

President Lynne's message

Educate to Empower and Enable



A VERY HAPPY and healthy new year to everyone.

It has been another challenging year for us all but let's hope 2023 will be a better one. It certainly is looking brighter for our Region with new members joining clubs and our being able to meet in person more often.

Unlike last spring when we had to continue with Zoom because of Covid, our next Regional meeting on March 18 will be at the Holiday Inn at Wrotham and we can celebrate International Women's

Day. We will have an illustrated presentation and update on the work of one of our international charities, Mary's Meals, who feed over two million children in some of the poorest areas of the world and help them gain an education. We are also delighted to have the Chair of UKPAC coming to talk about the important work of the UKPAC and where it sits within our Soroptimist organisation. An important session for us all and especially Programme Action Officers. Further details will be circulated soon.

For our Regional Project this year, I am delighted to see that we now have five mentors working through The Girls Network to provide support for girls from schools within our Region and making a real difference in their lives. I know some of you are also waiting to hear more about the opportunity to be an online mentor and we hope TGN will have more details on this soon. It was interesting to hear about the importance of mentoring in SI's recent webinar, 'Prioritising Education: Empowering Women and Girls'. Worth watching and should be available shortly on the SI website.

I shall soon be ordering books as gifts for girls completing their mentoring year and we hope to have 110 girls in our Region completing their course. A very big thank you to everyone who has kindly contributed so far to our Regional Project fund to buy the books which will have bookplates stating that it is a gift from Soroptimists in our Region. It will be a keepsake for them and will hopefully remind them of our organisation in the future and perhaps encourage them to become Soroptimists. Please do keep fundraising so we can offer books to all the girls completing their mentoring programme.

I look forward to visiting clubs and events over the next few weeks and meeting with members.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SEE REGION PRESIDENT

What's in this month's newsletter?

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Do you worry about ageing without children to support you?

PEOPLE WITHOUT CHILDREN who have cared for elderly parents often have a “light bulb” moment when they realise, “Mum’s quality of life as she became frail depended on me fighting her corner and picking up the pieces when the health and social care system failed – but there is no one to do that for me!”

In the future, there will be more older people and a higher proportion of those will be childless. And because adult children are the most common providers of informal social care to their parents at older ages, this is likely to increase the demand for paid-for care, says the National Statistics report “Living longer: implications of childlessness among tomorrow’s older population” (Aug 2020).

But enabling people without family support to age well is not just about childlessness. Carers Support East Kent say that many children are now unable to provide the unpaid care that past generations did due to busy working lives or living far away, including overseas. And, as ever, some children will pre-decease their parents or have care needs themselves. Or families may be estranged for many reasons, including fathers losing contact with their children after divorce.

It is not as simple as increasing the size of the social care workforce, necessary though that may be. Local communities and health and social care services need to change if they are to support the increasing number of people who are “ageing without children” to age well.

How many people are we talking about?

National statistics show that, while 9% of women in England and Wales aged 75 at the end of 2021 (born in 1946) had no children, this more than doubled over twenty years, with one in five aged 55 (born in 1966) being childless.

There are no reliable figures for those ageing without children for the other reasons mentioned above.

What should we do?

The issue has implications not just for the design of health and social care but also for how we organise ourselves as communities. Technology may help but we will still need more independent advocates – or less need for advocacy – in health and social care, as well as more care workers. And, more generally, we need to strengthen community support – as we did in the pandemic – so that ageing without children doesn’t mean coping alone.

And there are smaller changes that we can make as a community to enable people ageing without children to age well. For example, it can be alienating when everyone is assumed, whether by their friends or in hairdresser’s small talk, to have children and grandchildren. And holiday seasons, particularly

AWOC East Kent

Are you ageing without children or close family support in East Kent?

Join our friendly monthly
meetings in Canterbury, get
our newsletter or help us
work with local
organisations and
policymakers to ensure
everyone without children
and families can age well



*“Because I spoke up for my mother,
she could age well - but who will speak
up for me?”
Former carer*

Contact awoceastkent@gmail.com
visit www.awoc.org.uk/localgroups or
scan the QR code for more details

Christmas, can be difficult when so many clubs and societies close for the break because they think everyone will want to spend it with family.

Ageing without Children (AWOC) East Kent

There is now a new local group bringing together people ageing without children and campaigning to ensure that they can age well. Founded in 2022, AWOC East Kent is part of the national Ageing Without Children network and covers the districts of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe and Thanet. For further details and to receive its free monthly e-newsletter, visit www.awoc.org.uk/localgroups or email awoceastkent@gmail.com.

Two Soroptimists from the Canterbury club have attended meetings of the new local group and have found them informative, supportive and good fun!

TESSA WOODWARD, SI CANTERBURY

Eastbourne Club putting the FUN in fundraising



THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS SI Eastbourne members relaxing over a drink at one of their New Year fundraisers.

The evening get-together was held at the lovely seaside home of past president, Lotte Peasgood, and her husband, Bob.

Lotte and Bob provided the drinks while other members brought delicious food dishes and raffle prizes.

The occasion was extremely well attended and members voted it a huge success.

Over £100 was raised towards President Pat Hearn’s fund for the Ukraine.

PAT HEARN, PRESIDENT SI EASTBOURNE

Mayor's Toy Appeal



IN DECEMBER SOROPTIMIST Tunbridge Wells donated items to the Mayor of Tunbridge Wells Toy Appeal 2022 which provided Christmas presents to children of families in crisis.

The families are referred by Social Services, schools, churches and other agencies.

Pictured is Soroptimist Lucy Raj dropping off the gifts at Maddisons Residential.

Aligning with SDG 3 people – Good Health & Wellbeing, this is a project Soroptimists enjoy fulfilling.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Fun, Food, Friendship and Secret Santa



SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE chose to have a social gathering at the end of the Festive season, welcoming in 2023 in style.

Janet and Chris Garnons-Williams kindly hosted the party and everyone contributed food, so we were presented with quite a feast to tuck into. We also welcomed Angela Christie, a potential new member who brought a superb chicken dish.

Having enjoyed the delicious hot main course buffet, (some had seconds), it was time for dessert with plenty to choose from.

When everyone was fully replenished we all sat around the Christmas tree. It was time for Secret Santa, everyone receiving and opening a present.

A great time was had by all and a big thank you goes to Janet and Chris for welcoming us into their home.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Private Members Bill Update to Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist Safety Project Survey

SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS have had several Zoom sessions with their MP Greg Clark, to discuss issues related to the Safety Survey, such as incidents of cat-calling and street harassment.

Following on from this, Club members were invited by Greg to attend the House of Commons for the second reading of his Private Members Bill on Protection From Sex-based Harassment in Public. This was passed unanimously with agreement amongst all political parties in the Chamber. It will now go to the third reading in the House of Lords and then progress to receive Royal Assent and become an Act of Parliament and thereby Law. It is anticipated that this will happen in 2023.

After the session in the House of Commons the Club members present were pleased to be able to present Greg with a printed copy of the local survey and discuss ways forward relating to safety and VAWG.

In the photograph we are accompanied by Lauren Brook and Jayne Sharratt from Reclaim the Night Tunbridge Wells, whom we had joined with to walk the streets in the dark in November as part of the United Nations 16 Days of Activism against #VAWG.

We were honoured to be recorded as an organisation in Greg Clark's summing up of his bill as follows (recorded in Hansard):

"I will not comment on every speech, as some Members want to get on to the business to follow, nor will I add to the long list of organisations outside this place that have been mentioned,

but I do want to emphasise one that was mentioned, the Soroptimists. They are very active and important members of the Tunbridge Wells community, and they are represented in the Public Gallery today, so I emphasise my welcome to them."

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



PICTURED: Lorna Blackmore and President Caroline Auckland from SI Tunbridge Wells, Greg Clark MP, Lauren Brook and Jayne Sharratt from Reclaim the Night Tunbridge Wells.

International Day of Education

IN THE UN calendar, January 24 is the International Day of Education. The theme this year 'to invest in people, prioritise education' is dedicated to Afghan women and girls. Education is a human right and offers children a ladder out of poverty and a path to a promising future.

At our January club meeting, Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists welcomed Hayley Heyes from Byron Primary School in Gillingham. She gave us an update on the work they are doing as a Rights Respecting School. She spoke of the journey so far having registered for the award in 2016, achieving the Bronze award in November 2017 and the Silver award in November 2018.

Progress was halted during the pandemic but under Hayley's leadership was relaunched in 2021.



We have had a partnership agreement with the school since 2018 that included:

- Participating in the Steering committee.
- Developing international links with schools across the world.
- Supporting activities within the school that promote the ethos.
- Meeting the children and sharing in their learning.
- Sending the school a tweet or postcard from across the world.
- Sharing website links.
- Providing us with ideas of how we can help the community locally, nationally and internationally.

Byron is in a deprived area of Gillingham and recognising the challenges pupils and families face they have set up Social Change project. Some of the actions being taken by the school include:

- To make the end of term tag day a food bank donation going towards families at our school in real need.
- We distribute the left over fruit and veg from KS1 to families in need.
- We use our newsletter to advertise affordable food apps like Olio and Too Good To Go, plus show parents and carers the latest offers for deals in local cafés and restaurants.



- Uniform donations to go to the Salvation Army, Nelson Road Shop.
- Once a term we will host a come and take day at our school supported by the Salvation Army.
- Coat Amnesty planned, donations going to the reuse and recycle shop in Nelson Road.

As Soroptimists we are proud and totally committed to working with Byron Primary School.

Following the presentation, we have updated and signed up for a continued partnership agreement that includes being actively involved in supporting them and particularly their Social Change project.

Recently the children were asked to design a mascot for the school. They have chosen Rocky the Rights Respecting turtle (see page 01). The children opted for a gender-neutral turtle to represent equal rights for all. Rocky will be a colourful edition to classrooms and be a useful way to gain enthusiasm and interest in Rights Respecting Schools.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



Stella Barnes manning the secondhand toy stall at their Christmas Fair. Donations of unwanted toys from children were resold from prices ranging from 10p to £2. This raised £124 for Mary's Meals and with Double the Love campaign equated to £248.

Toilet Twinning Certificates to Dunorlan Park



Louise Taylor, Peter Russell, Chair Friends of Dunorlan Park, Café Recipient, Caroline Auckland, Kasia Olszewska Parks Technical Officer, John Telling, TWBC volunteer, and Lorna Blackmore.

IN JANUARY 2023 Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells were delighted to be able to present the Café in Dunorlan Park with their two Toilet Twinning certificates, one for each gender toilet. These were purchased with the proceeds of the recycling of the aluminum cans collected from the Soroptimist bins provided by the Parks Department of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. A real community project.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT
SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Remembering Wilma De Jong



SI LEWES ARE sorry to announce the sudden death of their valued club member, Wilma De Jong, late last year.

Wilma was a wonderful woman, mother, and friend. She was a woman with many facets to her personality, focused and direct, sympathetic, and someone who strived for justice and fairness. She was strong minded, determined, creative, passionate, empathetic, thoughtful, independent, and curious about the world and all who live in it.

Wilma joined the Soroptimist International Lewes Club in 2019 because she wanted to make a difference to people's lives, in particular to women and girls. To give women a voice, to improve their lives and opportunities, and to enable and encourage women and girls to achieve their potential.

Although only a member for a short time, before her untimely passing, she was a true Soroptimist in every sense: Wilma was an active member, always keen to engage with others, to help at any fundraiser or event, to suggest ideas and give her opinions, and to encourage others to get involved.

She was smart, funny, creative, caring and fun to be around. We thank Wilma for all that she did for our local club, and for the Soroptimist organisation. Wilma is deeply missed by her fellow club members.

We pray that she is at peace. She is remembered with love, fond memories, and great affection.

VERA GAJIC, SI LEWES

A Celebration of Wilma's Life is being held on February 04 at The Gallery, Depot, Pinwell Road, Lewes BN7 2JS, from 14:00 to 17:00, for her friends, family and of course Lewes Soroptimists club members.

Dates of the 2023 Saturday Region Meetings

March 18,
June 24,
September 23

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

Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News
Thursday, February 23, 2023

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.

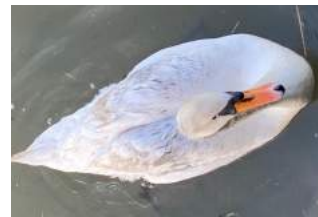
First litter pick of 2023



AFTER THE FREEZING cold and icy weather in the early part of the month, it was with some trepidation that two members of Medway and Maidstone (Jane and Stella) set off, all wrapped up, to join other volunteers at Rochester Esplanade Sensory Garden for the first Gardening Task Day in 2023.

We were lucky that we were given a warm welcome and the skies were blue with a few clouds. Unfortunately, it was too cold to do any gardening this month, but we were assigned litter pickers and black sacks and an area to cover. We set off on a 2km route along the esplanade pathway by the River Medway picking up any litter as we went.

At this time of year there were less of the take-away cartons evident on the actual pathway. However, as you looked over along the banks of the River Medway, that unfortunately was



out of reach to us, there were the usual culprits of cans, plastic bottles and cartons. This is of concern to the wildlife on the river such as the swans we saw gliding along. Sadly, in addition, dog owners seem to not always

be picking up after their pets have fouled on the pathways.

After a successful litter pick there were a total of eight sacks of litter collected... job done for an improved environment to be enjoyed by everyone.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

