



Hello All,

What extraordinary times we find ourselves in! This is an update on what Stafford has been doing to keep in touch and respond to the crisis.

Keeping in touch with each other:

We have two WhatsApp groups:

- SI Stafford Club includes all club members with capable phones who want to be included
- Care Home Scrubbers dedicated to the seamstresses among us – more later in this update

The SI Stafford WhatsApp group keeps members in touch on a social basis and we have shared many hints and tips on local, smaller companies who deliver or support click and collect from greengrocers to garden centres; we want to see these family businesses when we are through this crisis so it's good to be able to support them. We have shared favourite mugs & recipe books alongside the reasons these are favourites, videos of walks so our members who cannot get out can join us and see the signs of Spring emerging, our Easter decorations, favourite drinks (we seem to be a gin loving club!), quiz questions and many, many laughs. We have been there to support each other when members are worried about 'children' stranded in Australia (now back safely) and members with 'children' on the front line. We have seen members' hidden talents as artists, we have shared book recommendations and kept up to date with cultural opportunities available on YouTube from The National Theatre & The Show Must Go On – but the best cultural event in our lives will start on May 1st when the 'SI Stafford Songbirds' virtual choir has its first 'performance'.

Strangely we are getting to know each other better through this essential chat and are sure friendships and our common purpose will be stronger when we meet face to face again.



Some of the Easter Wreaths & Trees made by members





We asked members to post photos of them clapping at 8pm on a Thursday evening and share so members living alone can 'clap with friends.' A few photos below:



Eileen, Heather, Alison, Maudie, Tina, Janet & Debbie all clapping for Key Workers

SI Stafford 'Care Home Scrubbers'

Care Home Scrubbers is the name coined for our band of extraordinarily talented and enthusiastic seamstresses who are busy sewing scrubs for the staff in a Care Home to wear instead of their own clothes. It has been a well organised mission led by Joint President Elect Gill Green, with tasks allocated via spreadsheet by our able treasurer Alison!

Members who do not sew have volunteered to deliver material and collect finished articles dropping these off in Gill's garage ready for the onward journey. The first batch of 47 sets of scrubs was delivered last weekend and the recipients are delighted and said they feel genuinely cared for. Next batch well underway.

This WhatsApp group has been such a good support network for the tricky bits - like the neckline; for non-seamstresses understanding the messages has required a new dictionary! Pockets and necklines have been embellished and the final products modelled by some 'Soroptimisters' – this is definitely a project that has been embraced with fervour and will form a basis for more, similar projects (as in sewing rather than crisis response) in future.

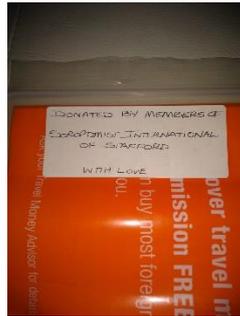
Photos of the scrub creation in action from delivery, cutting out, sewing and modelling





Knitted Hearts

Debbie Hardman-Wilson responded to the request for knitted hearts which have been collected by a member of staff at the County Hospital to give to patients and relatives – providing some tangible connection for families separated through illness at a time they most want to be together.



Club Business

Heather has been keeping our presence on FaceBook up to date with the sewing activities and Eileen has been recruiting help with the new website to ensure we reload information that was lost during the website transition as well as uploading current content.

The Exec has met twice via Zoom and put three proposals to all club members via email:

- The current officers remain in post during the pandemic completing an 18 month term followed by the new officers taking over and also serving an 18 months term until April 2022. There were no objections so this is what SI Stafford will do – it gives the club stability and allows the incoming officers to ‘push back’ their term of office and plan with greater certainty
- There was a proposal to distribute charitable funds now rather than delay until we meet face to face which was agreed
- There was a proposal to split subscription payments and pay the amount required to meet SIGBI & Regional levies now with the balance due once we have clarity on when we can meet again and the club’s obligations for the venue etc.; this was agreed

SI Stafford has four new members – we are pleased to welcome a long standing Soroptimist, Debbie Hardman-Wilson who has transferred from SI Tamworth to SI Stafford and are delighted to also welcome three new Soroptimists, Sue Davis, Val Westerman & Heather Hammett. We very much look forward to welcoming them all properly when we meet again face to face.

Donations

The club has agreed charitable donations to be made to Stafford Foodbanks, DFN UK, Stafford Samaritans, Staffordshire Women’s Aid & SIGBI Benevolent Fund.



Programme Action

While the sewing has very much been PA work in practice we have also completed a couple of other projects.

We now have 44 knitted scarves to support SI Walsall's project in Turkey and look forward to the day we can hand these over to Barbara.

Some of the 44 scarves knitted by members and friends



We have some knitted baby clothes to go to young mums – unfortunately our Young Persons Support Services outlet which supported pregnant girls under 19 years of age, has had their funding withdrawn under council cuts so has been disbanded. A very sad position as the team did so much to support a very vulnerable group of girls and their families.



Baby clothes knitted by members and friends

Domestic Abuse Bill

Club PA Ambassadors have circulated information to all members on the Domestic Abuse Bill and some members followed the debate on Tuesday 28th. The protection for survivors of Domestic Abuse who are driven to offend is aligned to our work with Drake Hall Prison – which unfortunately, is currently in limbo given the ban on external visitors during the pandemic.

Finally

We look forward to meeting all our fellow Soroptimists in SI Midland Chase when are through to the other side of this pandemic; until then stay safe & well!