

SI Midland Arden Region Newsletter – JUNE 2020 Soroptimists in Lockdown



A message from President Rose.....

I hope this message finds you and your families well and that you are all coping with this extra-ordinary situation. I am certainly not going to forget my year as your Regional President, but probably for all the wrong reasons.

Since our last newsletter, I was delighted to see you all at Wolston for our meeting. I know from the feedback that you all enjoyed the morning, especially hearing from Dame Vera Baird. The following day I was delighted to join SI Stourbridge for afternoon tea at Jonathans in the Park, in celebration of International Women's Day. That week also saw the completion of our Domestic Violence Courts observations - a huge project across all Midland regions.

It was evident at that point that things were changing around the world, but little did we know what was to come. All other events have since been cancelled, but I know from your messages that you are all trying to embrace technology and build on the good work you have already started. For incoming Presidents and for clubs themselves, all plans have been changed but we need to look forward and think outside the box. We are resourceful women and I know you will all come up with inventive ways to continue. Many of us are on a fast learning curve with Zoom meetings. If you have not tried this, I would encourage you to give it a go; it really is quite easy once you get the hang of it.

I know many of you like me have been supporting local sewing groups with scrubs, laundry bags, headbands and masks. As an NHS worker, I know how much these small gifts have been appreciated. However, those of you who do not feel up to the challenge of new technology or do not own a sewing machine, please do not feel that you have not contributed. By staying at home and conforming with the lockdown, you have given the greatest gift you can to your family, friends and the NHS, by not spreading this disease. I know this has not been an easy time for many of you living alone, but I hope that being part of this organisation has given you a little contact with the outside world.

I have participated in two meetings with Federation President Isobel, regional Presidents and countrywide Presidents from around our federation. This is a positive from this pandemic, as these meetings would not normally take place. We are all able to share what is happening in our areas. At the last meeting we heard from the Caribbean President and from South Africa, where members are concentrating on ensuring everyone has access to food and particularly water.

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We have also now held our first Regional Officers Committee meeting via Zoom. We were not due to meet again until September, but as so many things needed discussion we brought this meeting forward. I will be sending a separate message with more details of our decisions. I look forward to reading the rest of this newsletter to see what you have all been getting up to. (You will have filled in your Programme Action Forms won't you ??)

With very best wishes,

Rose



ROSE AT WORK

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SI BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH

Our club decided to Twin our Tap with another Tap in the World through Toilet Twinning. £60.00 would provide hygiene promotion and training in vulnerable communities across more than 45 countries. This is to help people understand how to protect themselves from Covid-19 through hand washing and good hygiene. Our tap is twinned with a Tippy Tap in Guatemala. The Tippy Tap consists of an old plastic container with a hollow handle, three sticks and some string. A hole is made in the handle so that when the bottle is tipped the water trickles out. A piece of soap is threaded onto a piece of string and then tied to the same stick as the bottle so that the soap is just in the right place for hand washing. We all need to work together to reduce and remove the spread of Covid-19.



Several of our members have been making NHS laundry bags and headbands which go to Hospitals, Care Homes, GP's and anywhere else they are needed. The laundry Bags are used to put the Care Workers uniform into when they leave their work. They can safely take them home and put the whole bag into the washing machine, thereby minimising the spread of germs, virus and disease. The headbands are used to hold the face masks in place, because their constant use was causing sore areas behind the ears. The masks can now loop onto the buttons placed on the head band. To date, two members have made a total of 64 laundry bags and 100 headbands. Well done to them!

Bromsgrove and Redditch Soroptimists have made or collected up "Thank You Cards" for the Charity 'Hope at Home'. The Charity supports survivors of Slavery and Trafficking by housing them in private homes until they are confident, settled and able to find accommodation of their own. 'Hope at Home' was one of the speakers at our recent Slavery and Trafficking Awareness Day held last October in Bromsgrove. Over sixty Cards were handed over to the Charity to help them in their work. Hope at Home's Helen Hodgson thanked the Soroptimists very much for their support.



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SI BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH continued

'JUSTICE AND CARE' are asking for support to lobby the Government. They say that when we start to experience our own freedom again, Slavery Victims across the UK will remain locked away. 'Justice and Care' will send a clear message, with our help, to the UK Government - that the lives of those in Slavery matter and that we will remember them. We will be supporting them by sending a montage of pictures of members holding a poster saying #UNLOCKTHEDOORS standing in front of their doors.

SI COVENTRY

Dates for Diaries – We will notify you if we have to cancel

Saturday 18 July – Cream Tea Garden Party

Saturday 3 October - Autumn Charity Fashion show - £15 including glass of Prosecco and afternoon tea. High Street brands e.g. Monsoon, Wallis, M&S. Full details to follow.

These are the some of the things that have been happening during the Covid-19 lockdown:

- We held our AGM online
- We arranged 18-month presidential terms for 2019/20 and 20/21 presidents, with a changeover in October. We are hoping this will be a face-to-face ceremony
- President Carol sends a weekly email of news, both good and bad, together with thoughts from members and things that have made us happy during the previous week
- We hold a weekly Zoom meeting for members
- Every member belongs to a small 'contact group', who keep in touch with each other at least once a week
- Several members continue Programme Action for girls and babies in Africa and India, making dresses, nighties, cardigans, and hats;
- Many members are volunteering at local food banks, making up or distributing food parcels, supporting elderly and vulnerable neighbours;
- We are supporting our local women's refuge with financial aid rather than in kind; many members are donating what they would have spent at club meetings.

TWO NEW MEMBERS in February! We were delighted to welcome Val and Jayne into the club. Their induction was especially memorable as two visitors from Midland Arden Region, Janice and Denise from S.I. Kidderminster were also with us for this meeting. As usual, members celebrated with cake, provided on this occasion by Harriet.

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SI COVENTRY continued

Programme Action

BAG-PACKING AT TESCO

On Friday 6 December a group of five members went Tesco Ricoh Arena to bag pack. This was our first venture doing this and any money raised was going to our charity, Health Help International. The staff and customers were very friendly and helpful, and were interested both in our charity and in Soroptimists. People were generous and often contributed even if they preferred to pack for themselves. We finished at 12.45 pm. The five members who volunteered managed to raise £122.32 for our efforts. We look forward to doing this again, hopefully with more volunteers.

FUND-RAISING SUCCESSES

At the end of the year we donated £53.75 to the Federation Benevolent Fund; this amount was collected in 5-penny pieces at every meeting during the year.

We also sent £1000 to Health Help International, our charity for the year. This, together with the £500 sent in August, has made a substantial contribution to the facilities at Thanal House, where destitute women with mental health issues are cared for. The earlier sum was used to connect the septic tank to the new toilet block, which enabled completion of the toilet-block project.

CLOTHES FOR AFRICA AND INDIA

At least two members are still busy during lockdown with knitting needles and sewing machines, making clothes for girls and babies in Africa and India.



SPEAKER MEETINGS

INTERNATIONAL NIGHT AND LADY GODIVA'S OVERSEAS WORK



We celebrated International Day at our meeting in November. Candles were lit for our Friendship Link Clubs. Our Friendship Link Co-ordinator, Margaret Mary, mentioned the ways we had kept in contact with each club during the year. A most interesting talk followed by Lady Godiva (Pru Porretta, one of our own members). She told us about some of the places she has visited, and the work she does with schoolchildren wherever she goes.

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SI COVENTRY continued

GLOBAL CARE

In January we welcomed Carolyn, who is a volunteer from Global Care, a local Coventry charity focussing on children. It is a Christian-based charity active in 17 countries in 4 continents and its commitment is to reach the 'poorest of the poor'. This includes children stigmatised by disability, street children, those affected by HIV / Aids, children from persecuted ethnicities. The charity works through grass-root organisations and local people; this enables them to make links to local resources as well as to support the groups to become self-sustaining. Education is prioritised and other related projects have developed, such as adult literacy. Carolyn spoke with passion, and her motto resonated with us all: "Can't do everything, mustn't do nothing, can do something"

COVENTRY NIGHT SHELTER

In February, Simon Brake gave us a very illuminating talk on Coventry Winter Night Shelter, a voluntary organisation run by religious communities around the city providing shelter for rough sleepers during the winter months of December to March. The organisation provides 20 beds per night, rotated between seven centres, and enables guests to have a warm bed, hot food, friendship, and support over the winter months. There is also help to find and move into housing, e.g. help with obtaining identity documents, access to mobile phones, deposits and first month's rents on housing. Guests are also offered clothing, shoes, and other necessities and are signposted to appropriate services. The project is multi-faith and assists over 60 adults each year, all of whom have been assessed to ensure all guests are safe, with drug, alcohol abuse and disruptive behaviour not tolerated. It was very humbling to hear of the work and dedication of these volunteers, giving up their time to help those who are so marginalised and vulnerable. especially as the Night Shelters are open every night during the winter including weekends and holidays. For more information see: cwnsbernardo@hopecoventry.org.uk

KAIROS

Michelle Hughes was our speaker in March. She is the acting Chief Executive Officer at a Coventry charity: Kairos Women Working Together. Kairos was set up in 1999 by a small group of volunteers to reach out to women caught up in sexual exploitation and street prostitution. The founders recognised that these women were marginalised and vulnerable, finding it difficult to access services such as health care. Michelle explained some of the factors that affect the women that Kairos works with and reasons for them being vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Many have experienced child abuse, been in Local Authority Care, have mental health difficulties, are homeless, misuse alcohol and/or drugs. Kairos provides women with personalised, non-judgemental services, including outreach work, drop-in sessions, one-to-one and group support, criminal justice and prison visiting to help women through the criminal justice system. A prevention service works to support young women who are at risk of sexual exploitation. Their latest project is a partnership with Coventry Haven, providing women only safe housing. One of the most important aspects of the work is keeping promises; Kairos always fulfils the promises it makes to its clients - very important to women who have been failed many times by other organisations. A collection amongst our members raised £90.50 for the charity.

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SI HEREFORD

We, in Hereford would like to wish everyone health and safety in this really worrying time. Who would have thought that things could have come to such a standstill so quickly virtually throughout the world? We all sympathize with everyone who has had losses during this period and reiterate the enormous thanks to all the front line workers who are trying so very hard to maintain their professional roles throughout this pandemic.

Club has managed to maintain seven members to carry on in 2020/21, one of whom is in hospital and has been very poorly but she is making steady progress. Rosemary, Violette Szabo Museum Curator, had been busy organizing a celebratory event at the Museum in July but has had to postpone until next year. Although this has created much extra work, she has now completed her changes and able to rest again. It is disappointing that we lost four members last year as they were all good friends, but it was mostly due to their family commitments that they were no longer able to continue.

We were unable to meet for an AGM but carried this out via email and snail mail, thus enabling us to plan for the time we can meet together as a club. Last year was a very good year for us as we had seemed to have quite a few activities which raised us some money, so grateful thanks to all members for their generosity.

Unfortunately, we - as all others - have been unable to meet up but we have not been idle. Anne and I have been sewing away. Anne has made 10 scrub bags via 'For the Love of Scrubs' and 30 masks, 20 gowns and is awaiting 6 sets of scrubs to sew. I have done 10 scrub bags and 12 masks. My scrub bags went to Hereford Hospital - for which we had a grateful reply from Lucy Flanagan, Director of Nursing, who was really most appreciative (they also had leaflets of our Organisation so that we could use it as an advertising opportunity too.) The masks have been handed to friends and family. Anne is a really good member and we cherish her busy participation.

This week I was really excited to receive a card from Federation President Isobel and Regional President Rose, congratulating me on 25 years as a Soroptimist Member. At first I was unaware of the dates and on checking through my personal archives soon realized why I had received it. I can honestly say that during these years I have met so many super ladies and what a joy it is to work with an Organisation that has the same true values.

I have also enjoyed many happy hours in Wales South and Midland Arden. It is true to say that wherever you are you will always be happy in Soroptimist company. Sadly, I am not as switched on as I used to be, mainly because I am not able to spend so much time with a keyboard - but I have a go and try.

Let's all hope for a safe and healthy year and make some more monies for our charities. We look forward to seeing you all at the Regional Meetings.

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SI KENILWORTH AND DISTRICT

We might be in lockdown but we're certainly not shut down! Most importantly during lockdown, we're keeping in touch to make that difference to our own members. With SIGBI President Isobel's message firmly in mind: *'THIS IS A TIME WHEN FRIENDSHIP AND CARING COME INTO THEIR OWN'*.

Lockdown isn't stopping us from getting up to all sorts! Are you ready for this? Get set go! We are: Creating cards for special people, shopping for those in isolation, making phone calls, chatting from a safe distance. What's Apping – is that even a verb?! Zooming has taken on a whole new meaning! Covid 19 might mean that we can't meet as we usually do, BUT - we can still stay social.

Future Soroptimist?



Some of us are cooking for *Molly's Meals*. This has been set up by a young lady called Molly in Kenilworth. She's been helping people who are self-isolating as a result of the pandemic before any community systems were started.

30 Cottage pies and peas!

Definitely a potential Soroptimist in the making!

Scrubbing for the NHS

Some have joined *Warwickshire Scrubbers* and *Scrub Hub North Warwickshire*. Sewing machines dusted down, duvets and sheets, sewing stashes ransacked. All made up into scrubs, scrubs bags and headbands to support our local NHS and frontline health professionals.



Not forgetting our regular Thursday 8pm Clap for Key Workers

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SI KIDDERMINSTER AND DISTRICT

Our last big fundraising event before the COVID-19 lockdown was a Big Curry Night held in February in aid of the Empowering Girls in Nepal project. We had a terrific evening and the food was superb - well worth all the hard work- especially as £900 was made to be donated to the charity. Thanks to the Soroptimist cooks who made the evening such a success. The ambience of the room at Baxter Church in Kidderminster was a match for any restaurant. Philip Holmes was in attendance, signing and selling his latest book 'Gates of Bronze' – his own personal story of finding redemption and purpose in Nepal.



We are still holding our business and supper meetings every month online. How many of us had heard of Zoom before the lockdown? Soroptimists cannot sit still for long. Although we have to adhere to social distancing and remain at home as much as possible, that does not mean everything comes to a standstill. We regularly make and donate baby clothes and accessories for Hoima and now we have added face masks and scrub bags to our repertoire. We hold a regular monthly walk in aid of Water Aid and although our March walk had to be cancelled we were still able to donate £90 to Water Aid collected during previous walks.

To borrow a phrase from Winston Churchill, it appears that we are now at 'the end of the beginning' of this terrible virus. I read or heard something recently which said to look for the good thing in every bad situation. One of the good things about this bad situation is the community spirit which has arisen in all areas and people now are more willing to help one another. I sincerely hope that this spirit continues long after the end of the virus.

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SI RUGBY

Supporting Refuge and Hope 4

We are continuing to collect donations for the Foodbank and the Refuge in Rugby.



We made a donation of £600 to Refuge (Rugby Services) to help support women escape domestic violence during lockdown.

Bra Banks

We have continued to support Refuge through our bra collections. This year we have raised £185 by collecting used bras at our bra banks across Rugby.

Wellbeing and Pampering evening March 2020

Despite the Coronavirus and people starting to socially distance, we raised £271. The event was not however all about fundraising. We had local stalls that provided women with information on local services. These services included, Refuge, Menopause Support, EQuIP (Equality organisation), RoSA (Rape and Sexual Abuse support), Coventry and Warwickshire MIND. We also had demonstrations by local dance coaches, Lynne Chapman who demonstrated Flamenco and Rita Joshi who demonstrated Bollywood dancing. We also had beauticians offering treatments and a henna artist. Despite the event having lower attendance than last year (due to coronavirus) it was received well and all the women that attended had fun!



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SI RUGBY continued

REFUGE WARWICKSHIRE

This was our chosen charity for last year and through the money raised, we have been able to support them through buying REFUGE Parcels as follows:

Refuge Parcels



Christmas Dinner Parcel - £5

After escaping to the safety of a refuge, spending the festive season away from family and friends can be difficult for the women and children Refuge support.



Emergency Parcel - £10

The first step to rebuilding lives. Could include clothing, food, toiletries, emotional support and more.



Children's Parcel - £25

Letting children be children again. Could include arts and crafts, story telling, emotional support and more



Festive Parcel - £35

Creating a festive experience can make the world of difference to women and children in our services at this time of year – lifting spirits and spreading joy.



Safety and Independence Parcel - £50

Help women live safely in their community. Could include support with home safety installations, housing and welfare information, finding work and more.



Law Parcel - £100

Bring abusers to justice. Could include expert support attending court, help writing statements and giving evidence, emotional support and more.

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SI SOLIHULL & DISTRICT

It is hard to believe that life has changed so much since we last met as a club in March. Our 20th Charter dinner at Copt Heath Golf Club was cancelled, so let's hope that we'll all be together for our 21st Anniversary in March 2021.

March – At the last meeting of President Jan Tilsley's year, members were captivated by Lola Lamour, the stage name of our speaker. As well as talking about her colourful life, she is also a professional singer with a penchant for the 50's. Lola told us about her life working for Lord Litchfield and Lady Asquith from the late 90's until his death in 2005 at Shugborough Hall. Staff were treated with respect and regarded as part of the family and she likened her experience to that of Downton Abbey.



We all wore purple at the MAR meeting to celebrate International Women's Day, whose theme for 2020 was "I am Generation Equality" We were delighted that our own SIGBI President Isobel was able to join us along with speaker Dame Vera Baird who spoke about the original Domestic Violence Courts observations in her Northern Region. An update was given by Chris Corless about our work with MCR.

April – Despite the challenging times we were living in, 26 members attended the AGM, still held on 9th April using video technology. Our new President Margaret Lloyd presented her theme "Time to Talk", more relevant today than ever at a time when social isolation and social distancing makes life difficult for everyone. Margaret nominated "Solihull Mind" as her charity for the year, providing support for local people with mental health problems.

After one day in post, President Margaret issued a challenge to members to "Make something for Easter which will make us smile!!" Members got creative – in the garden, in the kitchen and one granddaughter joined in too. Photos were collated and circulated in time for Easter.



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SI SOLIHULL & DISTRICT continued

As always Soroptimists respond to needs in the community! Late in April, a request came for Scrub bags for NHS healthcare workers to put their soiled clothing into at the end of their shift and put them straight in the washing machine. Three members got creative and the first 160 bags were distributed to NHS staff at Heartlands Hospital, Good Hope hospital and the Nightingale hospital at the NEC.



May – At the club's second virtual meeting, President Margaret inducted two new members, Angela Ladds and Fiona Brown, introduced by Pauline Mackie and Ann Keepax. We also welcomed Ann Hill and Pat Kirby transferred from Central Birmingham. Great to see Val Mansell is a link member now living in Devon.

As always, members are mindful of those in need during the Covid-19 lockdown. Following the meeting, generous donations came in, which were divided between ANAWIM Drop In, Birmingham & Solihull Refuge and Helping Hands Food Bank. Thornton Chocolate goody bags were also delivered to 30+ staff at Elizabeth House Care Home to let them know that we are thinking about them.

Finally Scrubs and yet more Scrub bags... A total of 442 bags were collected this week so a chance to catch up in their gardens. One member has been sewing Scrub gowns, 120 already delivered with 80 more to go!



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SI STOURBRIDGE AND DISTRICT

Just before the COVID-19 lockdown, President Anne Rogers brought her year to a conclusion with a visit accompanied by Mary Tooley and Linda Saunders to a Nepalese reception in West Bromwich in recognition of our SIGBI project 'Empowering Girls in Nepal. It was an enjoyable evening with Nepalese music, dancing and food. The Deputy Nepalese Ambassador was presented with a framed certificate of one of our 'Twinned Toilets' in Nepal.



President Anne's year culminated in a very successful International Women's Day Afternoon Tea at Jonathan's in The Park, Bearwood, in aid of Mary Stevens Hospice, Stourbridge, our local charity. Regional President Rose and several Soroptimists from around the region joined us. Music and poetry to theme, and an auction and raffle entertained the company. The profit of £400 was doubled by our charity account to make a £800 donation to the hospice, which has just received an 'Outstanding' CQC assessment following an unannounced inspection in February.

So lockdown arrived, and we have kept in touch with a WhatsApp group as well as by email and 'phone calls, Facebook, and Twitter. Jan McConville leads WhatsApp with a relentless supply of amusing videos. Our AGM was completed by email, and May Business led by President Rachel Tennant, saw us on Zoom, with which we had become quite familiar by the time of our second Book Club, currently taking the place of our Dinner meetings this spring/early summer.



We currently have three definite entrants to 'The Big Story' - fundraising for the girls in Nepal. Other Programme Action has seen the Club donate £300 to the Black Country Food Bank, and individual members have similarly donated both to this and a local Stourbridge community hub arrangement. Vice President Jane Clarke has liaised with our Women's Refuge, and arranged purchases of requested items, such as food and games - the children needing constructive occupation at this time.

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SI STOURBRIDGE AND DISTRICT continued

We have responded to UKPAC and our partner Toilet Twinning, with whom we are working towards Toilet Twinned Town status, who are currently purchasing water taps to further improve hand-washing hygiene in these COVID times. We have purchased 6 taps at £60 each from donated dinner monies not spent in April. Working with our Friendship Link SI Wrekin, we have to date individually purchased 28 virtual balloons for an eco-race on 2nd June in aid of the British Red Cross and their appeal for COVID crisis resources.

The current situation has given us all even more appreciation of the increasing challenges women and girls face during lockdown. It has spurred us on to consider additional ways Soroptimists may be of support in improving the lives of women and girls, by encouraging more partnership working with members' various charitable links and learning. Our Vice President Jane Clarke has shared her Kerala Partnership report with us, most impact is felt by those least able to withstand a challenge, as at home. Nearer to home, our local Mary Stevens Hospice is particularly grateful for donations when fundraising by Trading and Events dries up. Telephone helplines are needed as much as ever, with different questions arising as women in particular face increasing demands upon them.

Our two Book Club meetings on Zoom, have so far discussed Bernadine Evaristo's Man Booker joint winner 'Girl, Woman, Other' and, led by President Elect Linda Sanders, Kellie Rubenhold's The Five (Social history of the women killed by Jack the Ripper). As it was #MentalHealthAwareness week, we all wore green and our 'Think On It' badges to Zoom. Any MAR Soroptimist who might like to join our Zoom for the next Book Club, discussing 'The Beekeeper of Aleppo' by Christy Lefteri at 8pm on Wednesday 17th June, let me know: ejfb51@gmail.com. and an invite will be sent.

During #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek, we also held a silent auction by WhatsApp and email in aid of our local Dudley Mind organisation. Lots of good quality items donated – jewellery, perfume, toiletries, a knitted wrap, a cross stitch canvas etc. The final figure was £400+. Well done Ladies!



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SI STRATFORD upon AVON AND DISTRICT

Despite this unusual situation, members of SI Stratford have been communicating with each other, offering help and support where needed. Barbara Bennett has cleverly edited a weekly newsletter with many members contributing a variety of articles, recipes, cartoons, poems and humorous videos.

Following the last Regional meeting we were preparing for the Change of Insignia Vintage Tea Party, begging, borrowing and buying cake stands and china. Sadly, this much anticipated event was cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Hopefully we can make use of them in the future. When it became apparent that this situation could carry on for many months, we held a Zoom Executive meeting and following this, we had a social Zoom meeting for all members on 23rd May

Our annual donation to the Hospice, usually raised by manning a water station at the Stratford Marathon was paid, out of funds, with the club's agreement. We have also made a donation to The North Cotswold sewing group for supplies.

Rose and Ann have made over 367 laundry bags for the NHS. Penny Freeman has been memorising Macbeth in order to raise sponsorship money for the NSPCC and the 'Welcome Here' charity supporting Syrian refugees.

Chris and her team have been gardening at the Nicol Ward. It is a wonderful sight and much appreciated by both patients and staff.



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SI WORCESTER

Our last contribution to the Regional “News and Views” publication was in January 2020 where Clubs were able to share information, fun and friendship as we looked forward to planning our programmes for 2020/21.

So much has happened in the world since then and our lifestyles have changed dramatically in all areas of our activities, probably never to return in the quite the same way again. Nevertheless, as Soroptimists we have taken up the challenges the pandemic has caused, become flexible in our ways of working and are making inroads into continuing to meet the various demands of supporting the UN’s Strategic Development Goals and contributing to the Education, Enabling and Empowerment of women and girls locally, regionally and (inter)-nationally.

Club meetings continued, despite the significant flooding of the Severn in our area making travel extremely precarious, until lockdown in March.

Following an afternoon “Reflection” meeting in January, utilised to exchange views on how to manage the Club flexibly and the pragmatic use of Member’s skills and willingness to contribute, we achieved a consensus for 2020/21. The first outside educational meeting, also in mid-January, led by the Economic Empowerment & Environmental Sustainability Group, saw a mixed group of Soroptimists, Wribbenhall WI members and their guests together with a couple from the Wyre Forest Friendship group attend ENVIROSORT in Norton, Worcester to learn more about recycling in our Region.

Envirosort is a Materials Recycling Centre (MRC) and the plant receives, sorts and dispatches all the clean recyclables collected by the refuse operatives from households across Worcestershire and Herefordshire. That is, all the cans, bottles (glass and plastic) paper and light card put out for the kerbside collections. Essentially the bin lorries transport the collected “green bin” material to the Norton facility where it is emptied directly onto a conveyor belt assembly. The employment of a systematic range of techniques allows for the waste to be sorted into categories. For example, metal cans/containers are ‘magnetically’ ‘captured’; items made from glass are broken into smaller sizes thus allowing them to “fall off” the conveyor belt into strategically placed hoppers beneath the conveyor belt. Finally, the workforce, suitably attired in PPE, then hand remove any residual “contaminants” before the sorted waste is then made into bails and stored. A range of contractors are employed to transport the sorted waste to companies to manufacture a range of downstream products. Any “non-recyclable” waste is streamed to a local energy recoverer, leaving around 5-10% going to landfill. This latter figure is improving monthly. We came away having observed the working of this facility with an improved knowledge of what can be recycled as well as the chemistry of the term “plastics” and how this impacts the energy recycling processes. For any Club interested in learning more we would strongly urge you to organise a visit to Envirosort.

Website: www.sigbi.org/midland-arden
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**Women inspiring action,
transforming lives**

SI Midland Arden Region Newsletter – JUNE 2020 Soroptimists in Lockdown



SI WORCESTER continued

During the next four weeks under the Group Leader, club members worked together to consolidate raising funds for TOILET TWINNING.

- To celebrate the Chinese New Year, two members prepared and cooked an 8 course meal! Members attended and the afternoon meal with started with a glass of sparkling wine. There was a raffle and altogether some £220+ was raised.
- A coffee morning together with sales of a selection of “FreeTrade” goods and a raffle raised in excess of £130.
- Sales of home-made jams and marmalades over the year added another £224 to allow the purchase of both much needed toilets as well as improved hygiene by provided “taps” – essential during the current pandemic.
- Pat has also collected coins to the tune of £ 20 for Water Aid.

During early March before ‘lockdown’ we held our annual Quiz to raise funds to continue our support of a young disadvantaged girl in Uganda as she completes her course of education via FOAG.

Our Group Leader, Pat Martin organised and led the “virtual” AGM conducted via email in April. Over the past 10 weeks we have kept in touch with all members by email mainly and the telephone. This also applies to our Friendship links who have responded with warm wishes. As part of our continuing efforts to support needy women/girls and local charities we have:

- clapped for the care workers on a Thursday
- donated our monies that would have paid for our ‘supper’ had we been allowed to meet for our normal “Speaker meeting”. These monies have been donated to Worcester Foodbank to enable foodstuffs to be purchased for families in need. This approach will continue until we are able to resume meeting.
- Support was also provided to the local Charity – Whatever Makes You Different makes You Beautiful – in lieu of a cancelled event Club had planned to raise funds and to ensure their work would continue through this current pandemic.
- Members celebrated VE Day in a variety of ways, taking into account the “social distancing” and other rules applied to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. In the best traditions of SI, members were photographed sitting in their gardens having tea (or something ‘bubbly) - doing what Soroptimists do best, helping where necessary.



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