

## President Lynne's message

### Educate to Empower and Enable



WHAT A STRANGE year we have all lived through once again and it's incredible to believe we are nearing the end of 2022.

Despite the challenges of this year our Region has continued to carry out important programme action for women and girls, their families and communities.

We have also managed to increase our membership numbers which is important for the future of our Region. So thank you to everyone for your ongoing efforts.

It was good to see the growing attention given to the UN's 16 days of activism to eliminate violence against women and girls recently.

I took part in two events: SI Canterbury's Silent March in November and SI Eastbourne & District's Silent Vigil on December 04 (see page 02). They were both moving and important events to show our solidarity with other organisations in opposing violence to women and girls and also helping raise local awareness about our role as Soroptimists in supporting the UN campaign.

I was back again in Canterbury this month and really enjoyed the Christmas Lunch with Carols from the Canterbury Cathedral Choristers. Organised by Carol Reed and members from SI Canterbury at the Kings School, the event helped raise funds for Save the Children Fund (see page 02).

At our recent Region Meeting, SI President Maureen Maguire gave an excellent presentation on the importance of education for women and girls and spoke about her amazing international projects in five different countries. I know our Clubs will be contributing to her SI educational appeal in December to help fund these projects.

She also reminded us that January 24, 2023 is the International Day of Education and how we should all try to improve educational opportunities for someone who needs it.

Maureen sent me a very nice email after our Region Meeting saying that she was amazed at the work that is being carried out by our Clubs and how informative and inspiring our Region Newsletter is. She also made a personal donation to our Regional Project fund for books for The Girls' Network.

I am very much looking forward to visiting clubs for meetings and events over the coming months and send my very best wishes to everyone for a happy and healthy 2023.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SEE REGION PRESIDENT

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



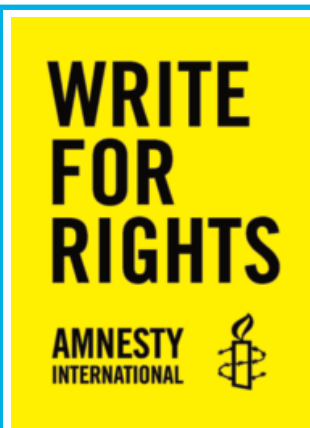
Orange Town Hall clock to support vigil, page 02.



Final day of 'Orange the World' page 02.



Eastbourne's Tree Planting Project page 04.



Letter writing to support Project Hope, page 04.



Boxes loaded and on way to Romania, page 05.



Happy New Year

## 'I Choose Freedom' Women's Refuge



AS IN PREVIOUS years, East Grinstead Club is again providing much needed gifts to 'I Choose Freedom' a women's refuge in Reigate, and Crawley Open House homeless centre. Once again Past President Sue Edgar set up a Christmas grotto in her garage where she received members' gifts and provided them with refreshments to ward off the cold. Handmade items were also available for sale, the proceeds going to Club charities.

It being the last day of Soroptimists' "Orange The World" project to end gender based violence, it was appropriate that Club members, some wearing something orange, dropped off donations for our local women's refuge.

The refuge provides a wish list of gifts for the women and children, including this year fluffy warm socks, hot water bottles, gloves and scarves for the mothers, and any new toys for the children. Wrapping paper and sellotape are also welcome so that the mothers can wrap the gifts they choose for their children. We support Open House throughout the year but at Christmas, in particular, they are pleased to receive women's and men's new socks and underwear.

In October three members were privileged to be able to visit Crawley Open House and view their new Resource Centre which, after more than four years' planning, was opened on July 05. The centre offers a range of facilities including the opportunity for anyone in need of practical or emotional support to drop in every weekday morning for a shower, some breakfast or to use the washing machines. An advice team is available for company and time to chat. The centre includes a training room with interactive white board and an engineering workshop where a programme of employability and life skills is provided in the afternoons.

These are two very worthwhile projects with which we are delighted to be associated, not only at Christmas but throughout the year.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



## Eastbourne Club supports UN's Campaign to end gender violence



Members of SI Eastbourne, Regional Vice President Sue Edgar from SI East Grinstead, and her dog Toby, met on a very cold evening on December 04 in front of Eastbourne Town Hall for a silent vigil in support of the UN's campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The clock on Eastbourne Town Hall was lit up in orange to support the UN theme.

Afterwards, we enjoyed a very welcome retreat at the home of Joint President Lucy McKeon, for warming mulled wine and refreshments.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SEE REGION PRESIDENT

## Christmas Carols at the Kings School, Canterbury



SI CANTERBURY, in partnership with Save the Children, hosted a Christmas Carols luncheon at the Kings School in Canterbury.

There were over 80 guests. We enjoyed a delightful three-course meal prepared by the Kings School kitchen staff, Carol singing by the Cathedral Boys Choir and Good Company.

Our Regional President, Lynne Chiswick, was accompanied by other representatives of Soroptimist clubs in the region.

We want to thank the Lord Mayor of Canterbury, Cllr Anne Dekker, for her support and participation in this event.

Opening and concluding remarks were made by our President Elect, Dawn Ryder. She perfectly expressed the essence of appreciation for all those who made the event a success.

A special thank you to Carol Reed for the organisation of the event.

We wish everyone a merry Christmas and a great new year.

KEJI MOSES, SI CANTERBURY



## East Grinstead pays tribute to Ann Kesteven



ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, a number of intrepid East Grinstead Soroptimists and Soroptimisters braved the elements, and the mud, at the British Wildlife Centre to plant a flowering Kanzan Cherry Tree in memory of Ann Kesteven a Club member who died earlier this year. In the spring, the tree bears plenty of bright pink blossom, Ann's favourite colour, and has open

flowers that are good for nectar and suitable for pollinators, especially bees.

The group also pruned fruit trees in the Community Orchard, as well as a native species hedge that they planted last year, the berries and blossom being of great benefit to wild life.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## Fundraising for International President's Appeal

AFTER THE DECEMBER Region meeting, Medway and Maidstone members gathered at Carol McKeough's home on the North Downs for her annual Christmas Soup kitchen event.

Sixteen of us attended, including some members who have not been able to attend any of our face-to-face meetings this year, plus a potential new member.

Carol Infanti (Membership Officer) was pleased to be able to present Jill Squires with her long service certificate marking 50 years as a Soroptimist

Amidst lots of chatter with Soroptimist friends we were able to tuck into some delicious homemade soups, fresh home-baked bread followed by an enticing selection of desserts to choose from.

All these foods had been made by members. Financial donations totalling £180 were made for the International



£180 raised for President's Appeal

President's Appeal – 'Opening Doors for a Bright Future' that we heard President Maureen Maguire talk about during the Regional meeting that morning to benefit women and girls across the five Federations.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



## Eastbourne's Tree Planting Project



DURING THE "100 Years of Soroptimists" celebration, members of Eastbourne Club took up the challenge to plant trees in a local area.

Programme Action Officer Claire Bell, recently visited the site with her grandchildren (seen above) to check on the trees.

We are all delighted that they are doing well.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE

## Hampden Park Christmas Fair



SI EASTBOURNE PRESIDENT, Pat Hearn, attended the Christmas Fair organised by the Hampden Park Area Panel for local stall holders to raise money for the Eastbourne Food Bank and a total of £760 was raised. Part of this fair involves a huge raffle which raised £200 with gifts presented by Tesco's, Morrisons and private individuals.

The fair was very successful and brought local people together on a cold winter morning, where they enjoyed the stalls and hot drinks and mince pies.

So, with the Bingo, over £1000 was raised for the Food Bank.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE

## Supporting Amnesty's 'Write for Rights'



ON A WET and cold weekend at the end of November, during the 16 Days of Action, Soroptimists Carol McKeough and Nellie Adjaye were on the Amnesty International stall at Aylesford Priory promoting the Write for Rights campaign.

Despite the weather, they were pleased to welcome visitors to the stall. This included some children with grandparents wanting to know more about the campaign. Some of the children took part in writing cards in support of the campaign and the photo below shows one of these cards.

For over 20 years, Amnesty International's annual Write for Rights campaign has transformed the lives of people such as anti-war protestors to environmental activists, whose rights have been wronged. Using the power of their words, Write for Rights supporters have united behind a common purpose 'together, we can change lives for the better'.

How the campaign works:

- People in more than 200 countries take part in all kinds of events Writing millions of letters, emails, tweets, and signing petitions.
- Supporting people who have been harassed, threatened and jailed just for who they are.
- Putting pressure on governments, leaders and decision-makers.
- Showing love and support for the people and their families.
- And making change happen – releasing activists and protecting people who stand up for change.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE





## Shoeboxes checked and all loaded for Serbia and Romania



AFTER SEVEN WEEKS of volunteering at the Shoebox Appeal Collection Point in Gillingham, all the shoeboxes had been checked, packed into cartons and were ready for loading.

On December 15, the final load with 606 cartons containing 5500 shoeboxes, plus clothes, shoes and blankets, were loaded onto the articulated lorry ready to be taken to five regions in Romania.

With the clearing up at the Collection Point, the surplus shoebox filler items needed to be sorted before everything could be closed down for 2022. Julia Search volunteered to take some items for the Refuges and Food banks, whilst other items, such as hats, gloves and toothbrushes, are being stored ready for the Soroptimists to fill shoeboxes in 2023.

Each of the Soroptimist volunteers received a thank you letter and certificate from Blythswood for supporting the Shoe Box Appeal, now in its 29th year. The need remains great for those whose lives are daily shaped by poverty, isolation and want.

It has been said by one of the volunteers that 'every shoebox is a smile.' Every gift in every box makes a difference. As useful as the items inside are, the beauty of shoebox gifts goes beyond this – each gift lets a person in need know that someone that they have never met before has thought about them and cares about them. Long after the toothpaste has been used up, the candles burned and socks grown out of, the hope and love conveyed by a shoebox goes on.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Lewes and Eastbourne Clubs working together



ONCE AGAIN THIS year the Eastbourne club joined with members of the Lewes club to help out with the Foster Carers Christmas party. Numbers were slightly down this year but everyone had a good time.

Gifts were provided by the Soroptimist clubs, and the families of children wrapped these up with the help of Soroptimists for their carers. There were also party games and a large tea.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE



## Christmas hampers to Refuges in Medway and Maidstone and Homeless Centre



Filling Christmas hampers

Christmas message to Homeless



Donated gifts from Morrisons



Carol McKeough delivers hamper



Angela Howe delivers hampers

EACH CHRISTMAS, MEDWAY and Maidstone Soroptimists fill hampers for the local refuge support services. This year we were pleased to have identified a refuge in Maidstone we could support, in addition to those in Medway.

Members were invited to donate luxury Christmas food items, personal toiletries, or an age-appropriate gift for each child.

An approach was also made to Morrisons Community Champions at both the Maidstone and Strood branches requesting donations. We were really pleased to hear that our bids for support had been successful.

Jane and Stella Barnes collected the donated items from Lauren, Community Champion at Morrisons Maidstone, whilst Sue Daykin picked up a trolley load of donated gifts from Alison at Morrisons Strood.

On December 03, following Carol's Soup kitchen (see page 03) we started filling the Christmas hampers.

In total, with the donated items from Morrisons, we filled ten hampers which we were able to distribute in time for Christmas to both Refuges and to the Maidstone Homeless Centre.

JANE BARNES, SI, MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Soroptimists as letter writers support Project Hope

IN 2021, MEDWAY and Maidstone Soroptimists supported Project Hope, a letter writing project for women affected by domestic abuse in prisons. We had shared this project with our Friendship link clubs, and SI Heswall members had become involved.

In October this year, we heard that Project Hope had set themselves a target to get 500 letters written in time for Christmas.

A project update was provided by Kirsty on November 03, via Zoom, attended by Regional President Lynne Chiswick, our friendship link clubs, and club members.

Some of our members took on the challenge and managed to contribute more than 40 cards/letters plus those from Heswall members.

It was pleasing to see the thank you post on the Sateda Facebook page on December 19:

"Thank you to our incredible team of Project Hope letter writers for all the thoughtful and kind cards which are on their way to four women's prisons in the UK right now. Together we wrote a total of 500 cards: both seasonal and non-seasonal for those who do not celebrate Christmas. We let them know we are thinking of them, and they are not alone, sharing our stories and welcoming them to share theirs if they want to."

For anyone who would like to join the team of letter-writers, contact [valerie.williams@sateda.org](mailto:valerie.williams@sateda.org). We just ask that you commit to writing five letters a month.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



### Dates of the 2023 Saturday Region Meetings

March 18, June 24, and September 23

Holiday Inn Maidstone/Sevenoaks,  
London Road, Wrotham Heath, TN15 7RS

### Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News  
Friday, January 27, 2023

Email your text and photographs to Patricia at  
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