunteer run charity, the Centre was founded 18 years ago by a group of cancer patients who recognised the need to have somewhere to go, to relax and to talk with others in a similar situation. The centre also provides a space to support families, carers and friends affected by cancer.

Held at the Masonic Hall, nearly 80 guests pitted their wits against topics such as Literature, the Natural World, Inspiring Women and Famous Masons. A tricky bonus round on the theme of all things James Bond narrowed the lead considerably.

Huge congratulations to the team from SI Sevenoaks who topped the leader board with an impressive 73 points.



A raffle was held to boost fund raising. There was also the opportunity to place sealed bids for a weekend in Dorset and a beautiful watercolour of The Pantiles kindly donated by local artist and previous club speaker, Elaine Gill.

We are delighted to be able to donate £1,200 to The Pickering Centre on the 18th anniversary of their foundation.

CLAIRE ARCHBOLD, PRESIDENT ELECT, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



Steve and Claire Archbold, the Quiz organisers

### Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News  
Wednesday, December 28, 2022

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

If you have events coming up after the closing date, which you would like to appear in SEE News, please advise Patricia who is happy to accept late articles with prior notice.

## SI Croydon completes Inauguration ceremony for three new Soroptimists



At SI CROYDON'S November 24, monthly business meeting, the first item on the agenda was a joyous occasion – the induction of three new members.

Due to the pandemic SI Croydon club members Helen Mangan and Coral Konibire were unable to complete their induction due to government restrictions. The third Soroptimist to be inducted was Roxanne St Clair who joined SI Croydon a few months ago.

Soroptimist International vision and mission statement was read by SI Representative to the Commonwealth and SI Croydon club member, Pat Dale, and due to the unavailability of both the current club President, past President and club Treasurer Heather Bailey read the induction statement to all three incoming members.

Our newest member Roxanne is a self-employed lifestyle coach, and Chair of Trustees at the charity, Commonwealth Girls Education Fund whose mission is to sponsor girls of ability through secondary school where, without financial assistance, they would be unable or unlikely to continue; to give them a sense of their own value and worth; and to enable them to act as ambassadors for female education within their own communities. To find out more about Commonwealth Girls Education Fund, visit [www.cgefund.org](http://www.cgefund.org)

CORAL KONIBIRE, MEMBERSHIP OFFICER, SI CROYDON

## The Mason Mile



Jane Webb and Margaret Pau

FIVE CANTERBURY MEMBERS, and one from Thanet, have successfully completed the training to lead Mason Mile walks.

The Mason Foundation was founded in 2017. It aims to lead community miles for people who have difficulty taking part in mainstream activities.

We have agreed to lead walks for Afghan women and their pre school children currently living in Home Office hotel accommodation whilst their asylum applications are considered.

JANE WEBB, SI CANTERBURY

# International President's December 10 Appeal

THE DAY IN December when all clubs traditionally focus on the International President's Appeal is fast approaching. Have you got something planned? I would like to encourage you to do some fundraising if possible, for this excellent initiative.

Every two years, on Human Rights Day (December 10) the incoming President of Soroptimist International selects a project that provides direct assistance to women in extreme need. Soroptimist International President, Maureen Maguire's project is **Opening Doors to a Bright Future**. The objectives of this appeal are to:

- Provide access to education in all its forms for disadvantaged and marginalised women and girls.
- Provide education to women and girls in a safe, friendly, and stimulating environment where there is equality of opportunity and support for all.
- Develop mentoring programmes that encourage confidence, self-esteem and increase the participation of women and girls in society and in decision-making.
- Increase access to information, educational resources, and services, to empower women and girls to make informed life-choices.

Projects will be established in all five Soroptimist Federations. There are currently projects in Cambodia (Cambodia Community Dream Organisation CCDO) and Uganda. In Uganda we are working with Rose Academies. The project seeks to remove barriers that keep vulnerable and oppressed children out of school, improving access to education and healthcare.

A project for SIGBI has been identified and is currently undergoing due diligence checks. We hope to be able to announce it shortly.

## Case study from Cambodia

Chay Satan is a single mother with an 11-year-old daughter. She lives alone. She always struggles with financial support for her daily expenses and for her daughter's education. Being a single mother and raising a daughter alone is not easy, but she never gives up because she wants her daughter to have a better future.

Satan was actively engaged in the training program, now she has become a role model for other women in the community. She has a vegetable garden, but that only generated little income because of climate change.



With the assistance from the project team, she was guided to create the other sources of income to support herself and her daughter's education. The team have helped her to start a food and soft drink business under the CCDO micro loan start up fund and now her business runs smoothly because of her hard-work and commitment. {See photo bottom left.}

To support this appeal, please buy a badge/brooch. The colour is yellow/gold and blue. The design is based on a sunrise and the 'Opening Doors' logo. Some of the cost goes to the project.

The badges can be ordered from Hilary Laidler. They are £25 each plus the cost of postage and packing which is dependent on how many are ordered, the weight and value of the parcel and where they are being sent to. Payment is either by bank transfer or by PayPal. Hilary will accept cash in £ Sterling only. If paying by cheque or cash the bank charges her a processing fee now so she prefers the funds to be paid directly by PayPal or bank transfer. Please contact her at [hilary.laidler@icloud.com](mailto:hilary.laidler@icloud.com)



Thank you for supporting this appeal. If you would like me to 'zoom' into a club meeting or visit to give an update, please contact me at [cfi42@outlook.com](mailto:cfi42@outlook.com)

CAROL INFANTI, AMBASSADOR SI PRESIDENTS APPEAL

## New Members for SI Eastbourne

SI EASTBOURNE AND District were delighted to welcome two new members to their November 14 meeting. President Pat Healy presented membership badges to Linda Creasy (pictured left) and Mary Sullivan (pictured right).

We wish them a long and happy Soroptimist life!

CLAIRE BELL, SI EASTBOURNE



## East Grinstead Remembers



ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, together with the rest of the nation, East Grinstead remembered all those brave men and women who have given their lives on behalf of our country.

As is customary, members of East Grinstead Club gathered around the town's War Memorial to pay tribute and to observe our current President,

Sue Darney, lay our Soroptimist wreath.

Following the Act of Remembrance a short walk back to a member's house provided an excellent opportunity for coffee and fellowship.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## East Grinstead welcome Black History Month speaker

OCTOBER BEING BLACK History Month in the UK, East Grinstead Club was privileged to welcome as their October speaker, Commander Dr Alison Heydari, the most senior black female Police officer in the UK. A large audience of members and visitors gathered to enjoy the presentation.

Commander Dr Heydari has seen over 20 years' service in the police force having answered a newspaper advertisement recruiting police officers at a time when she was living in Hampshire and raising two young daughters. Her husband encouraged her to apply and the rest is history.

When she joined the police, Commander Dr Heydari set herself a target of becoming an assistant chief constable in 20 years a goal she achieved in 19.

Her career has been varied, interesting and rewarding. The Metropolitan Police offers a wide variety of jobs and so the life is never boring. Commander Dr Heydari told us that her main aim in any job has always been to make a difference.

When she joined the police over 20 years ago there was a real lack of diversity and she knew she could create real change. She has a passion for mentoring and coaching, enabling people to reach their full potential. Whilst working with Hampshire Constabulary, as Force Leader for Hate Crime, Commander Dr Heydari worked closely with strategic partners to achieve a holistic approach to the issue, making it clear that hate crime would not be tolerated. It is disheartening when the public is unwilling to help with enquiries, so working to secure justice for victims of crime and helping them find a voice makes a huge difference to individuals and communities and improves trust and confidence in policing.

Commander Dr Heydari is particularly proud of contributing to the understanding of domestic abuse through her doctoral thesis. She feels strongly that it is the role of all of us to do whatever we can to reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse and her research highlights the impact this has on those involved.



Commander Dr Heydari with President Sue Darney

What are Commander Dr Heydari's tips for success? She is quoted as saying:

"Recognise what your strengths are. In policing we talk a lot about recognising developmental areas but it is also important to understand where your strengths lie and to use those strengths. Policing should thrive on difference. Innovation only happens when people have different views and solutions. We must celebrate our differences; you should be proud of what makes you different from the next person. Never shy away from a challenge, be proactive and consider every opportunity that is offered to you."

Wise words for all of us, whatever our calling in life!

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## Soroptimists Volunteering at G4 Christmas Concert

ON A WET AND windy November night, four SI Medway and Maidstone members got into the festive spirit by volunteering at a G4 Christmas concert at Rochester Cathedral. G4 have been long term supporters of the Missing People charity.

As volunteers for Missing People, this is an opportunity to volunteer for a worthwhile charity and have an enjoyable evening.

We were able to join in along with the 600 concert goers on a few hymns while supporting the charity Missing People.

During the evening, we acted as ushers, showing guests to their seats, as well as selling event programmes. At the end of the concert, we collected donations for Missing People by standing at the exits holding a bucket as guests leave.

One member was designated by Missing People as the lead Volunteer for the evening. They were responsible for safeguarding the donated monies, counting and transferring the donations to Missing People. This year despite the financial hardship being faced by so many, the monies collected at the Rochester venue amounted to a



Soroptimists volunteering



Rochester Cathedral



G4 supporters of Missing People

generous £457. In 2021 volunteers collected over £14,000 during the G4 Christmas Tour. This amount of funding keeps the Missing People Helpline open for families for 18 days.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

# Silent march against gender-based violence



CANTERBURY SOROPTIMISTS MARCHED on Saturday, November 26, as we do each year, to raise awareness of the United Nations 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls.

There are many popular notions about violence against women. That it is women in their 20s and 30s who are most at risk, that femicide is a 'rare occurrence', that women's refuges were a sixties thing and are no longer needed. If these notions were true, we would not march.

But then we watch the reaction of the Iranian government to women who remove their head scarves. We read recent global estimates that show, on average, more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation worldwide affecting more than an estimated 1-in-3 women, a figure that has remained largely unchanged over the last decade.

We read a report from the UK Femicide Census, a unique source of comprehensive information relating to 2009 to 2020, on women killed in the UK and the men who have killed them. From that census, we learn that in 2020 for example, the women killed ranged in age from 16 to 88. Most were attacked by someone known to them and many died in their own homes, challenging the notions above and the one that the streets are the most dangerous place for women. Of the 110 killed in 2020 alone, 57 women (52%) were killed by current or former partners, 14 women (13%) were killed by their son, nine women (8%) were killed by a stranger. 77 killings (70%) took place in the home of the victim and/or perpetrator.

So, then we know why we need to march.

We gathered in the Butter Market where Cllr Anne Dekker, Mayor of Canterbury, spoke of the silence that condones violence against women. So, we marched in silence. We then walked, holding placards and banners, through the busy streets, past the shoppers and buskers, the stall holders, and the Salvation Army Band. We were aware of the reactions of people in the streets. Some looked on with approval, some avoided our gaze, some explained to their children what we were all about. We were joined by staff and supporters of The Rising Sun, Satada Charity (both are Domestic Violence and Abuse Charities). We were also joined by our Regional President, Lynne Chiswick, Eastbourne, Vice-President Sue Edgar, East Grinstead, Soroptimists from Thanet, Whitstable, and Folkstone, Elizabeth Carr-Ellis, founder of 50sense, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, Cllr Pip Hazelton and by family members and friends.

Those who marched wore or carried something orange. As a bright and optimistic colour, orange has been chosen to represent a future free from male violence against women and girls. Walking in solidarity and silence through the ancient streets of Canterbury, to raise awareness about male violence against women and girls, is always a moving and powerful experience.

May the day come when we no longer need to do it.

TESSA WOODWARD, SI CANTERBURY



## SI Croydon offers Personal Safety Awareness Training



IN SUPPORT OF 16 days of activism which started on November 25 with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, SI Croydon held an 'Increasing Personal Safety Awareness for Women' training session on November 26. The theme for this second day of activism was Unity Against Rape.

As some of the audience members had never heard of Soroptimist International (SI), Club member Pat Dale introduced the session by explaining about the work of SI and how they can get involved. The trainers, Emma and Simon, then encouraged the group to share their concerns and discuss occasions when they have felt unsafe.

The training session was both friendly and informative and the delivery style was a mixture of videos, presentation and some physical demonstrations. Trainees were also taught about behaviours on how to remain vigilant and how to appear confident, less intimidated and more assertive when feeling threatened. These behaviours will help to project an image which makes women less appealing to being attacked.

PAMELA FLOUCH, SI CROYDON



ON NOVEMBER 24, SI Croydon had a speaker meeting featuring local children's charity, Reedham Children's Trust.

The talk was given by Jessica Ritchie (seen left in the photo with Coral Konibire), fundraising manager at Reedham Children's Trust. She talked about the Trust and the positive impact they have working with vulnerable and disadvantaged children in Croydon and beyond.

Reedham Children's Trust is one of Croydon's oldest charities having formed in 1844. They also regularly collaborate with partners such as Croydon Council and Legacy Youth Zone to ensure resources are used to maximum impact and help as many children as possible.

Jessica also introduced a number of the Trust's projects which included the Christmas Toy Appeal 2022 which takes the form of a giving tree in Centrale Shopping Centre, a brand-new partnership with Merry Maids Croydon by asking their clients to donate food and toiletries this Christmas, for vulnerable children and their families.

## Supporting the Thanet Medaille Trust



MEMBERS OF SI Thanet marked Anti-Slavery Day (October 18) by donating toiletries and period products to the safe house in Thanet run by the Medaille Trust.

The Trust supports survivors of human trafficking and modern day slavery and the safe house in Thanet is exclusively for women and children, currently housing 12 women with their very young children, most of whom were born after the beginning of the Covid pandemic.

The recently appointed safe house manager had contacted SI Thanet to say that the women were very short of toiletries, so club members donated two bags full of shower gel, shampoo and deodorants.

Club member Debbie sourced three bags full of period products and everything was handed over to Ella, a member of staff at Medaille, who was delighted with the donation.

Club members have promised to continue donating items to the women at the safe house to support them in their journey to rebuild lives for themselves and their children after their escape from abuse.

JAN TEBBETT, SI THANET



The Croydon Schools Education Programme was also presented and is a new initiative supporting vulnerable young people in Croydon who are at risk of exclusion, expulsion, social isolation or already in alternative education.

HELEN MANGAN, PAO, SI CROYDON

## Webinar held with Award Winning Author Speaking on Safeguarding

THE SIGBI SAFEGUARDING Network hosted a webinar on November 24 during National Adult Safeguarding Week (November 21-27) with an open invitation to all Soroptimists interested in Safeguarding.

It was an opportunity for Soroptimists from across the UK to come together to raise awareness of important safeguarding issues. The aim was to highlight key safeguarding issues, start conversations and raise awareness of safeguarding best practice. So as an organisation we can all be better together.

Twenty-nine Soroptimists attended the webinar which was well represented by our Region with 13 members including, Carol McKeough, Regional Safeguarding Officer, four Club Safeguarding leads and eight members interested in safeguarding issues.



The guest speaker was Christina Gabbitas, an award-winning novelist who has written books to help safeguard children, which in turn helps parents and grandparents understand the issues too. Read more about Christina at [www.christinagabbitas.com](http://www.christinagabbitas.com)

Christina told us how she likes to promote learning with fun! All her books have an educational element. Topics include pollination, healthy food, plastic pollution, teamwork, mathematical terms, history and safeguarding. The focus of the webinar was on her work in safeguarding and particularly two of her books:

- Share Some Secrets is a picture, rhyming, audio and paperback book (age 5-8) addressing the difference between good and troublesome secrets. Share Some Secrets is a book that encourages children to think about the secrets they should and should not keep, encouraging them to speak out to a teacher or ChildLine without fear by giving praise.

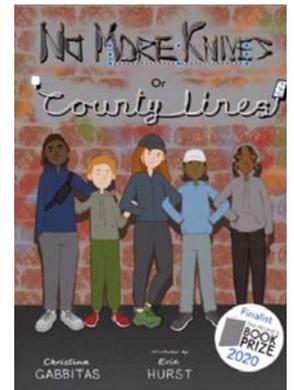


We teach our children to look out when crossing the road and we teach them to swim to keep them safe in the water. We should be educating our children about not keeping secrets that would be better shared and give them the confidence to speak out. We do not want children to harbour secrets that will have a detrimental effect on the rest of their lives.

Research shows there are no books for Children aged five to eight that subtly address the issue of possible abuse. It would be good if there was a Share Some Secrets book in every child/school/home setting for children to read freely and read along with the audio. The story will be very helpful for parents, carers and teachers alike. The story is available to download free via [www.sharesomesecrets.com](http://www.sharesomesecrets.com)

- No More Knives or County Lines – A comic strip style story about a group of friends groomed into county lines who suffer the consequences of carrying a knife. Christina has been working in partnership with Humberside Police and North

Yorkshire Police within Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in schools – funded by North Yorkshire Police Fire & Crime Commissioner and Humberside Police & Crime Commissioner. Go to [www.nomoreknifecrime.com](http://www.nomoreknifecrime.com) to learn more about Christina's project.



The talk was well received by all with positive feedback. Members were keen to follow up with utilising some of the resources in local projects they are involved with. We also heard about work that SI Yorkshire are doing to develop a leaflet for grandparents concerned about safeguarding and their grand-children.

The Webinar was recorded and will be available for those who were unable to attend and wishing to hear about Christina's work on safeguarding.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## 'Encouraging Newer Members' Webinar

A ZOOM WEBINAR with the theme 'Encouraging New Members' was held on November 23. This was hosted by our Region Secretary, Carol Reed. There were Soroptimists from the South East England Region, including newer members from SI Bromley, Canterbury and Croydon. The word had got out on social media about the webinar, and we were also joined by six members from two Midlands Regions and Dishy Attwood, Director of Membership.

Carol highlighted the many reasons for becoming a Soroptimist but guessed the main two would be to take part in programme action and to make friends. These would also have been the reasons when our organisation began 101 years ago in 1921. She questioned how we would thrive as an organisation without those who come forward to take office at all levels?

International President Maureen Maguire was unable to join us as she was celebrating her birthday. However, she had recorded responses to questions put forward by Carol about her journey as a Soroptimist. Janet Garnons-Williams, Past Federation President, and Past and Present Regional Presidents talked about their own Soroptimist journey.

- Taking on an officer role within the club such as Club President can be a start of the journey.

- However, some clubs run without a president at all, but all clubs need a Secretary, Programme Action Officer and Treasurer.
- Volunteering for one of these officer roles, which could be a job share, helps you learn more about our organisation and helps to keep all the wheels turning.

- The role of a mentor is key as they are always there to guide and encourage the individual to consider opportunities at club, region, federation and international level.

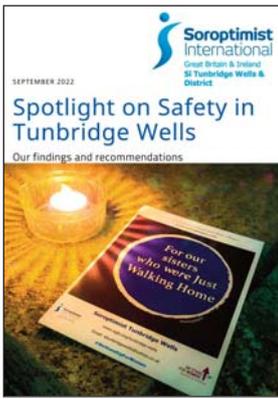
On reflection, it was interesting that no one mentioned ambition or, when asked by Keji Moses, no one had a plan for going forward.

The online seminar was a good starting point, and to follow up those newer members to explore and develop how the Regional Executive can nurture, help and encourage these members to take office and grow.

The webinar was recorded and so any other members who were unable to attend then should contact either Carol Reed or Lorna Blackmore.

Watch this space as the conversation and journey has only just started...

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



## Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells' update on their Safety Survey 'A Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells'

IN MARCH 2022 the Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist Group launched a survey to collect reliable, evidence-based information about how safe women and girls feel in the town of Tunbridge Wells and surrounding areas with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement and raising awareness of the issue.

The findings of the survey and consequent recommendations were compiled in a report which has been distributed to a number of agencies and services including:-

- The Town Forum
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Tunbridge Wells and Kent Police
- Friends groups of all Tunbridge Wells parks
- Member of Parliament for Tunbridge Well
- The local press
- A Soroptimist Club in Wales who asked for further information
- SIGBI UKPAC who contacted us via Facebook.

We have had follow up meetings with Tunbridge Wells Police and the local Community Safety Unit, plus the Clerk to our local Commons Conservators.

We have also engaged with Greg Clark, the MP for Tunbridge Wells and a local organisation who organised a Reclaim the Night Walk which the club participated in on November, 25, the start of the UN #16Days of Activism against gender- based violence.

### Kent Police and Community Safety Partnership

The discussion focussed on the following:

- police presence in potential "hot spots", seeking to establish
  - o their deployment strategy
  - o barriers to increased effectiveness
  - o responses to issues raised
- attitude of the police when incidents are reported, aiming to understand
  - o what training is given to front line officers
  - o how culture change is to be achieved
- the role of the police in education
  - o plans in place or being developed to reach young people

In our discussions with MP Greg Clark we would like to report the following which Region may find of interest

- GC gave an update on his Bill which seeks to make sexual harassment in public an aggravated crime.
  - o It was initially presented as a Private Member's Bill in the summer when it was approved for a second reading (which involves a debate in Parliament), now scheduled for December 09.
  - o Harassment on the grounds of race or sexuality is already an aggravated crime but not gender, something which this Bill will correct if passed.
  - o GC anticipates there will be two points of controversy:-
    - It will criminalise what is nothing more than harmless banter
    - It places an additional burden on the police who are already overstretched

- o Since the presentation of the Bill in the summer consultation has taken place with the Home Office to collect data to support its progress.
- o We also urged our MP to consider issues relating to public transport , CCTV and Education in Schools

It was agreed that the meeting had been useful and the dialogue should be continued and we now have a Zoom meeting scheduled for the December 08 to continue our discussions. Our meetings with Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservators focused on discussion around foliage maintenance, dark spaces and the funding of lighting.

### We have received the following statement Greg Clark MP

"I am very grateful to the Soroptimists for their work on this report. The findings are of course very worrying, it is not OK that women do not feel safe in their town. It doesn't matter whether those feelings of fear are perceived or from experience, either way, women should not need to take precautions to do the same things that men take for granted. One of the first areas where I can take positive action, is to make public sexual harassment an offence. My private members bill due shortly to have its second reading on December 09 will, when it is passed, give the Police new powers to treat this unacceptable behaviour as a crime and send a strong message to those that think intimidating women this way that it is not. I will continue to do all that I can to ensure that Tunbridge Wells is a place where women feel safe."

In addition we conducted a public presentation and Q&A session with our local Town Forum, President Caroline and Soroptimist Jill Ruddock gave a summary of the findings and recommendations of our report and hosted a Q&A session with representatives from the Police, the Community Safety Unit and the Business Crime Manager, Safe Town Partnership.

Our report was distributed to 68 friends groups, organisations and resident associations, leader of the local council and other councillors.

The full report, together with the original template is available for download from the SI Tunbridge Wells website and we do hope this report and the comments above may be of use should any other club wish to pursue support for ending #VAWG within their area of local engagement. A Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT, AND JILL RUDDOCK SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



Above: Caroline Auckland and Jill Ruddock present the report to Inspector Jones of Kent Police (Tunbridge Wells) and Community Safety Officer Terry Hughes.

Left: Jill with Terry and Inspector Jones, examining the annotated town map of areas of concern, reported by the survey respondents.



# Federation Consultative Council Report from FCC Jan Doyle

## Report from the Meeting of the Board of Directors, October 26, 2022

UNFORTUNATELY, I WAS unable to attend the Belfast Conference this year but through the wonders of technology I was able to be at the board meeting held just prior to the start of conference.

### Directors

- The Directors at the meeting were
  - Cathy Cottridge President
  - Ruth Healey President Elect
  - Reena Bhanatha Director of Finance
  - Giselle Davies Director of Governance
  - Dishi Attwood Director of Membership
  - Anne Rogers Director of PR, Marketing and Communications
  - Lindsey Green Director of Programme
- As were the retiring directors Chevonne Agana, Nisha Ghosh, Sylvia Watson, and Kay Richmond.
- From my laptop it was good to see a live meeting taking place with my fellow members of the FCC at the meeting and those who, like me, had to join the meeting virtually.

### Updates from previous meeting

- SIGBI Conferences in 2023 and 2024 will take place in London and Edinburgh, using smaller and cheaper venues.
- There is a very real risk of breaches of copyright by clubs using unauthorised material in their websites or social media. Legal action has recently been taken against a club and the situation is that it is the club's own responsibility to ensure they are compliant with copyright law. Training on this topic will soon be on offer to clubs.
- Since the Board Meeting, Anne Rogers has confirmed that the training will be on December 01, and she has also told me that if clubs were unable to send a representative to that meeting, the training will be available on YouTube – and she will confirm details. If it is not too long, it might be a good idea to show the YouTube clip at a future Region meeting.

### The Hub

- Work is nearing completion on a new SIGBI database, to be known as the Hub, to replace the Membership and Programme databases we now use on the website. The Hub has a far greater functionality than the current website, including offering the ability to email all members direct, and has great potential for improving communications.
- Watch this space!

### Governance

- A wide range of very practical guidance documents have been produced to support many club activities, including running online meetings, health and safety, avoiding money laundering, partnerships, due diligence, safeguarding and volunteers.
- The Club and Region Constitutions and role specifications are under active review.

### SIGBI Name Change

- A proposal had been received to change the name of SIGBI in a way that acknowledges the breadth of the Federation.
- A working party of members from across the Federation was established and they agreed that the name of the Federation is in many ways an anachronism.
- Some alternatives were suggested but the Board was of the view that now is not the time to act, given that reviews are taking place of SIGBI and SI itself, a change could be both premature and expensive.

### E Club

- The Board were pleased that the first E club is now up and running; it has been a long journey to get to this point. (Members from this region may remember that our region and Southern England tried to form an e-club many years ago).
- The Director of Membership has reviewed the types of membership SIGBI offers.
- Linked membership seems to have outlived its usefulness, as it was primarily offered to women who could not, for some reason, regularly attend meetings. As this requirement no longer holds, she does not consider that this form of membership should be offered but a decision on this type of membership is yet to be made. The role of Associate Membership is less clear. Women apply for Associate Membership for a variety of reasons, and only a small minority attend the quarterly meetings held by the Director of Membership. It has not worked to bring Associate Members into full Membership, as was the original intention.

### Social Media

- A social media agency, Quarterpillar, has been retained to produce social media materials to support external marketing. The first two have been released, with the rest to come over the next six months.

### Best Programme Awards

- The Director and Assistant Directors of Programme have spent a great deal of time choosing the winners of the Best Programme Awards. Clubs are reminded not to restrict themselves to just one programme area on the report forms, but to identify as many of the SDGs as are relevant.

### Federation Council Reports

- The reports to the Board from the Federation Consultative Councillors show that a growing number of Regions are finding it difficult to get officers.
- There is increasing use of Forums eg Membership Forums, but no evidence to date that they have improved recruitment or retention, although it may be too early to tell.
- The format of the FCC reports is being actively reviewed and may well change.

## Soroptimists Fill 83 Shoeboxes for Christmas Appeal



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists took part in the Blythwood Christmas Shoe Box Appeal this year. Weeks before work was underway in preparation by sourcing and wrapping shoeboxes, shopping for essential items from the checklist and some members were busy knitting hats, scarves and gloves.

Angela Howe kindly hosted nine members at her home one evening providing us with supper before we got down to business. All the fillers donated by members were set out and boxes passed along ensuring items appropriate to age and gender went into each shoebox.

We had set ourselves a target to fill 75 shoeboxes so were really pleased that we achieved 83 On the night.

These were all loaded up into a member's car, filling it to the brim ready to be taken to the Collection Point in Gillingham the next morning.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists have supported the Shoe Box Appeal for more than 20 years. Shoeboxes from across the UK will be distributed to Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine in time for Christmas.

Over half a million shoeboxes have been donated in the last five years and given to people in need.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

**Meeting of the SISEE Region  
Saturday December 03, 2022  
10:00 to 12:30 via Zoom**

**Guest Speaker**  
SI President Maureen Maquire  
*'Opening Doors to a Bright Future'*

Attendance requires a minimum donation of £5  
to the Region President's project  
The Girls' Network

**Dates of Future Meetings in 2023**  
March 18  
June 24  
September 23

## Soroptimists Volunteering at the Shoebox Collection Point



IN OCTOBER, MEDWAY and Maidstone Soroptimists were contacted by Blythwood Care to confirm the location of the Collection Point for London and the South East. This was at Lok'n'Store in Gillingham and would be open from October 27 until December. 16. They were looking for volunteers to assist with checking shoeboxes as Customs Regulations require Blythwood Care to do this.

Five members including one of our new members volunteered to work shifts of 2-3 hours primarily on checking the shoeboxes. After checking each box then the Blythwood Care volunteer adds a Bible storybook for children, a book for teenagers or a calendar with Bible verses for adults.

One member chose to work in the cartoning section, making up cartons and filling each with up to 10 shoeboxes before sealing and labelling ready to be transported. The shoeboxes from this Collection Point would be taken to Serbia and Romania.

On November 24, two Soroptimists were asked to assist a team of volunteers with the loading of 395 cartons consisting of more than 3500 shoeboxes onto the lorry to go to Serbia. This was done successfully and means they will arrive in Serbia in plenty of time to be distributed before Christmas.

In the first month that the Collection Point has been operational the five Soroptimist volunteers have worked more than 87 hours between them.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

