

## President Alison's message

### Inside Out and Outside In



I WONDER WHAT your club's plans are to mark International Women's Day on March 08?

I shall be on the panel judging the young entrants for Croydon's Loud and Proud competition – a highlight of her year I have heard from more than one former regional president.

That same evening I shall be attending a concert (including some pieces by women composers) given by a local orchestra, all proceeds going to Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid. I'm sure many clubs will have something in their diaries for that weekend.

On March 09, SI Lewes, are holding a Film Festival at the Depot, (details page 04). I know some of you have submitted films of your projects. Do please support this great initiative, being held in memory of their late member Wilma de Jong, which, if successful will be repeated the year after next.

Just to mention that SIGBI is having a CSW parallel event, to be held virtually on March 14, 2024 at 16:30 GMT, entitled "Women Standing Up for Women to mitigate Poverty". Full details including how to register are available on The Hub.

In my last message I mentioned my plans for two study mornings. The invitations (see page 11) and timetables are now finalised and full details will be issued shortly. Many of you have already expressed an interest in attending. Both themes, County Lines and The Sanctuary Movement, are quite challenging but those who participate will certainly be a great deal better informed on these topical issues. These events are open to guests and prospective members.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the regional meeting on March 16 when our keynote speakers will be from the charity Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability. Founding trustee, Val Jourdan, MBE, will explain how and why she started ABCD and Firas Sirhan, our project manager, will not only share the latest news from our partners in the West Bank but also will launch this year's regional project.

I am grateful to Jane Barnes for preparing the silent auction catalogue for our fundraiser on March 16. Thanks are due also to all those who have kindly offered to share their skills and interests to ensure this is a successful event. I would ask club secretaries, when they receive the catalogue, to ensure that all your members have sight of the catalogue because if they are not able to come on the day they can always ask a member who is attending to place a bid on their behalf. The back page of the catalogue gives more details of my regional project, and mentions the possibility of matched funding, so your support will be doubly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP, ALISON DRISCOLL

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



Awards for girls on TGN programme, page 02.



Oyez, oyez, Town Crier pays a visit, page 02.



Clubs prepare for IWD, pages 03 and 04.



Plastic free Whitstable, page 05.



Fashion, fun and fundraising, page 05.



Welcome to our new members, page 06.

## Regional Project Book Awards



TWENTY TWO GIRLS (pictured above) at Shoreham Academy, near Brighton, received a copy of “You Can Change The World” at their celebration event having completed The Girls’ Network (TGN) mentoring programme and becoming Ambassadors for TGN.

We raised sufficient funds last year under our Regional Project to donate an inspiring book to each girl who completed the programme in our Region. Each book contained a bookplate saying it was from Soroptimists in South East England.

Lynne Chiswick told the group about the work of Soroptimists and how we were happy to support TGN’s mentoring programme as we had similar values in helping girls reach their potential.

One of the girls who is in the School’s journalist club took one of our leaflets and was going to write an article on Soroptimism for the school magazine!

LYNNE CHISWICK, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT  
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGION

## Sevenoaks Soroptimists welcome the Town Crier



SEVENOAKS MEMBERS WERE delighted to welcome Chris Conlan, the Sevenoaks Town Crier, to our February club meeting.

Chris told us that he first heard about town criers as a little lad when visiting his gran in South London – one of her friends was a town crier and Chris decided that he wanted to be one too!

Chris lives in Bromley, but applied to towns in Kent and was very happy when Sevenoaks Town Council’s Town Clerk Linda

Larter (a Sevenoaks club member) took him on. On high days and holidays Chris is to be seen, resplendent in his colourful uniform, ringing his very loud bell and asking citizens to “Oyez, oyez” to him.

Chris is also the current Pearly King of Bromley, and is pictured above with Sevenoaks club members.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

# Clubs prepare for International Women's Day on March 08

## East Grinstead



HAVING BEEN REQUESTED by SIGBI to contribute to publicity for International Women's Day on March 08, East Grinstead members were invited to attend their recent meeting wearing Suffragette colours of purple, white and green.

The photo shows members posing under photographs of former mayors of East Grinstead in the Council Chambers where we meet. On display is a banner (produced by one of our members for a local competition some years ago), together with the Soroptimist pull-up sign. These have been instrumental in attracting new members at various outdoor events in the town – such is the power of the visual!

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## Medway and Maidstone



IN THE MAILING of January 24, we were told of SIGBI's plans for International Women's Day 2024. As a Federation we were adopting the theme from the IWD website of "Inspire Inclusion".

'When we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world. And when women themselves are inspired to be included, there is a sense of belonging, relevance and empowerment.'

SIGBI will be writing letters to the leaders of each political party of the UK asking them what they are doing regarding Inspiring and Including Women. An open letter is to be sent to various newspapers asking them to publish it on their letters page. Each club has been sent a link to the Trello board to access draft letters we can use to send to our own party leaders.

When members from SI Medway and Maidstone got together in February we took the opportunity to get a group photo of us showing the 'Inspire Inclusion' symbol to demonstrate our commitment.

We will be holding a Lunch in Rochester on March 08 to mark International Women's Day and have invited The Lady Mayor to join us to celebrate inspirational women.

#InspireInclusion #IWD2024

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED by the United Nations in 1977, International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe.

The first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on 28 February. The Socialist Party of America designated this day in honour of the 1908 garment workers' strike in New York, where women protested against working conditions.

But the first milestone in US was much earlier – in 1848. Indignant over women being barred from speaking at an anti-slavery convention, Americans Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott congregate a few hundred people at their nation's first women's rights convention in New York. Together they demand civil, social, political and religious rights for women in a Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. A movement is born.

The fact that Women's Day is celebrated on March 08 is strongly linked to the women's movements during the Russian Revolution (1917).

New Zealand was the first self-governing nation to allow women to vote.

In the first known campaign of its kind, the Egyptian Society of Physicians went against tradition by declaring the negative effects of female genital mutilation.\* This was in 1920.

Since those early years, International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point to build support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas.

SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS WEBSITE

\*See recent news on page 06.

## Clubs prepare for International Women's Day on March 08

### Lewes



*International Women's Day:*  
*a celebration of women through films*

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Saturday 9th March 2024  
2pm - 5.30pm, with an interval  
Depot, Lewes

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The event will include a selection of short films made by University of Sussex masters students, as well as women's projects around the developing world supported by Soroptimist International, in memory of Wilma de Jong.

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Book now at [lewesdepot.org](http://lewesdepot.org)



### Whitstable



International Women's Day **DANCE**  
with  
'Project F'

Whitstable Umbrella Centre  
8th March 2024 8.00 pm to 11.00 pm

Hosted by Whitstable & District Soroptimist International  
<https://sigbi.org/whitstable/>

Tickets £16 including one raffle ticket  
[www.ticketsource.co.uk/whitstable-and-district-soroptimist-international](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whitstable-and-district-soroptimist-international)

Proceeds to: Whitstable Umbrella Centre & Maya's Community Support Centre

### Croydon

FOR THE PAST 14 years, to celebrate International Women's Day, Croydon Club has held their *LOUD and PROUD* public speaking competition for Year 6 girls.

Plans are now being finalised for the 2024 competition, being held at the Croydon Town Hall on March 08. The number of girls taking part this year has gone up to 18 and reflects the interest shown by schools in the borough.

The five panellists, chaired by our own Regional President Alison Driscoll, will choose three winners. The event will be attended by the Civic Mayor of Croydon Tony Pearson and MP Sarah Jones, who will host the girls at Westminster Palace on another day.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON

Loud and Proud 2023 Winners



Croydon also celebrated the SIGBI theme for International Women's Day 2024: "inspire inclusion".

THE MISSION: Shine a spotlight on activity uplifting and inspiring women to pursue goals without bias or barrier.



# PLASTIC FREE WHITSTABLE SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE

When WHITSTABLE & DISTRICT Club was established, members resolved to be Plastic Free and support Sustainable Development Goal 14 "Life Below Water" and "reduce marine pollution especially from land based activities".

Reducing single use plastic is important to every community and not just seaside towns. Although legislation has been introduced and, for example, plastic bags are no longer given away freely and plastic cutlery is banned, our beach cleans and litter picks demonstrate that there is still too much plastic scattered throughout our environment.

Our district, including Faversham and Herne Bay, already had active Plastic Free groups but the Whitstable group had folded.

As a first step the venue for our Charter event agreed to eliminate single use plastics and we enquired about the criteria for becoming a Plastic Free ally of the Surfers Against Sewage campaign. Six months later two members are leading the local committee together with the coastal warden, local political parties and environmental charities. Our club has signed the PF Pledge and is organising PF events, beach cleans and signing up new Business Champions. We expect all our partners to reduce their single use plastic and we are taking steps to reduce our own.

Together we can make a difference! More information, including checking whether your town is Plastic Free, is available at <https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-pollution/plastic-free-communities/>

JANE WEBB, SI WHITSTABLE



## Fashion, Fun and Fundraising comes to Medway

MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE are holding a Charity Fashion Show with Travelling Trends on May 30 at the Franklin Rooms in Gillingham.

Every Travelling Trends Fundraising Fashion Show includes a pop-up shop and live catwalk Fashion Show which displays their vast clothing collection. This collection includes branded classical and fashionable garments from some of the most popular high street stores, individual boutiques and designers.

The garments will be modelled by real women including our own Soroptimist members. The sizing range goes generally from 8-20 but some lines come in sizes 4-6 and 22-24.

It promises to be lively, entertaining, and a colourful evening and lots of fun where you have the chance to see the fashions and buy at discounted prices.

The tickets cost £10, and this includes a welcome drink from the bar on arrival. Tickets are available from Angela Howe – see flyer below for contact details. All proceeds from the evening will be going to various Soroptimist charities.

Put the date in your diary and come along and support us.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



**Medway & Maidstone Soroptimists  
are hosting a  
Charity Fashion Show by Travelling Trends  
on  
Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
7 for 7.30 pm at  
The Franklin Rooms,  
65 Franklin Road, Gillingham, ME7 4DG  
Price £10.00 which includes a welcome drink  
To book or further information please contact  
Angela Howe on 01634 724365  
[howeangela@btinternet.com](mailto:howeangela@btinternet.com)  
Raffle Prizes gratefully received  
Proceeds towards Soroptimist Charities**

## Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News  
Sunday, March 24, 2024

2024 Closing Dates are:

April 24; May 24; 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](mailto:pat.painting@btinternet.com) 020 8668 2681

## New members welcomed



SI CROYDON WERE delighted to welcome new member Frances Lamberth, who was inducted by President Heather Bailey at the Club meeting on February 22.

Frances is a self-employed physiotherapist and works with clients independently in their own homes, or in care homes.

She is interested in Programme Action and embracing the social element of being a Soroptimist. She also helps in running a local Brownies Group.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON



WE WERE pleased to formally welcome and induct our latest new member Mandy Samrai to Medway and Maidstone club.

At a meeting on February 16, our Membership Officer, Carol Infanti, presented Mandy with her name badge and membership certificate.

Mandy is already getting actively involved in our club development plan, focusing on recruitment, PR and marketing, and promoting our work with partners.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

### LATEST FGM NEWS

In 2006, a woman took a three-year-old British girl to Kenya for female genital mutilation (FGM).

This only came to light years later when, aged 16, the girl confided in her teacher.

The woman was convicted in 2023, and sentenced to seven years in prison.

This conviction was the first for assisting in such harm under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

### Going Orange in Bromley

BROMLEY CLUB MEMBERS (plus a member from Croydon club) visited The Hub and The Library of Things in the Glades, Bromley, on February 25, and wore orange to promote the campaign to end Violence Against Women.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



### Dates of the 2024 Saturday Region Meetings

March 16; June 22; September 21 (AGM)

all to be held at the Orida Hotel (formerly the Hilton),  
Bearsted Rd, Maidstone ME14 5AA

### and Saturday Study Mornings

April 13, 10:00-13:00, Howfield Manor, Canterbury  
Theme: County Lines (drug trafficking and young people)  
April 27, 10:30-13:30, Dorset Gardens Methodist Church,  
Brighton. Theme: The Sanctuary Movement

## Visit to Indian Soroptimist



SEVENOAKS CLUB MEMBER Wendy Metcalf is the coordinator of our weekly zoom sessions with students of Dasghara Girls' College in West Bengal. Recently, Wendy, club President Pauline Payne and Programme Action Officer Sandie Higgs, paid a visit to the London flat of Indian Soroptimist Paramita Biswas.

During a very enjoyable day our hostess told us how she used a legacy to establish the college in 2017. We have been associated with Dasghara for some two years and Paramita assured us that the opportunity to speak regularly with our members is proving beneficial to the students.

As financial restraints mean that the girls only attend classes two or three times a week we are now hoping to raise money towards their travelling expenses.

PAULINE PAYNE, PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS

## Loaves and Fishes



THE LOAVES AND Fishes Foodbank located in Sevenoaks was set up 12 years ago by two mums who realised some children were arriving at school hungry.

Soroptimist International of Sevenoaks is one of the many local organisations to donate goods. It is run by volunteers and open once a week.

Rather than giving out bags of food, the policy now is to let the families choose their items.

There is a cafe offering tea, coffee and chat. Advice on further available help is there for those seeking it

ISOBEL WHITE, SI SEVENOAKS

## East Grinstead's Indian Feast

ON TUESDAY FEBRUARY 06, 27 East Grinstead Soroptimists and guests enjoyed a delicious curry meal together at the Tarana Lingfield, a local Indian restaurant.

During the course of the evening raffle tickets were sold raising money for two charities very important to our Club – I Choose Freedom Women's Refuge, and Crawley Open House for the homeless. In addition, the management of the restaurant made a very generous donation to the causes, resulting in a grand total of £430 to be shared equally between the two.

What could be better than a tasty, satisfying meal and the opportunity to help others at one and the same time? Our very grateful thanks go to the management of the restaurant for looking after us so well and for their kind support of our projects.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD





## Medway and Maidstone's Annual Day of Reflection 2024



WE HELD OUR annual Day of Reflection on February 17, at the St Margaret's Millenium Centre in Rainham. A small planning group led by Teresa Cambell had met in advance to plan the day and we had sent out a short survey to all members. The key themes from the survey were collated by Jane Barnes and fed-back to the group and had been used to inform the content of the day.

In the morning session, Teresa welcomed everyone, opened with an ice breaker, and shared the aims and objectives of the day. We broke up into groups to look at growing our membership and developing partnerships. Carol Infanti and new member Mandy Samrai led this successfully getting everyone engaged and contributing; thinking about what sort of people we would like to attract as members and groups we would like to partner with.

We stopped for a well-deserved and welcome lunch. Janet Garnons-Williams coordinated all the food contributions brought by members, which included a selection of homemade soups, bread, samosas, cheese, fruit, and cakes.

Mandy led the afternoon session where we looked at who we are and what we do as Soroptimists. We explored how we want to communicate to reach these potential new members and partners and what we will say, using leaflets, social media, and

face-to-face contacts. Carol spoke about an elevator pitch and shared what her's would be.

Teresa brought the day to a close and checked on what we had achieved: -

- Identified at least two potential partners – Yes (Rotary/U3A/ Police/Schools/University/NHS).
- Agreed content for at least one new flyer/poster to attract individuals – Partially.
- Agreed content for at least one new flyer/poster to attract organisations – Yes.
- Agreed frequency, format and days for meetings – Yes.

Working groups will take forward these actions to ensure they are fully implemented.

Overall, members concluded that it had been a well-organised day with a focused agenda, which had been facilitated well, with the opportunity for discussion and actions being taken forward, whilst enjoying good company and food.

As a club, SI Medway and Maidstone consider that taking time out in this way is important for us to continue to develop and grow in our work to improve the lives of Women and Girls. A big thank you to all those who contributed.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



## Sevenoaks' charity quiz night



SI SEVENOAKS HELD a very successful quiz evening at St Luke's Church Hall in Sevenoaks on Saturday, February 17, with many members, friends and guests attending, including teams from St Luke's Church, Arts Without Boundaries, Sevenoaks Town Council and a team led by Sevenoaks Deputy Mayor Cllr Libby Ancrum.

Our quizmaster David gave us some very interesting and sometimes amusing questions! The winners, for the third time in a row, were I-Care, a team of touring quizzers from Knockholt who donate their winnings to their charity I-Care.

Member Anne Bond organised a very successful raffle and, altogether, the sum of £1,060 was raised. This will be divided between the two charities chosen for this year by our President, Pauline Payne: Arts Without Boundaries, who support disabled and non-disabled people in our area by providing music and creative sessions, and CAMFED, an overseas charity providing education for young girls in rural Africa.

Our thanks go to President Pauline Payne, quiz setter Penny, quizmaster David and marker Isobel Groves. Very well done to all concerned and a big thank you to Penny and David for a super quiz!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

## Going orange at the Malabar Coffee House



A SMALL BUT jolly group of SI Sevenoaks members met at the Malabar Coffee House in Riverhead to mark February 25 and SIGBI Orange the World, to draw attention to, and help stop Violence Against Women and Girls. We used some orange teddies, knitted by member Shirley Brigham.

Pictured from left, are Vicky Tibbits, Shirley Brigham, Marilyn Canet, Sandie Higgs and Tracey Kemp. An obliging staff member took the photo for us!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS



TOOLS WITH A MISSION (TWAM) is a Christian charity that collects donated usable tools, refurbishes them, sorts them into trade kits, and sends them to countries such as Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of the Congo, for livelihood creation.

Working closely with established organisations in those countries, rather than offering a temporary solution, tools are the key to a sustainable career.

After completing a training course the trainees have a way to earn money to put food on the table and educate themselves and their family. Many of the recipients are orphans, disabled, homeless or in abusive relationships, and the tools are their key to a brighter future.

Whilst the focus is Africa, TWAM cares about helping local communities here in the UK, and the environment.

The tools collected are prevented from ending up in UK landfills. Last year 16 containers of tools were sent, which included 3327 Sewing Machines, 685 Carpentry kits, 266 Plumbers Kits, etc, plus 348 boxes of power tools, 596 computers and 7930 miscellaneous tools and kits.

To find out more information or to donate tools visit <https://www.twam.uk/>

SHIRLEY EDWARD, SI WHITSTABLE



# Canterbury's update on their Migrant Women Chat and Walk Project 2023/24



## Cost

There were no costs involved in this project as such, the occasional coffees were paid for by our volunteer members. We used a small amount of funding from the general funds to give each of the women a small token gift at the end of the year party.

## How?

SI Canterbury contacted the Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN) to help support migrant women with their spoken language skills.

We have been meeting women of all ages and from different countries for the last 12 months on a weekly basis. The meetings initially were at a local cafe, however when we established that some of the women could not afford this, we agreed with KRAN that we can use the hall, where they were teaching the women in the morning, for one hour afterwards. This suited us all.

## What?

The project helped connect migrant women with local women and encouraged them to come for walks (see above) at different venues and local areas, as well as encouraging them to talk about different subjects. The chats were about everyday happenings like children at school, holidays, cost of living, friendships and any other subject the women wanted to talk about. We often linked our conversations to what they had learned during the English lessons as well.

## WHATSAPP Group

With mutual agreement we established a whatsapp group to keep everyone up to date and pass on information of events and other wider community activity groups. This communication channel will continue with the agreement of all members of this group.

For example we signposted the women to look at how their child benefit was paid and how this needs to be in their name to help support their pension in the future, they had not been aware of this.

Also we connected them with EMIC (Ethnic Minorities in Canterbury) and community events they organise.

## Outcome

This project has worked well and the women have made fantastic progress with their language knowledge and self-confidence. Some of the women are volunteering in charity shops, others have joined courses for IT and English at College

and Adult Education Centres, as well as a local craft group to help with integration.

One of the women we met originally has now started her university course in London to complete her dentistry qualification and her children are settled in local schools.

Our aim and endeavour has always been to integrate the women into more local groups to enable them to make further friendships and help with language skills and communication. We encouraged independence by signposting to different free courses, groups and events to give a variety of opportunities to the women.

We have made friendships and are meeting the women ad hoc now, rather than for a specific Friday session.

So far we have supported 10 women on a regular basis and at the end of year party we were joined by 25 women including those from other language courses.

At times it has not worked so well when the morning course was cancelled and no one was there when we arrived, or only one of the women had stayed on. This was due to either appointments or child care issues.

## Working with others

Working with other organisations has also been beneficial and allowed us to keep costs to a bare minimum.

Due to the women having other interests now, we have paused the project until we hear back from KRAN about further interest by the other women who have just started their language course.

MARGRET PAU, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, SI CANTERBURY

**SILENT AUCTION**  
at SISEE Regional Meeting

Putting lesson, Homemade Meal for 4, Handmade quilt, Murder Mystery, Homemade jams, Compendium of Games, Lunch for 8, 16th March 2024, Afternoon tea for 2, Framed sketch map, Art by the Sea at Pevensey Bay

Handmade Kente Banner commissioned BYRON PRIMARY SCHOOL  
**EXCELLENCE TOGETHER**  
And more lots to bid for.....

Soroptist International South East England, Proceeds in aid of ABCD, abcd



## **SISEE STUDY DAY** **Howfield Manor Hotel**

Howfield Lane, Chartham Hatch CT4 7HQ

**Saturday, 13 April 2024**

Theme: County Lines

(trafficking and exploitation of young people carrying drugs for criminal gangs)

Coffee at 10 for start at 10.30, 2 course buffet lunch at 12.30

**£20** payable to Soroptimist International South East England Region  
**Lloyds Bank PLC ~ Sort Code: 309950 Account No: 75093860**

R.S.V.P. Carol Reed  
[secretary.sisee@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:secretary.sisee@yahoo.co.uk)



## **SISEE STUDY DAY in Brighton**

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Dorset Gardens, Brighton, BN2 1RL

**Saturday, 27 April 2024**

Theme: The Sanctuary Movement

Coffee at 10.30 for start at 11

**£10** (to include light refreshments)  
payable to Soroptimist International South East England Region  
**Lloyds Bank PLC ~ Sort Code: 309950 Account No: 75093860**

R.S.V.P. by 20 April Carol Reed  
[secretary.sisee@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:secretary.sisee@yahoo.co.uk)

