



Congratulations!

to SI Liverpool Club members:

Norah Rawsthorne, Ann Clayton, Judith Harris, Sue Woods, Yvonne Davies, Carol Abbasi. (pic 1-r). Also, Anne Pagendam and Caroline Griffiths.

These wonderful ladies have an amazing combined service record of 255 years as Soroptimists. Now, that's what you call commitment.



Soroptimist International of South Lancashire Regional Conference 2024



Soroptimists standing up for women and girls. A conference focused upon the key themes of women's health and wellness, education, gender equality and human rights.

SAVE THE DATE
Saturday 11th May 2024



THE WRIGHTINGTON
HOTEL, HEALTH CLUB & SPA
Moss Lane, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB

SI ST HELENS REACH OUT TO THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE



When we heard about the war in Ukraine, we wanted to help. Items were donated to the convoy lorries leaving for Poland and a raffle organised to help refugees arriving locally. We also purchased books for distribution to girls in Ukraine, warning of the dangers of Trafficking.

We worked with the "No Duff" charity to support them to send an ambulance and supplies to Dnipro in Ukraine. Donations included; heavy duty water containers, purification tablets, survival blankets and specialist purification straws. Damage to the infrastructure had caused many water supplies to be contaminated so these items were desperately needed. Blankets, sleeping bags and other essential items were also donated.

We were in direct contact with SI Dnepropetrovsk, who requested candles, torches and batteries, vital for long power cuts. These items were purchased using raffle funds raised at a joint meeting with Widnes and Warrington and transported by ambulance.

The ambulance left for Ukraine in February proudly bearing the Soroptimist St Helens logo and reached the hospital a week later. Items sent to the Dnipro Soroptimists were distributed by the Ukrainian women's army to families in need.

Contributed by Anne Jones

Club News from around the Region

SI Widnes – Join Forces to Tackle Abuse

On 11th March a joint meeting was held with St. Helens and Warrington. The theme was abuse of three different kinds; elder abuse, in the work place and forced marriage. Denise Parker spoke on elder abuse. 35 women attended and there was excellent participation.



The President's Party

It was good to welcome presidents from around the region when we held a party in April to celebrate and thank Lily and Marjorie, who have served as joint presidents for the past year. Members and guests tackled the various quizzes that were to be found on the tables before enjoying the excellent buffet. Everyone received an item from the lucky dip to round off the evening.



Our AGM took place on 24th April and included reports on the different aspects of the life of the Club. This year felt as if we were very much 'back to normal' and it was good to realise how much we have achieved in the past year, in terms of our Programme Action work, as well as enjoying a number of Social events. The officers were thanked for their leadership and hard work.

Then it was time to install our officers for the coming year, with our candle lighting ceremony. Sheelagh Dayus was welcomed as our incoming President and presented with flowers as well as the chain of office. Flowers were also presented to Lily and Marjorie, our outgoing presidents. We also welcomed Anne Alvers as a new member.



Contributed by Wendy Ross-Barker

SI Crosby – Club News

On International Women's Day in March, Soroptimists from Crosby, Liverpool, Southport and Bootle clubs visited the new Royal University Hospital in Liverpool to present a cheque for £7,500 to be used by the Safeguarding Team to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable, abused women. The four clubs had worked independently with a single aim over several years to provide a Sanctuary Room in the hospital. Sadly, a room is no longer a possibility, so instead the money will be used to alleviate the suffering of victims by provision of Comfort Bags containing essential items and information. The new hospital is a light, airy and spacious building with several open garden spaces where patients and their families can enjoy the air surrounded by flowers and trees. The group visited the Palliative Care unit and the multi faith Chapel and experienced the optical illusion of the 'tube' followed by lunch in the top floor Sky restaurant where there were spectacular views of the city.



In February we welcomed Sue Doyle, a volunteer speaker with the Royal Osteoporosis Society, to give us the facts about bone health. We learned about osteoporosis and the medications treatments available. Sue is a member of SI Wigan.

In March we held a Celebration Dinner Dance to mark the end of our 84th year. This was an outstanding success - lots of fun and friendship was enjoyed by all. The dance floor was filled with fun loving Soroptimists until nearly midnight.

Meanwhile one of our newer members, Abby Younis, missed the Celebration as she was busy representing SIGBI at the UN CSW67 in New York. We also held a Poetry Evening in March to raise funds for Autism Initiatives.

During the recent April AGM, our new President for 2023 - 2024, Jill Boggan was inaugurated. Jill is Director of Finance for the Archdiocese of Liverpool and has been our minuting secretary and Chair of Fundraising. Thanks to her we have enjoyed several fundraising events like 'Allo 'Allo and 'Fawlty Towers.' Something fireproof was needed for the Candle Ceremony so Basil's tray was used! Outside Soroptimism, Jill has been Treasurer for Age Concern Crosby and has also driven a van full of aid to Ukraine, twice during the past year.



At the beginning of May, Past President Chris Smith and her husband were invited to meet King Charles and Queen Camilla at a reception for Ukrainian families and their hosts in Liverpool Central Library. Chris has hosted a Ukrainian family since last September. During Eurovision, another Crosby Past President, Ann McCracken, donned a yellow T shirt and cape as a volunteer for the event. One BBC Eurovision broadcast was even made from her kitchen!

Meanwhile we have continued to help at Lunt Meadows with wet sieving and digitising archaeological finds. Our Social events programme has continued too, with a visit to see Sister Act. All in all, it has been a very busy few months for SI Crosby.

Contributed by Margaret Davidson

SI Ramsbottom

The new President of Ramsbottom Soroptimists, Caroline, was installed by Past President Ann at our AGM at the Red Hall Hotel, Bury. Caroline is pictured lighting the Soroptimist International candle at the installation candle ceremony. The orange jacket and scarf is in recognition of Orange Day. Ann also presented long service awards to Denise (45 years), Jean (35 years) and Sue (30 years). That's a lot of service! Well done you three and here's to many more years serving the Ramsbottom community and beyond!



We held our annual Seniors' party at Ramsbottom Cricket Club with a theme of 'The Coronation.' Fifty guests were treated to a wonderful tea, entertainment, bingo and a quiz. Pictured are some of the guests and members who organised the afternoon, which was enjoyed by all.



Contributed by Ann Bennett

SI Ashton-under- Lyne



We held our Charity Giving Night to distribute funds raised by over the course of the last 12 months.

Willow Wood Hospice received £1000 and Alder Hey Children's Hospital received £300 for the children's Cardiac Ward. This money was raised by Lesley Walker who has compiled a book of Story Rhymes - Lesley went out and about reading her own work. Club members also donated towards the Children's Cardiac Ward. Stanley House, where we meet, was given £200 for the roof fund.



The cheques were presented by President Jaya Rao to Lisa Buckley for Willow Wood and Becky Cocks for Alder Hey Hospital.

Contributed by Jill Dewsnap

SI Manchester & The Big Help Out

Manchester Club have a strong partnership with Emmeline's Pantry, a charity which support families in need, particularly women and children escaping domestic violence.

They were having a Disney Day on May 20th to raise money and also to give the families they support, a fun day out.

Volunteers were needed and four of our members spent a very happy day helping with refreshments, running the raffle and the toy stall.



We also donated toys which had been given to us. It was so lovely seeing the children with the toysand the sun shone that day, which was a bonus!

Contributed by Rose Marginson

Manchester BloodBikes address South Lancashire Soroptimists



On Saturday 4th March, we had our Regional Programme Action meeting. Our speakers were members of BloodBikes Manchester, an organisation offering such a valuable service for free. They are a volunteer organisation providing a transport service to carry blood, milk for babies to and from the milk bank, medications and equipment. They work in conjunction with North West Air ambulance and have two cars, six bikes and are part of the Nationwide Association of BloodBikes.

They offer their services from 7.00pm till 6.00 am daily and 24 hours on weekends and Bank holidays. They explained how they organise their work and how they arrange long distance transportation using different members for different parts of the journey. Accurate co-ordination is essential.

These amazing heroes work so hard and save the NHS around £1million. Our members were so impressed that a hat collection raised more than £200 in a few minutes.

Pictured - Regional PA Chair on a blood bike with a biker standing by.

Contributed by Sriya

SI ST HELENS - ALZHEIMERS SOCIETY



Our 2022-3 President Diane chose the Alzheimer’s Society as her Charity for the year. Diane’s mother Alice was diagnosed with the disease in 1980 at the age of 51 at a time when few people had heard of it, especially not in one so young. Her father Tom devoted the next 12 years to caring for Alice, selling his business and the family home to retire to Grange over Sands where he could be seen pushing her wheelchair along the prom and admiring the stunning views across Morecambe Bay.

Diane’s Charity lunch raised £1,000 for the Alzheimer’s Society and the cheque was duly presented to Chantelle Day, the regional fundraiser. Diane’s brother Steve Wainwright, a local social historian, also pledged £1 for every one of the first 1000 copies sold of his latest book ‘The Hidden History of St. Helens ‘ Volume 2. This target was reached just before the end of Diane’s Presidential year in April.

Contributed by Anne Jones

SI SOUTHPORT

The last meeting of President Carol Cookson's year celebrated our fund-raising efforts. Heather Shulver and her team prepared a wonderful West African buffet and gave us an update on the Don McMath School in the Gambia.



For a number of years, our club has sponsored girls at the Don McMath School to progress their education through both primary and senior levels. It is always rewarding to read the girls' reports and to receive some lovely photos. We invited as our guests, the recipients of our fund-raising activities.

Cheques were presented to Riding for the Disabled, Samaritans, Alzheimer's Society and Compassion Acts. The final presentation was made at the May meeting to the Learning Rooms, Southport. They showed an excellent video and answered questions from SI Southport members. Well done to the team for all the worthwhile work they do.



At the AGM in April, SI Southport elected Agnes Ng as President for its 91st year. Agnes takes over from Carol Cookson, who has led the Club very successfully (for 18 months) in her second tenure as President. Agnes was inducted at a lovely lunch at the Southport Old Links Golf Club. President Agnes is keen to involve all members and friends in activities inside and outside of the club.

One such event was the annual 'Star Trekk', a 10K evening walk through the streets of Southport in support of our local hospice, Queenscourt Hospice. President Agnes, Rosemary Moore and I participated, along with over 900 others, which included dogs, babies and even a dinosaur. It was a beautiful (and dry!) evening and there was a great atmosphere with music, a rock choir and refreshments to help us on our way.

We raised around £700 in donations and sponsorships and are very grateful to everyone for their generosity in aid of the Hospice.

Of course, any further sponsors and donations are always welcome and the 'Just Giving' link is still open

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/soroptimists>



Contributed by Ghislaine Fletcher

SI ST HELENS – We are Family

When we heard about the war in Ukraine in March 2022, my husband and I applied to become a host family. Our application was successful and Aid Ukraine UK contacted us with news that a family had been found for us:- Mum, Irina aged 42 years, Veronika, (Nika) aged 15 years and Anastasia aged 4 years. They had left their city Dnipro at the start of the war and reached Poland. From there they were moved to Germany and then on to the Netherlands.

We corresponded via WhatsApp thinking it wouldn't be long before the family moved to England. Mum had an international passport, Nika had a Ukrainian pass but Anastasia only had a birth certificate as a form of ID. They completed the relevant forms in Amsterdam and were informed it would only be a few weeks, but it took months. During that time, I maintained contact with my local MP and the Home Office for updates.

The family eventually arrived on 10th August to Manchester Airport, hot, bothered and the little girl physically vomiting - not the best start! It was also her 4th birthday. Three suitcases and three backpacks were all they had, but it was a huge relief that they were safe. A fellow Soroptimist kindly gave me a car seat for the 4-year-old, the first of many donations by the Club.

Anastasia was nicknamed Nastia, not a very nice name for a little girl in England. I explained to Mum and we decided to call her Stasia. We were initially informed that local schools were not taking extra pupils and the children would most likely have to travel to the other side of town. A fellow Soroptimist gave advice on completing school application forms and we managed to find local school places for the girls. There were many, many forms to complete and often an interpreter was needed. A mobile app called *sayhi translate* was most useful and used frequently.

We soon worked out a routine of living together, as we had to share a kitchen, bathroom and shower room. Luckily, we had two toilets and the bedrooms have washbasins. Mum and Stasia shared a bedroom, Nika had a room to herself and they had their own lounge.

The family had never had pets and were delighted with our two Labradors, one only a few months old. Language was not a problem when playing and walking the dogs. Food was an issue as some Ukrainian food was not to my husband's taste. We solved this by the family eating first, about 6pm and then it was our turn to cook, eating about 7.30pm. The family often joined us for a meal on Sundays.

The family had come with few personal possessions but toiletries, food, clothing, school uniform, toys, bicycles etc were all offered by local people as well as Soroptimists. I regularly found bin bags outside the front door full of items from an anonymous person!

Unfortunately, there did not appear to be an on-going plan regarding what happened to the family after hosting for 6 months. This caused much worry for us and for the family. Unless we could find affordable housing, they could be made homeless and it would be up to the local council to organise somewhere for them to live. Luckily a friend had a two bedroomed house, which she was prepared to rent out to the family. After living with us for eight months and one day, the family moved into their own accommodation. So many local people helped furnish the house and St Helens Soroptimists donated a bucket of cleaning products, bags of toiletries and personal items for Irina and Nika, a backpack for Stasia and enough money to purchase a washing machine. Fellow Soroptimists also donated bedding, kitchen utensils and hand crocheted blankets.

Irina was delighted with all the gifts and is so grateful. She thanked everyone, saying she is so happy her children are safe and very happy now. *(Continued on next page)*

More forms now need to be completed and problems still crop up in translation, including 6 double sided pages per person, to transfer to a different GP practice!

Luckily neither girl needs to transfer schools. Stasia is very happy and settled at school, she seems to be popular and has attended 15 birthday parties so far! Nika has dropped down a year, giving her two years to study for GCSE's. Their first language is Russian so it must be very difficult learning to read, write and speak another language when you only know the Cyrillic alphabet. Their spoken English is better than their mother's, but they are teaching her. Needless to say, our spoken Russian is minimal to say the least!

Irina is urgently looking for employment but has a problem as she can only work after Anastasia goes to school at 9am and has to collect her by 3.15pm.

This story sounds straightforward but in truth it was difficult for both families at times, but we have become bonded in a way we never thought possible and they have become our Ukrainian family.



Contributed by Linda Spakouskas

SI LEIGH & DISTRICT

International Women’s Day 8th March 2023

In partnership with Leigh Spinners Mill, SI Leigh organised an event for IWD to celebrate the achievements of local women, with speakers from different walks of life including our own Dorothy Bowker, who was presented with a surprise ‘Heart of the community award’ by councillor Debra Wailes. The event was well attended and is something we hope to build on. To round off the day we braved the cold to join our WASPI friends to see the Town Hall proudly lit up Purple for IWD and WASPI.



We were busy in March....

We welcomed members of Girl Guiding, their leaders and parents, raising funds towards trips to Canada and Japan. They gave an excellent presentation of their planned adventures, followed by Bronwen and Sue from ‘Days for Girls’, who brought along samples of fantastic re-usable kits, which they make and send abroad to enable girls to attend school with dignity. We presented a total of £200 on the night and were also able to provide three dozen pairs of black knickers and lots of travel size soaps to go in the period packs.

We had a fantastic and emotional presentation from the Baby Room representative Alison Wakefield, based at Leigh Spinners. The audience were impressed by how powerful and supportive this initiative is. In recognition the club donated £75 which is the cost of one of the baby packages, given to ladies identified by health professionals as in need of support. In addition, there are many ways that we can provide ongoing support.



Easter saw us make our annual delivery of Easter eggs for children in refuge accommodation. Thank you to The Bridge for supplying the eggs.

SI LEIGH & DISTRICT



Also, over the Easter holiday we caught up with WN7 OUTREACH to present them with their Golden Star Award, at the end of one of their Rugby sessions.

We gained a new member... Tracey Andrew from Beauty for Ashes Refuges joined us. Welcome Tracey - we look forward to forming a mutually beneficial partnership.



This is The Marigold Room at The Bridge. S.I. Leigh provided the funding to furnish this wellbeing room.

At the beginning of her year, President Dorothy presented all members with a challenge - she gave each of us £5 from her honorarium and asked us to 'grow your fiver'. We rose to the challenge in many and varied ways raising over £1000.00 which was shared between M.N.D. association, The Christie, Greater Manchester Blood Bikes, Derian House and a further donation to The Baby Room at Spinners Mill. Dorothy got her wish...to sit on one of the Blood Bikes!



The A.G.M. and Change of insignia, Gail Farrar was presented with the chain of office, we look forward to another busy year serving the community and raising funds for worthy causes. Gail thanked I.P.P Dorothy for inspiring us and presented her with a pair of Amber earrings from club members as a token of appreciation.

All submissions contributed by Lynda Lilley

SI LIVERPOOL – CELEBRATE 255 YEARS OF SERVICE

At our recent change of insignia, club members welcomed President Ann Mercer as the 97th President.

It was a great honour, as her first task as President was to begin the club year by awarding long service certificates and flowers to eight club members, who between them have given over 255 years of service to Soroptimism!

What an amazing legacy in the service of women and girls!

Congratulations to (l to r) Norah Rawsthorne, Ann Clayton, Judith Harris, Sue Woods, Yvonne Davies, Carol Abbasi. Also, Anne Pagendam and Caroline Griffiths.

A huge thank you to you all!



Contributed by Anne Grimes