

## President Sue's message

### It's Never Too Late – or Too Early



AS WE HURTLE towards the end of Autumn and towards the end of the year, it is a busy time for most clubs.

Gearing up for the 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we will see many of us undertake walks, vigils, and other innovative activities. Because there is #NoExcuse. Ever.

Towards the end of October, many of our region members will head north of the Borders for the SIGBI

Edinburgh Conference, being held in the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms from November 01-03

Ann Reeves will be delivering her yellow 'Soroptimist at Work' sandwich boards that have been purchased on line. Pat Dale will be announcing the return of Soroptimist 63 Gin from Gorilla Spirits which will retail at £36 per bottle. And I am sure that Pat will also be presenting the 500 Club lottery to delegates. Our Regional Poster (see page 05) looks great and will be transported by me as I drive North.



It looks like our Region will be well represented and I am sure members will return to their clubs with news of how the Conference was, what more did we all learn about Modernisation! And new ideas to share.

I was also delighted to put in my diary March 07, 2025, the date of Croydon Club's annual Loud & Proud competition when I have been asked to take on the role of Head Judge.

On October 22, I joined in a Zoom meeting hosted by SI Medway and Maidstone on Breast Cancer. The speaker was great and it was reassuring to hear about the work that this charity (Breast Cancer Kent) undertakes to fund state of the art technology.

I look forward to our next newsletter when I am sure we will have reports on the Edinburgh conference.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP, SUE



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



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The Great Suffrage Pilgrimage, page 04.



View the magnificent Region Poster, page 05.



Letter writing for Project Hope, page 06.



ABCD fundraising update, page 06.

## Soroptimists raise £125 in Sponsored Knit for Shoebox Appeal



THIS YEAR WE fielded a small team of knitters for our Soroptimist Team consisting of Sue Hunt, Carol McKeough, and Jane Barnes to take part in a Sponsored knitting event on September 30 in Gillingham.

This is organised annually by a Blythswood volunteer to raise funds to go towards transport costs and additional items for the shoeboxes in the Collection Point. The knitting efforts are all finished off after the event and made into scarves for the shoeboxes. Pictured above is the Soroptimist Team with others from various groups who took part.

Thanks to friends and family the Soroptimist Team raised £125 this year in sponsorship monies and overall, the sponsored knit event raised in excess of £1000.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



What was achieved in the allotted time (left) and Carol McKeough and Sue Hunt from SI Medway and Maidstone

## Folkestone Club find a new way of promoting Soroptimism



101 OPEN DOOR Hythe is a community centre giving space to voluntary organisations offering support, information and advice within the area. It is run by volunteers and is connected to St Leonard's church in Hythe and was opened by The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, in 2022.

SI Folkestone has been lucky enough to secure a three-week slot in the shop window displaying leaflets, posters raising awareness of our organisation and things we have done.

These include Orange Café, making a flower wreath, knitting trauma teddies and 'Soroptimists At Work' boards to name a few. Thank you to Ann Reeves for making up the display boards, the T-shirts and the 'Soroptimists at Work' A-boards.

We are about to start using the community room there as our club meeting venue and we are delighted that Pat Wood (pictured above dressing the window) discovered this excellent opportunity right in the centre of Hythe.

YVONNE FREEMAN, SI FOLKESTONE

## An Orange the World event on October 25



SI SEVENOAKS HELD another successful Orange the World event with tea, coffee and cakes at the very smart Bojangles Coffee House at Dunton Green, just north of Sevenoaks.

Eight members and one guest had a lively chat and we were able to hand out a leaflet or two!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO,  
SI SEVENOAKS



WHEN I FIRST visited Kenya in 2016 one memory that will remain with me is the broad smile of a small child when I gave him a pencil. His very own pencil. It struck me to the core and made me really appreciate the education and opportunities that I have had in the UK. If parents can't afford to buy some sort of uniform for their child they cannot go to school. Even though education is free parents must pay for uniforms, exam fees and books.

For many children in Kenya life can be very difficult. Children don't get enough food to eat, and often go hungry. If they go to school they get fed in the morning and at lunchtime, so it's a bit of a vicious circle for parents – send their children to school so they get fed, but then they have to pay for uniform etc, or keep them at home helping with chores and supporting the family – fetching water, looking after younger siblings, herding cattle and goats to pasture. For some it is not even an option – they just can't afford any sort of uniform. Some children will just drop out from school.

Amuka Foundation works with three schools in the Karare town area in Northern Kenya and has a very good working relationship with the headteachers. The children most in need of sponsorship are identified by the headteachers and Amuka can then link them with a donor.

Compared to other charities the monthly donation (£15) is a much smaller amount. That is because we do not have any admin costs associated with it. 100% of that £15 goes towards the child's schooling and his/her family. It immediately provides the child with school uniform, school shoes, pays the school fees and the family receives a food parcel. The donation covers exam fees and textbooks and, very importantly, covers health insurance for the whole family.

We hold 'sponsored children days' three times a year and try to coincide that with any visitors to Kenya. The children are given donations of clothing and toiletries and are provided with refreshments. On production of their end of term report their parent/guardian is given a food voucher which can be exchanged for food staples at one of three women-led businesses in Karare.

Full details with questions and answers are on the website – [www.amuka-foundation.org](http://www.amuka-foundation.org) or I can provide you with details/pamphlet – Liz Owsley – [lizzorabs@gmail.com](mailto:lizzorabs@gmail.com)

All children have hopes and dreams, but poverty and injustice can hold them back.

Become a sponsor today and watch a child's life change for the better as you unlock their potential.

LIZ OWSLEY, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



One of the woman owned shops providing staples in exchange for a voucher.

# 111 Years Forward: Celebrating the Legacy of the Great Suffrage Pilgrimage



Wanda Wright - Artist



## Soroptimists – Following in the footsteps of Vera Conway-Gordon



Inside Medway Art Box

DURING OCTOBER, ROCHESTER'S smallest art gallery, the Medway Art Box, proudly hosted a new exhibition presented by the 111 Years Forward Project. This creative display commemorates the 111th anniversary of the Great Suffrage Pilgrimage of 1913, when approximately 50,000 women marched from across the country, converging in Hyde Park to demand the right to vote.

The exhibition aims to capture the significance of the pilgrimage, celebrating both the collective achievement and the individual journeys that shaped this historic event. A central feature is the recreation of an original women's suffrage banner, expertly crafted with guidance from Dr Gillian Murphy of the London School of Economics Women's Library. The display also includes replicas of historic literature, photographs, and artefacts, offering a glimpse into the lives of the women who paved the way for equality.

The 111 Years Forward Project team invited people of all ages to contribute decorated footprints for the exhibition and this included Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists.

Wanda Wright painted two footprints as our contribution and labelled them, 'Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists Following in the Footsteps of Vera Conway-Gordon 1874-1955'.

Many of the footprints have been paired with the names of real women's suffrage campaigners who participated in the 1913 pilgrimage, including Rochester's own Vera Conway-Gordon, who led fellow pilgrims through the High Street to a service at the Cathedral.

We chose Vera as Soroptimists have been volunteering at the Suffrage Sensory Garden on the Esplanade, just a short walk from the Art Box, in tribute to Vera Conway-Gordon's legacy.

The photographs show Nellie Adjaye, Stella Barnes and Jane Barnes visiting the Medway Art Box after their October volunteering gardening session.

Jennifer Godfrey, author of *Suffragettes of Kent*, commented: "We are incredibly grateful to Medway Art Box, LSE Women's Library, Friends of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade, Medway Libraries, and all those who contributed footprints and shared their support on social media. This collaboration has been such a rewarding experience for us, and we deeply appreciate everyone's involvement."

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

### Dates of the 2024 Saturday Region Meetings

December 07 via ZOOM

### Proposed dates for 2025 Region Meetings

March 15; June 21; September 20

### Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News  
Monday, November 25, 2024

The final 2024 Closing Date is: Friday, December 27.

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

# Our Regional Poster for Edinburgh Conference

THIS YEAR THE conference organisers were keen that attendees at conference in Edinburgh would be left in no doubt that they have arrived at a Soroptimist conference. They were keen to highlight the breadth and depth of work being undertaken by SIGBI members.

Each Region/National Association has available a board on which to create a display of the work being carried out by clubs in their area. Our Region was keen to take part and so a small working party led by Incoming Regional President Sue Edgar was identified to take this forward. The theme chosen for our display was, "Working in our Communities to Effect Change".

One project from each of our clubs that had been reported on the Programme database was chosen. This also included Kent College School Club's Eco-garden project and Regional President Alison's ABCD project to fund a Speech and Language therapist.

Jane Barnes was asked to design the poster measuring 835mm x 1000mm. It was then sent electronically to Sue Edgar to organise the printing. It was then packed up ready for transporting to Edinburgh. The boards will be displayed in the ballroom of the Assembly Rooms from November 01-03.

Initial feedback from the Executive team has been positive with comments such as:

"The poster looks really good, and I think could well be used as a marketing tool for our region long after the Annual Conference." YVONNE, PROGRAMME ACTION

"Looks fabulous!" ANN, FCC

"Wow, excellent!" CAROLINE, SOCIAL MEDIA

"It looks so professional and vibrant. Well done to everybody involved and I look forward to seeing it 'in the flesh' in Edinburgh." PRESIDENT ALISON

"What a great poster reflecting the work being undertaken in Region. Be good to include in our club websites as well as Region's." PAST PRESIDENT LYNNE



"It looks vibrant, which is just what we want. Well done to everyone involved." JANET GW

We look forward to seeing photos of our poster amongst all the others on display in Edinburgh, and hope all those attending have a great time at Conference.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Welcoming a new Club President



SI SEVENOAKS WELCOMED outgoing South East England Region President Alison Driscoll to their club meeting on October 08. Alison gave us a really good talk about the ABCD charity for which she has raised an amazing amount during her year.

We were delighted to have her at this meeting as it was our changeover from President Pauline Payne, who has run the club magnificently for 18 months, to our new President Margaret Crabtree, who has so kindly agreed to take over after a relatively short time as a member of the club!

Huge thanks to Pauline and congratulations and good wishes to Margaret from all the SI Sevenoaks members! Pictured are Pauline, Margaret and Alison.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

## Letter Writing to Support Project Hope

PROJECT HOPE IS SATEDA's letter writing initiative which aims to combat isolation among women in UK prisons, where two in three women are domestic abuse survivors.

It can be done anywhere, takes little time, and makes a massive difference.

Launched in summer 2020, when they found out that the Covid pandemic meant prisoners were being kept in their cells for 23 hours a day and going without family visits, Project Hope was the brainchild of a SATEDA volunteer who was herself locked up because of her abusive ex-partner.

Volunteers write encouraging letters, cards and poems that let women behind bars know that someone is thinking about them, and they are not alone.

Every year Project Hope sends over 2,000 messages of hope to four women's prisons across the UK, giving recipients the option of starting some correspondence. Our writers use only their first name, or a pen name, and all letters exchanged go through Project Hope.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists have been supporting this initiative since 2021. At our October club meeting members brought in cards to write during the meeting suitable for the holiday period in December. Fifty cards were written with encouraging messages such as, 'Strong women are not simply born; they are forged through the challenges of life. With each challenge we grow mentally and emotionally.'

This was one of the actions as part of our commitment to support the '16 Days of Action' in November to end violence against women.

One of our newer members, Mel Dann Adamson, kindly volunteered to deliver the cards to Project Hope. She can be seen delivering the cards to Valerie Williams of Project Hope.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



## Fundraising success enables sponsorship for Nour

MANY, MANY THANKS to everyone who supported my regional project – sponsoring a year's salary for Nour, the speech and language therapist based in the rehabilitation centre of a Palestinian refugee camp, Deir Ammar. Not only did we raise £4751, but also a great deal of awareness about ABCD's work in the West Bank. I have been given the opportunity to share a regularly updated presentation with almost all the region clubs.

To give further context, Nour is working with up to 35 students a month. The majority of her pupils have learning difficulties but there are also a few cases of Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, and one or two have cognitive speech delay. The majority are aged between 1-6, followed by 7-12 and then 12-16. The rehabilitation centre is working closely with the local schools to encourage students to join the normal educational system. It will come as no surprise to learn that Nour has a waiting list but without an increase in her hours, she can work with only the most needy cases.

The head of Deir Ammar rehabilitation centre, Rabab Azmi, states "I am grateful to the Soroptimists group for establishing the speech and language service, it gave hope and an enlightenment to children with learning difficulties to engage with schooling and local community as therapy did improve their speech and social skills"

Nour herself says "I am extremely delighted to be working with children with learning and cognitive disabilities to support and help them develop their skills and their engagement with day to day activities of daily living. Thank you Soroptimists for giving me such an opportunity".

And that's a big thank you from me too.

ALISON DRISCOLL, OUTGOING PRESIDENT, SEE ENGLAND REGION



Nour working with some of the children in the Deir Ammar refugee camp.  
(See also cover picture.)

# Soroptimists fill 60 Shoeboxes for Christmas Appeal



MEMBERS OF SI MEDWAY and Maidstone have been busy preparing for this year's Christmas Shoebox Appeal. We set ourselves a target to fill 60 shoeboxes, focusing on women and girls aged 10 years plus.

Some of the essential items for each shoebox include a hat, scarf, and gloves. Two members took on the task to knit 60 sets of these throughout the year in time for the shoebox filling.

Other members donated monies to purchase practical items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, flannels, shower gel, notepads, pens, pencils, sanitary products, underwear, socks, small toys, gifts, sweets, candles, and household items.

A supply of 60 empty shoeboxes were provided by a local shoe stockist and then wrapped in advance ready to be filled.

Angela Howe kindly agreed to host the team of five volunteers at her home on the evening of October 23, providing us with a meal before we started filling the boxes. It took us about two hours to fill the 60 shoeboxes and label them with what was inside and the gender and age of the intended recipient.

After a successful evening, the 60 shoeboxes were loaded up and taken the next day to the Collection Point in Gillingham.

They will be checked by volunteers before being transported to people affected by the war in Ukraine in time for Christmas.

The individually wrapped boxes will be distributed in schools, hospitals, orphanages, and care homes, and to households in very low-income communities.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Forthcoming International Days

November 25  
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

December 01  
World Aids Day

December 10  
Human Rights Day

January 24  
International Day of Education

January 26  
International Day of Clean Energy

## Adult Safeguarding Week

Monday 18th November - 8pm

Join SIGBI Safeguarding on zoom to hear from **Professor Gill Kirkham** - University of Bradford, who will discuss her development of an innovative online game called 'Danielle' designed to help teenagers understand relationship safety.

During the talk she will share insights into the development process, challenges faced and the importance of early education on healthy relationships to support young peoples long-term well-being.

This is a free event, but donations to the **British Heart Foundation** who are funding research to promote best recovery from stroke, would be welcomed.

To receive a link to the session please email [Barnes786@btinternet.com](mailto:Barnes786@btinternet.com)



## Croydon Club's World Food Day event, supporting the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund



CROYDON MEMBERS, friends and members from other clubs, including a Soroptimist from Barbados, attended this World Food Day celebration on October 19.

The event was held at the Chestnut Gardens Care Home in Purley, where the Chef prepared a wonderful selection of Indian foods.

After lunch, and the raffle in support of the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund, guests repaired to the upstairs lounge for musical entertainment.

## She may be 90, but there is no stopping Peggy



THERE IS NO stopping Peggy Duffin who celebrated her 90th Birthday this year.

Here she is, above left, teaming up with Beckenham Rotary to sell Poppies in the Glades Shopping Centre, Bromley, for The Royal British Legion.

Peggy had to 'retire' from stewarding at the Royal Albert Hall at 70 and every year since has been out selling Poppies. She has volunteered for another two sessions this year as well!

Whilst the staying power might not be as good, and a sitting location is appreciated these days, to quote Peggy it is something 'I CAN do'!

Don't get the impression that is all she does though, she is an avid campaigner towards our Programme Focus areas and supports as many of our events as possible.

Once a Soroptimist always a Soroptimist!

MARY DALMAN, SI BROMLEY

## UK Parliament Outreach for Maidstone and Medway Soroptimists International

FOLLOWING THE CLUB'S decision to have a Campaigns Officer, I thought we should know a lot more about how our government works and how we can influence it to benefit women and girls. I have arranged for a member of the UK Government Outreach team to talk to us at November's Zoom meeting – although this time it will be conducted via Teams (which I am assured is even easier to operate).

This will be at 19:30 on November 26 and fortuitously follows UK Parliament Week (November 18-24). Kerrie Carpenter, Senior Education and Engagement Officer for SE England will talk to us, amongst other things, about:

- \* how Parliament works;
- \* how to open the doors to Parliament and get our voices heard;
- \* what are Select Committees and how do they work;
- \* how do laws get made;
- \* how can the public get involved;
- \* how we can use it to our best advantage.

Since Soroptimists started out as a campaigning organisation it seems important for us to know how to navigate Parliament and learn how to use it to make a difference to women and girls. Kerrie has assured me that it will be a lively and engaging session and, having spoken to her I am sure that that will be the case. She knows all about Soroptimists and she and her team have spoken to different Soroptimist regions in the past.

Anyone interested in attending the meeting, please email [barnes786@btinternet.com](mailto:barnes786@btinternet.com) for the link. The talk will last about one hour and she is happy to extend it by half an hour or more to allow for questions. If you plan to attend, contact us as soon as possible so that I can let Kerrie know numbers in advance.

She has also asked me to point out that this is absolutely non-political.

WANDA WRIGHT, SI MEDWAY & MAIDSTONE