



December 2023

# see news

Soroptimist International South East England Region Newsletter

## President Alison's message Inside Out and Outside In



I WRITE THIS message on Boxing Day as we are off early tomorrow on a "Twixmas" break. We had a lovely Christmas and hope you did too.

As you will realise, sadly this was not the case for our brothers and sisters in Israel/Palestine. Christmas in Bethlehem was cancelled. Further raids on the Nur Shams refugee camp are affecting the whole community there and it would appear that my proposed regional project may become more focused on general rehabilitation than the bespoke bursary I had originally planned. I am working with ABCD's Palestinian trustee to identify a worthy project that would best match our Soroptimist aims and objectives.

However, I still intend to proceed with the "Auction of Gifts" during the afternoon of our March 16 regional meeting to be held at the Orida Hotel (formerly the Hilton) in Maidstone.

So, get your thinking caps on ladies as I would really like to have at least one item from each of our clubs. As a reminder of the sort of gifts you could offer please see the suggestions as listed on page 04.

One or two suggestions have been received as ways for the region as a whole to meet President Ruth's "90" challenge and we will be discussing at the next Executive how we could take this forward. We would welcome other ideas too – it would be good to have more than one "scheme" taking place.

Many of you are quite understandably still very concerned about the Modernisation Proposals but hopefully you were able to join one of the webinars hosted earlier this month by President Ruth. There was only one other representative from SISEE at the one I attended but I am sure others participated on one of the alternative dates.

I felt members of the board addressed well the questions posed and of course the FAQ papers circulated in advance had already covered some of the members' misgivings. I guess following these Q&A sessions, the Board will discuss further and we will hear more early on in 2024. A case of "Watch this Space" and I'm sure many of you will!

I think all that remains for me to do now is wish you and your loved ones a Happy and Healthy New Year.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP,  
ALISON

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



Croydon club's Visible and Vocal competition goes global, page 02.



Santa arrives early in East Sussex, page 02.



Bromley Brighter Beginnings, page 04.



Write a letter, change a life..., page 05.



12,500 shoeboxes sent to Ukraine, page 06.



## An early start to Christmas in East Sussex



THE LEWES AND Eastbourne clubs were at the East Sussex Foster Children's Christmas Party on Sunday, December 03. The party is organised every year by the East Sussex Foster Carers Association and our clubs join in by stocking and running a present stand for the foster children to visit during the party. We helped them choose and wrap presents for their foster carers to take home and put under their Christmas trees. We have been doing this for over 10 years and know how much the children love being able to give presents to their parents and carers.

We really enjoy meeting the children and hearing about their hopes for Christmas and, in some cases catching up from last year, as well as meeting Father Christmas!

It is a good opportunity for our two neighbouring clubs to do some joint programme action and share a coffee and mince pie. We hope to keep this tradition going as long as we are a club.

Thank you to the Lewes Barbican Rotary club for helping fund the presents.

VERY GAJIC, SI LEWES



## Croydon club's Visible and Vocal competition goes global



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL CROYDON'S annual Loud and Proud competition has this year gone global. The Club marked this year's International Humanitarian Day by staging the final of the inaugural international public speaking competition for girls aged 10 and 11 – called Visible and Vocal.

"We're proud that our little competition has gone global," a SI Croydon spokesperson said.

International Humanitarian Day coincides with the end of the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Domestic Violence. Visible and Vocal was born out of the Croydon club's own competition, Loud and Proud, which has been running for 14 years.

Held over Zoom, there were participants from seven countries: Australia, Ivory Coast, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Rwanda. Topics covered included:

- Climate change.
- Households and the increased cost of living.
- Ending all forms of discrimination against girls.
- Barriers to girls achieving their career aspirations.
- Combating bullying.

Croydon's annual Loud and Proud competition gives young speakers an opportunity to address an audience in the grandeur of the Town Hall Chambers.

Speakers' corner (photo above): Sarah Jones MP and the group from Croydon Soroptimists at the Houses of Parliament this year. Sarah Jones, Croydon's first woman MP, also supports the competition, and earlier this year hosted attendees at the Houses of Parliament.

PAT DALE AND ROXANNE ST CLAIR, SI CROYDON

### Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News  
Thursday, January 25, 2023

#### 2024 Closing Dates are:

February 23; March 24; April 24;  
May (TBA); June 24;  
July 25; August 25; September 24;  
October 25; November 24; December 27.

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

#### Are you an Associate Member in the SEE Region?

Do you support your local SI Club or help with fundraising and awareness raising?

If so, please send your stories to the Editor.



## Christmas collection for the Eastbourne Women's Refuge

Once again Eastbourne members have collected items for the Women's refuge.

This year the nine bags for the ladies contained a tin of sweets, a bag of toiletries: shower gel, hand cream, face cream, body lotion and spray, a bag of makeup and a small gift of a teddie with a cracker.

I am very lucky to have an excellent Avon Lady who is always generous at this time of year with additional items to add to the bundles.

The Club supports the refuge throughout the year



and give these additional gifts at Christmas.

Denise Staplehurst,  
SI Eastbourne

## East Grinstead helping to provide Christmas cheer



From Left: Bridget Newbould, President Jane Griffiths and Sue Edgar

ONCE AGAIN THE Club has collected much needed Christmas gifts for *I Choose Freedom* a women's refuge in Reigate and Crawley Open House, a residential and drop-in centre for the homeless.



As in previous years members delivered their gifts to a Christmas grotto (above), this time located at President Jane Griffiths' home. Having handed over their presents, members enjoyed a time of fellowship with coffee, cake and chat. Handmade Christmas goodies provided by one of our members were also on sale raising money for Club charities.

The colour orange was very evident in the grotto and some members wore orange accessories in support of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

As shown by the number of bags in the accompanying photographs, members have once again been very generous in supporting these two very worthy causes. Of course their needs are ongoing throughout the year and, as part of our Programme Action activities, we are always happy to help them in whatever way we can.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



## Keeping Bromley Green



Bromley Club members, Dinah Scudder and May Clarke, joined a working group at Beckenham Green, to clear weeds and leaves and to plant red Bellis daisies and Polyanthus.

They will be enjoyed by everyone who walks across the green to the station, and will provide a floral display until April next year, against a backdrop of winter flowering shrubs.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



## Soroptimists support Byron Christmas Fair to Double the Love

**Byron Christmas Toy & Book Sale of pre-loved items**

- Raised **£147.10**
- With Double the Love = **£294.20**
- Means **15 children** to be fed for a whole year





A donation of **£19.15** will feed **one child** ~~one child~~ **two children** for a whole school year!

mary's meals

ONCE AGAIN THIS year Byron Primary School held a Christmas Fair at the school on November 30 with lots of different stalls and activities for the children.

The Rights Respecting Steering Group were responsible for organising and running a Toy and Book stall with pre-loved and good quality secondhand items.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists were asked if they could assist on the day, and Jane and Stella Barnes volunteered. Everything was laid out on the tables in one of the classrooms and prices ranged from 10p to £2 for items. The stall proved to be extremely popular, with children looking and eagerly spending their pocket money.

The sum taken was £147.10 and this will go to the Mary's Meals Double the Love Campaign and become £294.20. As from November 22 to January 22, 2024, donations made to Mary's Meals will be doubled by a group of generous supporters, up to £1 million. This means donations will go even further at this critical time. In a world devastated by conflict, food insecurity and the cost-of-living crisis, bringing new hope to desperately hungry children with life-changing school meals have never been more important.

It costs just £19.15 to feed a child with Mary's Meals every day for a school year. And this winter, a donation of £19.15 will feed two children. So, through Byron's and the Soroptimists' joint efforts an additional 15 children will be fed for a whole year transforming their lives.

JANE BANES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE




A donation of **£19.15** will feed **one child** ~~one child~~ **two children** for a whole school year!

mary's meals

a simple solution to world hunger

## The King's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for volunteer groups, awarded to Bromley Brighter Beginnings



SI BROMLEY is delighted to report that Bromley Brighter Beginnings (BBB) has received this prestigious award.

BBB started 10 years ago when a few young women, having their first babies, realised that, whilst they were wondering what to do with all the 'stuff' they had accumulated for their child and which was now redundant, others were struggling.

BBB has used Facebook to ask for equipment and clothing in good condition for families in difficulty that BBB volunteers have visited. From there it has developed into a major helper for Bromley families in poverty. The joy is that most needs are met by recycling used items that are in good condition.

More recently BBB has recruited a volunteer fundraiser and has tapped into local businesses as well as organisations such as Rotary. In the last year they provided beds and bedding for 143 children without a bed, 73 cots, school uniforms for 283 kids, 41 new born packs... the list is endless.

What is clear is that the level of family poverty in a seemingly affluent south east London Borough is increasing. BBB estimates that 20% of the children in our Borough are living in poverty.

*What can Soroptimist Clubs do about family poverty?*

If this is happening in Bromley it's happening all over the South East Region. We can give money and support, and encourage others to do the same, but that doesn't tackle the core issues.

*How much hidden poverty is there in your area?*

JENNI MOGRIDGE, SI BROMLEY

## President Alison's Auction of Gifts for the March 16, 2024 Region Meeting

### Possible offers of talents and time

- Bake and decorate a celebration cake
- Sunday lunch for 4/6
- Aromatherapy massage
- 3 hours' pruning/weeding plus gardening advice
- Make/alter a pair of curtains
- Take photographs at family event
- Basic Excel Lesson including how to design a spreadsheet
- 3-hour art session (Tuition and materials supplied)
- Visit to Kent vineyards or guided tour of NT property
- 3 hours' housework
- 6 jar selection of jam/marmalade/pickles etc.
- 2hr archery taster session
- Golf lesson
- Looking up your family tree
- Murder Mystery Lunch for 8 in your home

### Possible offers of tangible items

- Foot Spa
- Dry Air fryer
- Set of suitcases
- American cast iron small pan set
- Pair of sun loungers
- Chocolate fountain
- Bodyshop gift set
- Car radio
- Kettle/Toaster set
- Hand sewn double quilt



## Soroptimists say 'Write a letter, change a life...'



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S Write for Rights campaign transforms the lives of people whose rights have been wronged. In recent years, we have seen real change to people's lives because of action by Write for Rights supporters. From Zimbabwe to Guatemala, activists have been released and justice delivered.

This year's campaign features people from around the world, all connected because their human rights have been violated. Some by their governments, others by the police, or by big corporations. All because of who they are and what they do.

On December 02, visitors to the Maidstone, Medway and Swale Amnesty International Group's stand at the Christmas Fayre at Aylesford Priory signed 63 greetings cards with messages to the people featured in this year's campaign.

Three Medway and Maidstone Soroptimist members (from left in the photograph) Wanda Wright, Nellie Adjaye and Carol McKeough, who are long-term supporters, volunteered to be on the stall that day.

In the Amnesty International December Newsletter it said, 'Thanks, as always, to the local Soroptimists club for their help with this. Students at Maidstone Grammar School wrote and signed 142 greetings cards and appeal letters, thanks to great work by the school's Amnesty group.'



A further 18 greetings cards were signed by Soroptimist members during their December Club meeting. Together, we can fight for their rights.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Bromley members give voice to their support for the homeless



MEMBERS AND FRIENDS of SI Bromley joined a scratch choir singing carols (and even dancing!) in The Glades Shopping Centre, raising awareness of, and funds for, the Bromley Homeless.

It was a really fun way to support the charity which is doing such wonderful work and whose practical and pastoral help is needed so much more at this time of the year. The following message was received from the charity's volunteer liaison

officer: "Just to say a huge thank you again for yesterday. I have attached a picture for your newsletter and you can let people know we raised £180, which I think is really good going for only 45 minutes of singing!!

"Thank you again for being a brilliant supporter of Bromley Homeless, we really appreciate the Soroptimists!"

ALISON DRISCOLL, SI BROMLEY



# Soroptimists support Christmas Shoebox Appeal for Ukraine



December 15, Jane and Stella Barnes with volunteers having loaded boxes for Ukraine.

MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists have been taking part in the Blythswood Shoebox Appeal for more than 20 years.

This year, 92 filled Shoeboxes from members were delivered to the Collection Point in Gillingham.

A request was received for volunteers to assist at the Collection Point during the period October 25 to December 15.

Six club members volunteered for a total of 155 hours, some doing a single shift and others up to 24 shifts. Whatever time volunteers can contribute is appreciated by the organisers.

The volunteers checked more than 12,500 shoeboxes and packed them into cartons to be transported. The first delivery of 6000 shoeboxes to Ukraine left on November 29.

All checking and cartoning for the 2023 Appeal was completed on time and the final delivery with 800 cartons containing nearly 7000 shoeboxes left on December 15 to get there in time for Christmas.



JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



Julie checking the shoeboxes



November 20, Stella and Jane storing shoeboxes from Leicester



# Remembering Jean Mary Turner



JEAN WAS BORN in Croydon on December 07, 1927, and lived there all her life except for a short time when she was evacuated to Eastbourne. She was educated at Coloma Convent Girls' School, where she spent a very happy school life.

After leaving school she joined Barclays Bank which, at the time was very much a 'man's world'. However, after a few years' service, she was encouraged to take the Bank exams and eventually became an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers.

In 1958 Jean was invited to join Soroptimist International of Sutton and was soon asked to be Secretary. She was Club President on two occasions, the second time when the Club celebrated its Golden Jubilee.

In 1964 she attended her first International Convention which impressed her greatly, since when she attended several, including Istanbul and San Francisco.

For several years, Jean was Treasurer of the Southern DU (now called Region) and became their President in 1974. For the first time ever the SIGBI conference was held outside Great Britain. The Federation President was an Australian so to be inducted she had to go to Sydney. Jean found it a wonderful experience travelling out via Bangkok and Singapore and returning via New Zealand, Mexico and Hawaii.

When Sutton Club ceased several years ago, Jean joined Croydon Club, where she served as Secretary for many years and also Treasurer of South East England Region. She hosted coffee mornings in August every year (see below) to raise funds for each Club President's charity until in recent years when her health deteriorated.

Jean's outside interests included education, she was a governor of Park Hill Infant and Junior Schools, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Her interests with the elderly included Treasurer of the local Abbeyfield Society and Chairman of the support Group for Friends of the Elderly in Coulsdon. She was also a Trustee of Barclays Bank Welfare Fund.

As if all that was not enough to keep Jean occupied, she was a keen gardener, with a most interesting garden, a member of the Royal Horticulture Society, and Treasurer of a local Allotment Association.

Jean enjoyed playing bridge, meetings, outings with both the Croydon and Sanderstead Decorative & Fine Arts Societies. She enjoyed the theatre and music and regularly attended The Chichester Festival Theatre from the time it opened in the 1960s. She frequently visited The Royal Opera House to see ballet.

What time she had left was spent happily in the company of her cats Susie and Katie until they passed away.

Jean enjoyed travelling and experiencing different cultures. When I was posted to Kiev, Ukraine, she travelled with Denise Staplehurst. She enjoyed the adventure, which continued later while visiting China and Hong Kong.

She was an independent lady with a dry sense of humour. A lady who was a Soroptimist and who, in her own way, made a difference to many.

Jean spent the past few years in Orford House nursing home, Coulsdon, and passed away peacefully on December 15, 2023.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON



One of Jean's August Coffee Mornings, held in her garden in 2010, with (from left) Dorothy Buck, Patricia Painting and Ethel French.



As chair of Friends of the Elderly, Jean was invited to St James's Palace to meet Her Royal Highness the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.



Soroptimist Tree at St Margaret's Tree Festival in Rainham

DURING THE 16 DAYS of Action, a Soroptimist Christmas Tree was decorated at St Margaret's Church, Rainham.

The Christmas Tree Festival was taking place from November 30 to January 04, 2024. Twenty-three local organisations and businesses had been invited to take part.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists, Janet Garnons-Williams, Stella Barnes and Jane Barnes were ably assisted by two of Jane's grandchildren aged 5 and 8 to decorate our tree.

The blue themed decorations included homemade baubles made from recycled Christmas cards, membership cards and information about 'Orange the World.'

It was lovely to return to St Margaret's Church on Christmas Eve for the Crib Service and to see it full of all the adults and children and all the twinkling decorated Christmas Trees.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



## Call for Action

### Christmas Soup Kitchen Fundraiser



DECEMBER 10 IS THE Soroptimist International Foundation Day (also known as Human Rights Day or the International Soroptimist Day), SI President Maureen Maguire, encouraged us all to raise funds and to donate them to the Soroptimist International Foundation.

With the establishment of the Soroptimist International Foundation, SI will no longer have an International President's Appeal. The SI President will lead the Foundation, raising awareness of projects and promoting fundraising through continued Soroptimist members giving, legacies, grants and other funding sources.

There is a need for us to fundraise so that the many worthwhile projects can continue to be funded by the Soroptimist International Foundation. Similarly, to that of the SI President's Appeal we can only do so with help and donations.

By donating it helps to make a difference to the lives of women and girls around the world giving them the opportunity to have a global voice.

Currently the Soroptimist International Foundation has launched two projects, hence a call to action to support the work to improve the lives of women and girls across the world. The two projects are :-

- Education For Women And Girls In or From War-Torn Countries
- Visible and Vocal

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists accepted the challenge and organised two fundraising events. The first was our Christmas Newsletter that included Christmas messages with pledges made by members in lieu of exchanging Christmas cards. The financial pledges made amounted to £208. The Newsletter is sent to all members, Friendship link clubs and Friends of the Club.



The second event was a Christmas Soup Kitchen held at Carol McKeough's home on December 16, attended by 12 of our members. It was a lovely way to celebrate the festive season together, enjoying delicious home-made soups and then some naughty homemade desserts with our Soroptimist friends. Donations made for the Soup kitchen amounted to £157.

The combined total raised from both events amounted to £365 and has already been paid direct to the Soroptimist International Foundation via the SIGBI website and attracted an additional £91.25 Gift Aid.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Christmas Hampers for Women's Refuges in Medway and Maidstone



EVERY YEAR MEDWAY and Maidstone Soroptimists make up Christmas hampers for the local Refuges. Planning and preparations start in November during the 16 Days of Action. It was identified that there were 14 women and 9 children currently being supported across three sites.

A donation of £200 was made by the Medway Towns Soroptimist Trust towards items and gifts for the Christmas hampers. A club member agreed to do the necessary shopping of Christmas related food items using these monies. In addition, we had donations of surplus toiletries and baby products from the shoebox collection, plus toys and games we had from Morrisons in Strood.

Everything was taken to pack after the Christmas Soup Kitchen on December 16 and was packed into large covered cardboard boxes. The group photo shows members with all the filled hampers. The hampers were then taken and delivered by Angela Howe and Carol McKeough on December 18 to each of the Women's Refuges.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

