

## President Lynne's message

### Educate to Empower and Enable



I AM DELIGHTED to have been invited to be your President and it is a real honour to be in the company of so many exceptional women.

Having spent a large part of my career teaching and managing in schools, colleges and university, and with a strong focus on the education and training of women and girls, you won't be surprised to hear that my theme for

the coming year is 'Educate to Empower and Enable'. It is of course a basis for our Soroptimist vision and in accordance with SDG 4 Quality Education. It is also SI President Maureen McGuire's theme in "Opening Doors to a Bright Future".

As well as inviting speakers on different aspects of education during the year, I would like to promote some of the excellent projects within our region focusing on the education of women and girls in the UK and abroad.

I would also like to have a Regional Project that supports the impressive work of The Girls Network (TGN), a charity that works to inspire and empower girls aged 13-19 by connecting girls with mentors and a network of professional women. TGN currently mentor 1200 girls across the UK and 110 of these are in our Region. TGN's work is a perfect fit with Soroptimism in helping a girl develop her potential through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities.

I have been mentoring with TGN since 2019 and have enjoyed seeing mentees progress through their programme towards goals they never thought they would achieve. The Regional Manager for the South of England will be a speaker at our December Regional Meeting on Zoom and she will also bring along a girl who has been through the mentoring scheme to talk about her experience. SI President Maureen will also be talking about her education theme at the same Zoom meeting.

TGN would love to invite Soroptimists to become mentors and this can be undertaken online if there is not a school or college in your area. As Soroptimists we have so much to offer given our lifetimes of experience and skills.

I would also like to ask Clubs to try and raise £100 during the year to provide an inspirational book gift to every girl who completes the mentoring scheme in our Region. Each book would contain a bookplate stating it was given by SISEE. This would be presented at the celebration events when the girls become Ambassadors for the TGN and our work as Soroptimists would be recognised.

Outgoing Regional President Yvonne will be a very hard act to follow but I am really looking forward to getting to know everyone when I visit Clubs during my year and finding out more about the excellent PA being undertaken.

Lynne Chiswick  
SISEE Region President 2022-2023

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# East Grinstead Club supports CREW



THE AIM OF CREW 'Challenging Recreational Experience' Weekend is to promote positive rehabilitation of children and young people cared for in Peanut Ward at Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) East Grinstead.

Many of the children who take part in the annual weekend camp are severely scarred from burns and plastic surgery injuries, as well as birth defects. Children with burn scars often require numerous operations throughout their childhood and into their late teens. The skin has to be cut and grafted to ensure the scarred area meets the changing size of the young person. Some are able to cover their scars with clothes and are only willing to expose their scars to others when participating in activities such as canoeing and swimming.

The camp on the Isle of Wight accommodates around 30 children and young people aged between seven and 16 years. QVH Charity, the charity dedicated to supporting the hospital, has to raise £8,000 every year to fund this camp. CREW is run by QVH staff and past patients who are now too old to attend but come as volunteers. The volunteer team also have the support of East and West Sussex firefighters.

The children attending do not have to pay anything to attend ensuring that this vital camp is open to everyone. East Grinstead Club has been funding one participant on the weekend for a number of years but Covid has meant a two year break in the activity. This year, however, the camp has been able to take place once again and the impact it has had on the participants has been tremendous. The following is an extract from a report written by one of the nurses on Peanut Ward who organises the event each year.

"After two years of CREW being on hold, we set off for an amazing weekend, the volunteers as excited as the children. As well as all the usual challenging activities – climbing, archery, beach fun and zip wire etc – we introduced a 'Diamond Jubilee' biscuit decorating competition. By bedtime on Friday night they were buzzing on red, white and blue icing, all that sugar!

"To see these young people overcome their fears, not dwelling on their disabilities and putting 120% into every activity, however tricky for them as individuals, was both awesome and humbling.

"To watch a child with only one strong hand do the 'leap of faith' twenty feet in the air was utterly amazing with lots of wet eyes both adults and children. To hear them discussing and helping each other to make sense of their fears and feelings and the camaraderie and encouragement is fabulous.

"These young ones have so many hurdles to overcome one way and another and to witness them spending three days just being kids, not paying heed to their injuries and disabilities is truly priceless."

We are delighted to be able to contribute to this life-changing experience for these young people, all the more so since Margaret Duncombe MBE, a founder member of the Club and chosen in SIGBI's centenary year to be celebrated as an Outstanding Soroptimist, was instrumental in opening the Peanut Ward with a private room allowing parents to stay with their children.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## Banu's Turkish Breakfast



BROMLEY MEMBER BANU Dagada with help from her daughter (see photo on page 01), showed us how to put on a fundraising event within a couple of days of returning to the UK to collect great GCSE exam results!

It was not as hot as Turkey had been, but still hot by this summer's standards as we gathered for a Turkish breakfast, joined by Mary from Sevenoaks Club who had introduced Banu to SI.

What a spread we enjoyed with lots of laughter, peels off the tree, homemade deserts and catching up on all the summer news. £125 was raised towards Club charities this year.

A big thank you to Banu for her hospitality from us all and lots of good luck wishes to her daughter as she enters 6th form focussing on the sciences!

MARY DALMAN, SI BROMLEY



## Thank You to Talking News Volunteers



FROM LEFT: Liz Duckworth, Jenny Jones, Wanda Wright, and Barbara Fisher

KENT ASSOCIATION FOR the Blind (KAB) held a Get Together Talking News lunch on September 02 at the Lenham Community Centre. Nine Soroptimist members (see below) attended the lunch joining other volunteers. This was to say a big thank you to all those who had volunteered for Talking News over the years. Soroptimists from SI Medway and Maidstone had been involved for a major part of the 45 years that KAB had provided this service. The Talking News service finished earlier this year due to falling levels of need following advances in technology.

KAB have a new Mobile Sight Centre, called Iris, which was parked up at the community centre on the day to support service users in the area. We were able to look around Iris which has been developed to help KAB reach many more people across the county and surrounding areas. It is packed with useful equipment, resources and technology.

The vehicle can travel around the county to rural communities, schools, summer fairs, libraries, fundraising events and more. Iris and its staff and volunteers provide help and advice to existing clients with a sight impairment, new clients and the general public.

This is an excellent resource to improve health and wellbeing as Iris raises awareness of the importance of good eye health, including having regular eye tests.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



FROM LEFT: Jenny Jones, Liz Duckworth, Angela Howe, Wanda Wright, Pat Varty, Barbara Fisher, Lesley Rich and Jane Barnes



## UNiTE Campaign

ON SEPTEMBER 13, SI Sevenoaks September club meeting highlighted the following important days in the Soroptimist calendar: UN Literacy Day and the launch of The UNiTE campaign to Stop Violence against Women.

Members, potential members and guests were enthused and energised by an action packed meeting celebrating UN Literacy Day with speakers from the Coram Beanstalk charity and Sevenoaks Youth Forum. The UNiTE campaign proclaiming the 25th day of each month as Orange Day was launched by Penny Robbins, Regional Programme Action Officer, in the business meeting section of the evening.

Margaret Crabtree spoke eloquently about her work as a reader helper for the Coram Beanstalk charity, followed by Katie Willis member of Sevenoaks Council Youth Forum speaking on the effects of the pandemic on learning during lockdown. The talks led to very lively discussion. The speakers were thanked by Margaret Nicholson, club treasurer.



Penny Robbins gave a powerful introduction to the UNiTE campaign tracking its beginnings and the reasons for UKPAC launching their initiative of wearing badges stating Soroptimists say NO to Violence Against Women, distributing posters in public places and handing out post card size publicity. Each person attending collected a badge to wear as an aid to raising awareness. Orange teddies graced the evening with some already distributed to young girls who have been traumatised by witnessing violence.

ISOBEL GROVES, PROGRAMME ACTION OFFICER, SI SEVENOAKS







## Canterbury Soroptimist receives Make a Difference Award

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS IN Kent have been honoured in an award scheme run by the BBC.

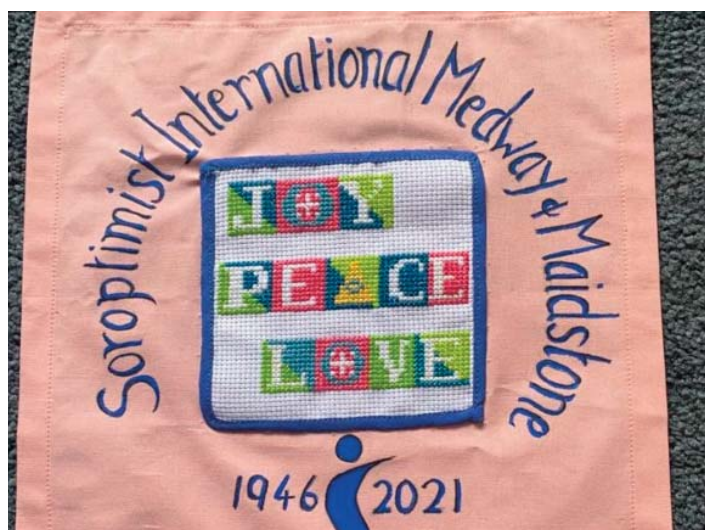
Make a Difference was set up at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. It was a virtual notice board for those who could offer support, and those who needed it.

On Monday, September 26, at the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel, the Make a Difference Awards celebrated local heroes who have been working tirelessly to improve their local communities.

Janice Tebbett, supported by SI Canterbury, was the recipient of a Highly Commended Award for making a difference in the community by volunteering for a good cause.

KEJI MOSES, SI CANTEBURY

## Patches of for SI San Fernando's 60th Anniversary



THIS YEAR SI SAN Fernando in Trinidad and Tobago celebrate their 60th anniversary of charter. Their theme for the year is 'Celebrating the Past, Pursuing a Peaceful Future for Women and Girls'.

Clubs received an invitation to join them in celebrating this milestone by contributing to a commemorative 'Patches of Peace' Patchwork Sheet which will be made of patches of fabric from clubs around the Federation.

A request went out to our Medway and Maidstone members to see if we had any skilled and creative seamstresses that could design something to meet the guidelines given.

Julia Search volunteered to start sewing a 'peace' design on a patch of fabric 12" x 12" square. Wanda Wright then offered to write our name and insert the Soroptimist logo round the outside. The photograph shows the finished result for the Medway and Maidstone 'Patch of Peace'.

The patch is to be taken to the Belfast Conference and given to Membership Director Chevonne Agana to take back to Trinidad.

Carol Reed from SI Canterbury has also designed and sewn a Patch of Peace which she brought to Region and which Jane Barnes has agreed to take to Belfast.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



### Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News  
Monday, October 24, 2022

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



# SI East Grinstead celebrate 60 years of service

## Sixty Glorious Years



IN 1962 whilst the world held its breath over the Cuban Missile crisis and The Beatles released their first single, Soroptimist International of East Grinstead was born.

Today, 60 years later, the Club is flourishing with 33 members and playing an active role in the local community, as well as supporting projects overseas.

This year's President, Sue Darney (below), has overseen a weekend of celebration with a Tree planting on Friday, September 23, followed next day by a Celebratory Dinner.

For a period of two weeks spanning the celebration weekend, a display illustrating the history and work of the Club appeared in the window of East Grinstead Library (see above).

The dinner was held at the Ashdown Forest Golf Club and we were honoured to welcome the Mayor of East Grinstead, Councillor Adam Peacock, SIGBI President Cathy Cottridge (who cut the celebration cake), President Caroline Auckland of our Mother Club Tunbridge Wells, and both South East Region President, Yvonne Freeman and President Elect, Lynne Chiswick.

The room was beautifully decorated with floral displays prepared by a Club member. Elegant and attractive programmes, produced by the Club's Art Group, adorned each guest's place (see below) alongside silver-painted pine cones holding the place names.

During the course of the evening the name of every former Club President was read out and those who were in attendance stood to enthusiastic applause. Shirley Tricker (1982-1983) and Betty Deller (1983-1984) were the earliest Past Presidents who were able to attend. As each decade was mentioned a candle was lit at the top table.

Before leaving for home each guest was given an organza gift bag of fudge hand-made by a Club member.

This was definitely a weekend to remember and we look forward to celebrating our next milestone in 10 years' time.

ROSEMARY STONE SI EAST GRINSTEAD



## Anniversary Tree Planting



WHEN WE STARTED planning events for our Diamond Jubilee we decided that we would combine our celebrations with a project inaugurated for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. We were going to help form the 'Green Canopy'.

Anne Richards took charge of some Lime saplings and nurtured them carefully, which was quite a task during the long, hot, dry summer. They survived the extreme conditions and steadily started to grow and branch out. Jane Griffiths liaised with Mr David Mills MBE, the owner of the British Wildlife Centre in Lingfield, to provide a suitable planting area. Mr Mills kindly agreed and a space was secured.

The date was set for Friday, September 23. The very deep holes had been dug by the staff at the Wildlife Centre – for which we were so grateful as it would have been a mammoth task to excavate holes of the necessary dimensions ourselves! Once again the weather was whimsical and this time the heavens opened and torrential rain poured down upon the fields of the Centre. Nonetheless, four intrepid Soroptimists, two Soroptimisters, and Mr Mills arrived at the scene. It was hard work but under Anne's expert guidance the four Lime trees were planted, protected from marauding rabbits and deer, and without any need for watering!

Our efforts will now combine with the National Trust's plans to establish 20 million trees by the year 2030 to create a strong natural defence against the climate crisis, the project to create a 'green canopy' and our own very special 60th birthday celebrations.

SUE DARNEY, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



Top Table Guests from left: Caroline Auckland, The Mayor, Sue Darney, Cathy Cottridge, Yvonne Freeman.





# Soroptimist South East England Region 63rd Annual General Meeting President Yvonne's final meeting



THE REGION AGM held on September 24 was the final meeting for Yvonne Freeman as Regional President.

Yvonne opened the meeting with the sad news that Grace Onions, Immediate Past President, had sadly passed the previous day. (See tribute to Grace on page 08.) A minute's silence was held to remember Grace and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who had passed away on September 08.

Mike Pitney then joined the meeting to accept crutches and wheelchairs, collected by members to aid the injured in Ukraine. He gave an update on the work of the Kent Fire and Rescue Service in supporting the situation in Ukraine through the delivery of firefighting equipment. (See update on page 07.)

Yvonne gave a PowerPoint presentation to highlight her year as Regional President and this was followed by the AGM and the appointment of three new officers: Sue Edgar, as Vice President, Jane Barnes as Communications Job Share with Jacalyn Wood, Yvonne Freeman as Regional Representative and Trustee of the Benevolent Fund.

The change of insignia then took place and incoming President Lynne Chiswick thanked Yvonne for her year as President, noting her achievements in line with her theme 'Healthy People – Healthy Planet'. She then presented Yvonne with a gift.

President Lynne spoke about her theme for the year, 'Educate to Empower and Enable' and her proposals for a Regional Project of mentoring girls aged 13–19 by working with the charity The Girls' Network (TGN).

After lunch we were joined by Federation President Cathy Cottridge, who shared her vision for the Federation moving forwards. She said how much she was looking forward to welcoming SIGBI members at the forthcoming Annual Conference in Belfast.

Finally, Cathy presented four long-service badges and certificates (see photo top right).



From left: Vice-President Sue Edgar, President-Elect Alison Driscoll, President Lynne Chiswick and Immediate Past President Yvonne Freeman.



President Cathy Cottridge speaking at Region and celebrating members long service and work on SDG Goals

FEDERATION PRESIDENT CATHY Cottridge joined the afternoon session of the Regional meeting on September 24.

She spoke frankly about the Strategy and Vision for the future of the organisation:

*We are looking at strategies for increasing active membership whilst reducing the demographic age profile with the creation of e-clubs, school clubs and new smaller hubs.*

*We need to ensure that the programme work reflects the Charitable purpose and supports the United Nations 5Ps (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, Partnerships) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

*We have also explored strategies for developing and raising awareness of the amazing advocacy work of clubs across the country.*

President Cathy presented a long service certificate to Janet Garnons-Williams (SI Medway and Maidstone) for her 40 years of service, and 25-year badges and certificates to Hilary Rowberry (SI East Grinstead) and to Fiona Holmes and Denise Staplehurst (SI Eastbourne).

Later that day, President Cathy attended SI East Grinstead's 60th Anniversary Dinner (see page 05).

## President's Handover



President Yvonne presents the President's Chain to Incoming President Lynne Chiswick.

## Contributions from Immediate Past President Yvonne Freeman, and Jane Barnes, Communications



## The growing collection of crutches for Ukraine

FOLLOWING THE CALL for crutches for Ukraine by Mike Pitney from Kent Fire and Rescue Service at our June Regional Meeting, Tunbridge Wells Club put a message on our Facebook page requesting crutches.



We were delighted when the Tunbridge Wells Hospital plaster room contacted us with news of some excess medical aid we could collect. After we visited the hospital and collected the crutches they were very kindly stored for us at the local Ukraine Relief Group until we could take them to the next regional meeting in September.

The Ukraine Relief Group run a support service for Ukrainians who are guests in Tunbridge

Wells and also pack up aid to send out in convoys to Ukraine and Poland. The building has been provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Tunbridge Wells Club have actively supported the group with aid and female volunteer hours, and we are very grateful for the community support.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



## Another successful Croydon

### Quiz Night

IT'S THE FIRST time in over two years since we got together on this scale for our popular Quiz and Curry Night.

Croydon Club has organised a Quiz and Curry Night for a number of years and though we did a Curry takeaway evening during the pandemic, we missed the fun and competitiveness of club and regional members getting together in person.

Danae Bird, (Sheila's friend), was Question Master yet again and did a great job, ably assisted by Sheila's husband, Manoj on technology, recording the marks for each round.

Whilst we only had 36 participants this year, mainly made-up by the excellent turnout in particular from Bromley and East Grinstead clubs, and despite the increased costs, the Quiz raised £354. Also thanks to the generosity of all the participants who also purchased raffle tickets, takeaway quizzes and leftover curry dishes to take home! Even those not keen on curry seemed to happily tuck into it!

This year's fundraising by the club having reached our initial target of £1000 will go towards our president's project to provide self-defence courses for women, particularly those in Croydon and Bromley Women's Aid.

SHEILA PATEL, SI CROYDON

## Southborough Lions Art & Crafts Fair



DURING THE WARM, dry August bank holiday weekend, Tunbridge Wells took a stall at the Southborough Lions Arts & Craft Fair.

Joining local artists and crafters we promoted Soroptimism and sold handmade bags, pincushions, bunting, keyrings, plant pots and other items all made by club members. We were delighted to raise £130 which will be used for supporting poverty projects.

Pictured are Martha Naish and Angela McPherson behind the stall during a visit by the Mayor of Southborough Cllr Dianne Hill and the President of Southborough and District Lions Club Christine Forbes.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

## Willow Weaving and Toilet Twinning

MEMBER KATHLEEN LYNCH-Howard represented Tunbridge Wells Club when she joined volunteers in Grosvenor & Hilbert Park to work on the Willow Tunnel feature. Weaving new growth into the structure, excess growth was pruned. The tunnel is taking on an established shape which local children and dogs enjoy racing through.



Kathleen was also able to present the Chair of the Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park, Carolyn Gray, with their toilet twinning certificate. This has been made possible by the installation of a rubbish bin for the collection of aluminium cans in the park. This continues the Tunbridge Wells Toilet Twinned Town project.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS







## Grace Onions

IT IS WITH great sadness we report that our dear friend and fellow Soroptimist Grace Onions passed away peacefully on September 23, 2022, at the age of just 56, following a diagnosis of cancer less than a year ago.

Grace was not just a member of SI Croydon and District Club, she was a force to be reckoned with! She was not afraid to tackle any challenge thrown at her, and actually make things happen. Grace was a dedicated environmentalist, tackling climate change and finding innovative ways of raising awareness on the issues of nappy recycling. She was a member of the Green Party, and stood for election locally. She joined many organisations to move the agenda of climate change forward, even to the extent of lying down in front of a tree in the street to stop it from being felled!

She went to COP26 in November 2021 to join representatives campaigning outside the conference building. She said that the protest of over 100,000 citizens from all over the world on a wet and windy November day in Glasgow clearly showed the strength of feeling of desperation at the inaction of so many governments.

She organised her time to benefit so many different causes and charities, and in the process making life better for many people. During her two years as President of SI Croydon she raised funds for, and also raised awareness of both the Women's Environmental Network and the Croydon Churches' Floating Shelter for the Homeless.

Grace walked in stilettos for Croydon community against trafficking, and also did a 25km Thames Bridges trek to raise funds for the mental health charity Mind. She was a member of RHS, and regularly took part in, and also organised, litter picking events.

Soroptimism gave Grace the platform to push her climate change agenda forward.

She served as Club president for two consecutive years, 2016 and 2017, and presided over the 90th birthday celebration. She also served as Membership officer, Club secretary and was Regional President in 2021-2022.

A special human being, who was full of life, and made a huge difference to the people she met. She always made time for everyone and shared her laughter and zest for life, usually accompanied by a bottle of prosecco. Grace made a huge contribution to so many in such a short space of time. She will be missed by many.

HEATHER BAILEY, SI CROYDON

