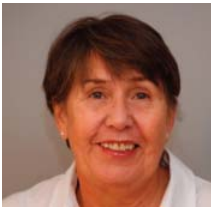


President Sue's message

It's Never Too Late – or Too Early



ECHOING PRESIDENT ALISON'S message from October 2023, we are now in a twilight zone when the Presidential Chain was presented to me at the AGM and within 15 minutes it was handed back to Alison! The official Change of Insignia will take place on November 02. However, I will be attending the Canterbury Quiz on October 18, and the annual Silent Walk on November 30 during the 16 days of Activism. I hope to meet Club members at that event. If transport is an issue, do reach out to me to see if we can organise some car sharing opportunities.

My theme for this year is 'It's Never Too Late – or Too Early' which can be interpreted in many ways. Get involved by volunteering in your community or within Soroptimist International; deliver service via Programme Action at your Clubs; learn a new skill/teach a new skill; lobby for change/sign petitions; make new friendships/re-ignite old friendships; share best practices with other Clubs; keep SI at the forefront of activities in your Community.

Many of you reading this will think – well, we do all this anyway! Which is true, but try looking at things differently. In their early weeks, introduce newer members to programme action. Embrace ideas that new members bring whilst celebrating the rich body of knowledge and service we have in abundance. By mixing up teams, sharing projects with Region Clubs, and tapping into our collective skills, we will all benefit.

During my Presidency there will not be a Region project. My aim is to introduce organisations that work within the area of Education/Training, be it Children's Literacy, Second Chances through horticultural training for women based in UK prisons, as well as keeping The Girls Network on our radar. Domestic abuse and the safety of women will also feature.

During these tough times of high cost of living concerns I know that Clubs will be working with local food banks/refuges, and education opportunities for all vulnerable residents.

One challenge I want to put to you is for the benefit of our Soroptimist Benevolent Fund. At each Club meeting it would be great if you can 'raise' £5 or more (£60 for the year) which we can give to the Fund at the end of my year. By supporting our fellow Soroptimists these funds could make a difference in helping replace a cooker that has stopped working, deliver a slow cooker to reduce energy costs, or whatever is needed. I hope that you can get on board with this initiative.

So as I prepare to head north to Edinburgh I look forward to seeing many of you at Conference and for those who cannot attend there will be many feedback opportunities to ensure you get a flavour of what was decided, and the overall mood as we get a better understanding of 'Modernisation'.

IN FRIENDSHIP, SUE

What's in this month's newsletter?



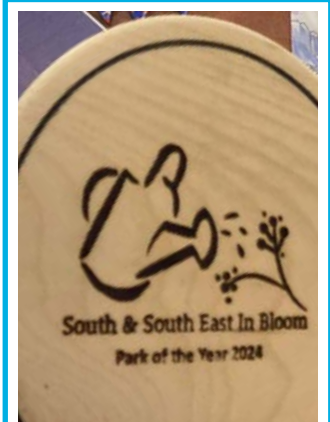
Sevenoaks club receive £250 for plants, page 02.



Carol at the Stour Riverfest, page 02.



Changing lives in Kenya, page 03.



Sevenoaks Vine an award winning park, page 04.



Charity theatre fundraiser, page 06.



Whitstable win Grace Onions Award, page 08.

Cleaning up at the Stour Riverfest



ON SEPTEMBER 17, I took part in the Stour Riverfest to help with the river clean. I was in the group which included Plastic Free Canterbury of which our club is a member.

Between us all, we collected a shocking amount of litter and fly-tipping – over 20 sacks of litter and a huge volume of metal, plastic, traffic cones and other fly-tipped items.

One of the most disturbing items was the large amount of entangled plastic netting which would prove a death-trap to any animal that got caught up in it.

The most unusual item found by one of the team was a World War II metal helmet!

CAROL REED, SI CANTERBURY

Sevenoaks Station Manager donates £250 voucher



SI SEVENOAKS MEMBERS were delighted when the Sevenoaks Station Manager, Gemma Louro, presented them with a £250 voucher for plants and equipment for use at Sevenoaks Station. The voucher was awarded by South East Rail.

Sevenoaks member Sandie Higgs selected some colourful autumn plants (see cover photo and above) and, after a busy session cutting back the existing Perovskia, planted Rudbeckia Goldblitz, large Impatiens and Echinacea Purpurea!

We still have nearly £200 to spend in the spring!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

We welcome two new members

SI Bromley

CHRIS THOMAS WELCOMED Stellamaris Ijeh to Bromley club and presented her with her badge.

Stellamaris is already a Soroptimist and was the twelfth president of Asaba Club, Capital of Delta State in Nigeria and we look forward to the new ideas she will bring us.

At our last meeting she led us in singing from a book of Soroptimist anthems, which cheered us all.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



SI Medway and Maidstone



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists were pleased to formally welcome Daisy O'Hagan at our September club meeting. Carol Infanti, Membership Officer, presented Daisy with her name badge.

It has been a busy month for Daisy finding out more about Soroptimists as she attended her first Regional meeting. Then the following week she joined an on-line induction session hosted by Carol, supported by Janet Hughes and Jane Barnes, along with three other new Medway and Maidstone members.

Daisy is an accountant, a Rotarian, is married with two children, has grandchildren, and enjoys sewing, which all keep her busy.

Welcome Daisy to the Soroptimist family.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



WHEN A FRIEND and ex colleague of mine asked if I'd be a trustee of a charity that she was founding I readily agreed, not really knowing what it would involve! The last seven years has been a fabulous, inspiring, motivating, emotional journey.

The charity is registered in the UK with projects and work in northern Kenya, centred around a town called Karare, in the county of Marsabit.

I think that this charity is unique in that 100% of any donation is utilised on a project – not one penny is spent on admin costs. Any costs associated with admin or the running of the charity is provided by the founder or the trustees.

Without going into too much detail – most of which can be found on the website – our projects focus on sponsoring children, mentoring girls and empowering local women.

The community in Karare are pastoralists, so their livelihood revolves around goats, cattle and camels, and the environment that they live in can be harsh at times, with extreme weather conditions, and no infrastructure to assist them.

When I visited in December 2022 they had just had rain – after almost four years without any! Animals were dropping down dead. The animals looked so thin – no rain, no feed, no food for people. There were even instances of people dying. Then they have downpours which flood everything – there's no drainage like we have here.

I'd like to tell you about our Mentorship Programme, specifically our Mentorship Camp for girls. The most recent one was in April this year, and myself and several UK Board Members travelled there to manage it.

Thirty two girls, from three schools, travelled from Karare to Nairobi – over 500 kilometres, along with eight mentors and two head teachers, plus UK Board Members. Some of the girls had never been out of their village, so this was huge for them. They were provided with Camp T-shirts and hoodies, extra clothing, toiletries, school equipment, a blanket and a sheet and a holdall.

They spent a week exploring their hopes, dreams, fears and obstacles. They learnt about problem solving and sharing burdens. They talked openly about harmful cultural practices and how we and they can reduce the risk and harm, and how, through peer mentorship and support, they can grow stronger together.



We also arranged various, very simple, team games and the girls showed how competitive they were when it came down to it! Apart from football they don't play any other sort of game. One of my abiding memories was a simple balloon game where the noise was unbelievable from such shy girls, and then a balloon free for all which was an absolute delight to see how carefree they had become from the quiet girls we first met.

All the girls will be provided with mentoring as they negotiate school, and hopefully we will obtain sponsorship for many of them.

We hope to provide a Mentorship Camp every 18 months to two years, so that we capture all the year groups.

The Mentorship Camp will be an ongoing project (current cost approx. £9k), and our mentorship programme is constant.

Our next big venture is to build a Women and Girls Resource Centre (approx. £50k). We have made a good start on this but are looking for ways to spread our message and fundraise on a serious level.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about our work or would like me to come and talk to a group, I am very willing. I also have some craft items made by the ladies for sale which I would bring with me.

LIZ OWSLEY, ASSOCIATE MEMBER

lizzorabs@gmail.com 07914 799739

Amuka Foundation: www.amuka-foundation.org.uk





Last Night of the Proms comes to Lingfield



ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 several members and friends of East Grinstead Club met at the Lingfield home of President Alison and her husband Alan to celebrate “Last Night of the Proms, in the Garden”.

Armed with garden chairs, warming layers and picnics, we planned to watch the evening from the garden. The British weather however proved a little too chilly and plan B was activated. We took our seats inside and, with Pimms in hand, settled to enjoy the concert. It was a super programme with a mixture of pieces from old favourites to world premieres.

Picnics and Pimms were enjoyed throughout the evening and hot gooseberry crumble and meringues kept everybody warm.

There was plenty of audience participation as the evening progressed with our own choir in the back row – altogether a very enjoyable occasion that ended in age old fashion with a rousing chorus of Auld Lang Syne.

ALISON SKINNER AND ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

Sevenoaks Vine wins gold medal



SEVENOAKS CLUB WERE delighted to hear that Sevenoaks Vine, an area of pretty garden which members had been tending for seven years, had been awarded a gold medal in the South East in Bloom Competition, and in addition has won an award for best park in the area!

A team of 10 volunteers, led by Mary Hogarth, and comprising Shirley Brigham, Anne Bond, Vicky Tibbits, Tracey Kemp, Penny Robbins, Wendy Metcalf, Kathy Jordan, Sandie Higgs and former member Isobel Groves (who put forward the project in 2018 and had liaised with Sevenoaks Town Council over the years) worked hard all summer to keep the area pristine and colourful for visitors to enjoy.

Our photo shows Mary at the Town Council offices with the awards!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

Soroptimists attend National Foodbank Day Event in Medway



When people in our community are going without, it's time to

GUARANTEE OUR ESSENTIALS



Jane networking

Medway & Maidstone Soroptimists Supporting Medway Foodbank Event



Angela with Mayor, Council Leader and MP

NATIONAL FOOD BANK Day is held on the first Friday in September and is dedicated to raising awareness about food insecurity and the role of food banks in supporting vulnerable communities.

Angela Howe and Jane Barnes from SI Medway and Maidstone were invited to attend an event held by the Medway Foodbank at the charity's warehouse on September 6 with more than 40 guests. This included the Mayor and Mayoress of Medway, Council leader Vince Maple, Rochester, and representatives from the Medway VCS sector.

As part of the event, Medway Foodbank urged guests to support the Trussell Trust's Guarantee Our Essentials campaign which calls for Universal Credit to include an Essentials Guarantee.

The charity says this is needed because there is a shortfall between people's living costs and their income which means they cannot always cover the essentials like food, utilities, clothing and transport.

We were able to see hundreds of messages gathered on tablecloths from people explaining the hardship they experience and their hopes for the future.

In November, the messages of hardship will be taken to Westminster by the Trussell Trust to highlight the “moral scar” of rising foodbank use and urge the government to introduce an Essentials Guarantee.

To find out more: trusselltrust.org/essentials

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Dates of the 2024 Saturday Region Meetings

December 07 via ZOOM (to be confirmed)

Proposed dates for 2025 Region Meetings

March 15; June 21; September 20

Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News
Friday, October 25, 2024

2024 Closing Dates are:

November 24; December 27.

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

Celebrating Community in Croydon



CELEBRATING A 70TH BIRTHDAY is always a special occasion, however, for SI Croydon's Pat Dale, her day was spent supporting the community.

Thanks to a significant donation from an international foundation, SI Croydon partnered with Croydon Voluntary Action to identify and award shopping vouchers to local families needing support.

Sixty-one family representatives attended the gifting ceremony at the David Lean Cinema.

Additionally, donations ranging from £2000 to £5000 were given to eight local community organisations.

Croydon members are delighted to be able to help community groups working with: Care leavers; Family counselling; Food banks; Homelessness; Mental health; Young carers; Youth empowerment.

It is anticipated that over 3400 individuals will benefit from the gifts and donations distributed on the day.

ROXANNE ST CLAIR, SI CROYDON

East Grinstead Club steps up to 90-for-90 Challenge



IN RESPONSE TO the Federation President's challenge to celebrate 90 years of SIGBI, East Grinstead members collected 90 items of non-perishable food and household essentials to be delivered to Crawley Open House.

The charity which is supported by the Club on an ongoing basis provides support and services for those suffering the effects of homelessness, unemployment, loneliness, discrimination and other forms of social exclusion.

A speaker from Open House visits the Club from time to time to update us on their development programme and to highlight any areas in which we might be able to assist them.

We were very happy to grasp this opportunity to further support the work of Open House and to continue to raise awareness of Soroptimist International.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

Bromley wear Orange at their Fairtrade Fortnight celebration



Edwina Mitchell, Carmelita Kalloe, Lesley Darvill and Angela Hume

BROMLEY CLUB MEMBERS 'oranged' Beckenham at the Methodist Church on September 25 with a great display of dazzling tops. They also collected bras to be recycled to support research against breast cancer.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



Free speakers event



LEWES AND DISTRICT club held a free speakers event on September 16, open to all at the beautifully named House of Friendship in Lewes.

Imogen Makepeace, Mayor of Lewes and District Councillor, gave a talk on the Rise of Global Violence against Women.

A familiar and very worrying topic, it was good to be reminded of how much needs to be done particularly with regard to awareness raising.

A discussion was held after the tea break about possible actions locally.

A dozen women attended the meeting, half of them new faces who we hope may join our club.

VERA GAJIC, SI LEWES

Ring out those bells tonight!



AT ITS SEPTEMBER speaker meeting East Grinstead Club was delighted to welcome Esther Klijn who had come all the way from the Lake District to talk to us about campanology.

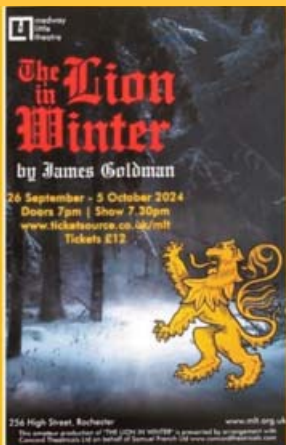
In an interesting, informative and entertaining presentation, Esther told us about the history of bell-ringing in churches, the skills required of the ringers and some of the possible dangers of the activity.

Although campanology is an enjoyable and sociable hobby, we heard how one false move could see a ringer flying up into the air and banging his/her head on the ceiling. A bell tower is not the easiest place from which to rescue an injured person!

With the help of visual aids and a video of herself in action in a ringing chamber, Esther captivated her audience and answered a wide range of questions with clarity and ease.

As a token of our thanks, Esther was pleased to accept a cheque in aid of a hospice close to her heart as well as a very well-deserved and, after a ringing session, probably much needed bottle of wine.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



ON SEPTEMBER 25 there was a charity performance of 'The Lion in Winter' at Medway Little Theatre organised by Angela Howe.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists and friends enjoyed an excellent amateur production of this historical dramatic comedy about who will inherit Henry II's crown and the plotting and betrayals that pursue.

This was a fundraiser event in aid of Medway Hygiene Bank and other Soroptimist causes.

The proceeds from the ticket sales and raffle held on the night raised £327.

JANE BARNES,
SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



Charity Theatre
Performance
Fundraiser at
Medway Little Theatre



Soroptimist International South East England Region 65th Annual General Meeting



Welcome

President Alison welcomed everyone to the 65th Annual General Meeting at the Holiday Inn, Rochester. This was her last meeting as Regional President and was pleased that Federation President Ruth Healey had been able to join us for the whole day.

Zaytoun

Zaytoun is a social enterprise inspired by a love of Palestinian culture, communities and cuisine. They exist to support Palestinian farmers through fair trade – 100% of our profits are reinvested into delivering this mission.

In Organic September, the Soil Association is particularly highlighting the power of collaboration and community – both vital to Zaytoun in furthering their mission to support producers in Palestine through fair trade. Sales of certified organic extra virgin olive oil and hand-rolled maftoul are supporting farming communities and women's groups in the West Bank.

We heard that Fairtrade Fortnight moved to September 09-22 for the first time and this year's call to action is #BeTheChange. It is important to choose Fairtrade for the producers in the West Bank right now. A hamper of Zaytoun products valued at £40 had been donated and was auctioned during the meeting and the successful bidder was Angela Howe pledging £55.

'My year in pictures' by President Alison

The presentation showed President Alison's year visiting all the clubs across the region at least once. Normally, President Alison will avoid having her photograph taken. So, we were fortunate to see many photos in the presentation where she was centre stage, whilst others you have to look carefully as she is hiding in the background.

She thanked all officers on the Executive for their unstinting support during "her year." She said she was always met with a warm welcome and great enthusiasm on her visits. These visits have been the real highlight for her and the whole experience of being regional president has been a pleasure and a privilege.

The 2023-2034 Region Project



The ABCD Regional Project has been a success with £4371 being raised towards the salary for a Speech and Language Therapist, Nour working with the children in the Deir Ammar refugee camp.

A further £200 was raised during the meeting making a revised total raised of £4571.

Election of Officers

Regional officers were appointed, and this included Sharon Forghani, who has taken over from Carol Reed as Regional Secretary after more than 6 years in post. It has been more challenging in identifying a Regional Treasurer, as Barbara Fisher steps down. Both Carol and Barbara were formally recognised for their extraordinary contribution to the Region. There was hand-over of Regalia from President Alison to Incoming President Sue and Roxanne StClair as President Elect and Keji Moses as Vice President.

SIGBI President Ruth Healey

A question had been given in advance: -
'How will/does the contract with the new PR company impact our recruitment of new members?'

continued on page 08

SISEE Region 65th AGM continued

SIGBI President Ruth Healey (continued)

We all tend to think that everyone does things the same way as us; we think that all our club meetings are the same, all our regional meetings are the same but that really couldn't be further from the truth! Actually, we pretty much all do it differently; we have different ways of running our meetings, different ways of keeping in touch with each other and different projects we support but the one common denomination is our concern and care for women and girls.

The PR company is called ALTITUDE and they have a one year contract that can be extended for a further year. The target is to have a corporate identity so all Soroptimists will become known to journalists by using the same message.

Currently there is inconsistency, so they will produce a statement that we all adhere to before going into lengthy explanations of what we do in our clubs.

A "long" and "short" blog will be available for us to use by the end of September.

They are starting from zero exposure in the media with a slow burn to get over our message and hopefully attract new members.

Membership Workshop

It was pleasing to note that we had increased the number of members in the Region over the last 12 months and were bucking the trend. However, it was important to ensure we all focus on identifying potential new members and have effective support systems to retain members.

An interactive session was held asking members to consider responses to a series of questions and the responses were taken away to be collated and shared with Membership officers and clubs.

Long Service Awards

President Ruth presented Agatha Okwudinka (SI Medway and Maidstone) and Christine Thomas (SI Bromley) with certificates for their 25 years' service to Soroptimism.

Presentation of Grace Onions Award

The well-deserved winner selected from the four submissions were SI Whitstable & District for their work on relaunching Plastic Free Whitstable. A short presentation was given by Judith Jackson who explained this is an ongoing project, and future plans include more beach cleans, more Business Champions, establishing a review mechanism and continuing support, taking part in more events and recruiting more Community Allies.

Incoming President Sue Edgar's Vision for the Year

Sue outlined her theme which is 'It's Never Too Late – or Too Early' and how she hopes each of us will get involved in volunteering, delivering service, sharing our skills and best practice. Each club was given an Anti-spiking kit to promote along with other projects relating to education, literacy for children, and women in Prisons.

Finally

It had been a busy day and everyone was thanked for their contribution, and were looking forward to the Edinburgh Conference and the year ahead.

JANE BARNES, REGION MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS

Oasis is delighted to introduce our second screening of the classic 1940s psychological thriller **Gaslight**, starring Oscar winner **Ingrid Bergman**. Following on from our success in Broadstairs, we are thrilled to be bringing this event to **The Woodville in Gravesend**.



Hailed by the Hollywood Reporter as "extraordinary", *Gaslight* is the American film adaptation of the 1938 play by Patrick Hamilton with the same name, in which a manipulative and conniving husband tries to convince his wife she is losing her mind by making her doubt her words, actions and memory. Fast-forward to today, and the term "gaslighting" is used by many Oasis clients when describing the abuse tactics they endure from the person they should feel safest with.

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Oasis' Head of Operations, Tina Alexander, for the audience to discuss the key themes of the film.

Please join us for our first cinematic fundraising event in North Kent

📅 Wednesday 9th October 2024

🕒 Doors open at 6.30pm, event starts at 7pm

📍 The Studio, The Woodville Gravesend DA12 1DD



Tickets cost £10

Scan QR with your phone camera to book online now or go to:

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/oasisdomesticabuse/1326602>

There will be a raffle on the night with all proceeds going towards Oasis' vital work supporting individuals and families experiencing and recovering from domestic abuse in Kent.



Working to end violence and abuse.

Supporting people affected by domestic abuse
in East Kent, Medway and North Kent

www.oasisdasevice.org

Forthcoming International Days

- October 10 World Mental Health Day
- October 11 International Day of the Girl Child
- October 16 World Food Day
- October 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- November 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- December 01 World Aids Day
- December 10 Human Rights Day