Newsletter

SI:MK founded in 2015 with support from MK Community Foundation

31 Aug 2026 MK Soroptimists Newsletter 69

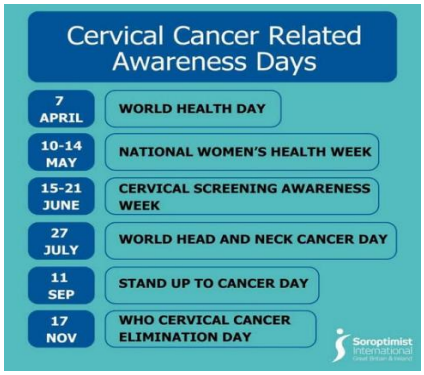
Editorial Welcome

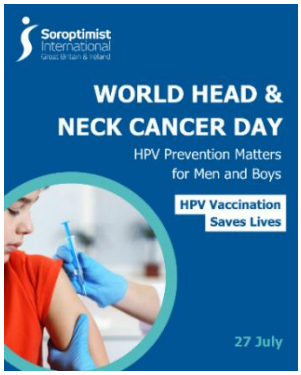
Soroptimists standing up for Women and Girls

I want to start this edition of the newsletter with two words "Raising Awareness". Raising awareness is one of Soroptimists 3 main activities – Awareness, Advocacy and Action.

Our Federation, SIGBI is currently running two key awareness raising campaigns focusing on women's health and women's safety.

Women's Health – Cervical Cancer







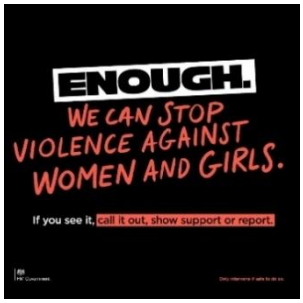
The women's health campaign is focusing on Cervical Cancer. In the UK cervical cancer causes around 3,300 new diagnoses and hundreds of deaths each year. It is currently the 14th most common cancer affecting females across the UK. Most cases occur in younger adults, with higher rates concentrated among those under 45 and peaking in the mid to late thirties.

The good news is the HPV vaccine, which should be offered to school children aged 12 to 13, both girls and boys, has helped drive cervical cancer deaths to close to zero for young women under 30. England aims to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue by 2040 through enhanced screening and vaccine uptake. That is why Soroptimists are supporting this campaign by raising awareness through our social media. Our club is using our Facebook page and our Orange Café Stall to get the message out there. If anyone wants any posters to put up in their local community centres just let me know.

Women's Safety – Violence Against Women and Girls

SIGBI's second campaign focuses on women's safety. Each government across the UK have developed strategies to tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) but they are all different, with different timescales. As Soroptimists, the safety of women and girls is a key focus for us. We want to support each government, and make sure they maintain their focus on ending VAWG. One way of doing this is to involve men and boys in the debate, as well as highlighting the tools and practical support that is available. In addition to the Orange Cafés a 12 month social campaign has been developed, which started in:

May with the message “Enough is Enough”.
June – “Unhealthy Relationships”
July – Anti-Stalking
August – Safe Spaces – UK SAYS NO MORE
September - Harassment









Posts are appearing on our Facebook page and included in our Orange Café both at Dobbies. We took the campaign to the Thames Valley Police Day of Action on Domestic Abuse on 27 August at CMK shopping centre and we will also be presenting the campaign at MK College Welcome Day events in Sept and Oct. This will give us the opportunity to inform new students about the support and tools available and what they need to be aware of. Again, if anyone wants copies of the posters to out up in their local community centre, please let me know.

I can’t believe I am now writing this newsletter and September has started, marking the start of autumn, a time of long walks and enjoying the beautiful changing colours of the trees. And did you know September is the only month with the same number of letters as its numerical position? It is also unique in that in any given year, no other month ends on the same day of the week as September.

Now let’s continue with what we have to look forward to for the rest of the year?

- **Branch meetings held 3rd Tuesday** – see all dates in box below.
- **Speaker for 15 Sept branch meeting** – the Leader of Milton Keynes City Council, Cllr Jane Carr is coming to speak at our meeting about her role as Leader.
- **Friendship lunches** – see all dates in box below. Potential new members are welcome to come along to find out more about us.
- **Orange Cafes** – see all dates in box below.
- **2026 16 Days of Activism Event** – last year the Craftivism event was held creating display pieces around violence against women and girls. This year it is a **Writing Competition, which** opens on 1st September till 7th October, inviting people from Milton Keynes, aged 11 through to adults, to submit an original piece of writing on the theme: **“It takes all of us to make a (world / city / home) where women and girls live in safety.”** Full details HERE. Selected winners will feature in an event on 25th November at 4pm at MK Gallery, hosted by the OU's Centre for Protection of Women Online and the organisers of the Annual Vigil at Milton Keynes Rose, as part of this year's Vigil Programme, so save the date! After the winner is announced a torchlit vigil will take place at MK Rose.
- **Working Wardrobe volunteering** – on the 10 and 17 September a few members are helping out Works For Us and tidying up their working wardrobe.
- **Refuge Lunch dates** – 8 and 24 Sept; 22 Oct; 12 and 26 Nov and 10 December.
- **College Welcome days** – Tuesday 29 September at MK Campus Woughton and Thursday 1 October at Bletchley campus. Our Orange Stall will be taking part raising awareness around violence against women and girls and women’s health.

- **Craftivism Exhibition** – from Monday 28 September Unity Place has agreed to host the 2025 Craftivism Project exhibition for at least 2 months. The exhibition will feature craft and artistic pieces created by local communities, organisations and survivors of domestic violence. The pieces were created as part of 2025 Annual White Ribbon and Orange the World Vigil. Each piece carries a message of hope, resilience and solidarity and is re displayed to spark conversations and provoke thought around preventing violence against women.
- **Regional Conference** – Sat 10 Oct, Regional Conference/AGM, 35 Craven Terrace, London, W2 3EL. Keynote speaker is award winning Professor Sophie Harman – author of "Sick of it: The Global Fight for Women's Health". To find out more **click here.**
- **SILC special event led by SI High Wycombe and District** – Sat 17 Oct, 10am to 1pm Soroptimists present "From Silence to Safety, Empowering Women, Engaging Women, Engaging Communities, Creating changes – Stop Violence Against Women". Willow Room, Bucks New University. £5 to include refreshments. To book and learn more **click here**.
- **SIGBI Annual Conference** – Friday 30 to Sat 31 Oct at Cardiff. Add link
- **11 November Remembrance ceremony at MK Rose** – 11am wreath laying.
- **16 Days of Activism** – 25 November, Sky Gallery 4pm Writing Competition Winner will be announced prior to a torchlit vigil at MK Rose, Campbell Park. More details to follow.
- **Regional Conference** – Sat 5 Dec Human Rights Day celebration. This is a online Zoom event 10am to 1pm. Details to follow. Click here to visit Soroptimist International London and Chiltern Region website.
- **Xmas UnityMK Buffet** – date to be confirmed. Either 1 or 8 December.
- **Xmas projects** – help with these projects for our charities to be confirmed.
- **Club Xmas meal** - 15 December branch date will be our Xmas meal – details of venue, menu to follow.

Branch meetings – Tuesday - 5.30pm Community Room (back of café), Morrisons, 4 Barnsdale Drive, Westcroft, MK4 4DD	**Friendship Lunch Wednesday, 12.30pm The Inn in the Lake, Mount Farm Bletchley**	**Orange Café – Dobbies 10am to 1pm**
15 September 20 October 17 November 15 December	30 September 28 October 25 November	29 September 27 October: now at MK College 24 November

But let's look back at what we have been up to over the summer months?

April - a month of donations. A couple of friends and members were having a clear out of clothes and we were able to redirect 26 sacks of clothing and items to our charities. A number went to help with the working wardrobe at Works For Us and to support the young homeless people at YMCA Midlands, MK branch. 3 sacks were delivered to the homeless clients of UnityMK. Another 200 grams of medical blister packs were recycled through the Boots scheme and with the help of friends 24 bras were sent to the charity Smalls for Us, who help women and young girls in the UK and in the African countries.

At our April branch meeting we joined MK Snap's, the charity for adults with learning difficulties, Blue fundraising week, dressed in blue and donated £50. We were either naughty St Trinian's (who remembers them?) or going perhaps back to our Toya Wilcox years! Thank you everyone for your donations. The meeting also agreed to use £60 to sponsor women entrepreneurs through the Lend with Care scheme. Hopefully we can consider increasing our donation next year. SIGBI has told us that microfinance activity has continued to grow both through SIGBI's

own team and also through other clubs. A total of 56 Clubs or individual members are now part of the combined SIGBI Team on Lendwithcare. To date, the SIGBI Team has loaned over £98,000 to 4,339 entrepreneurs – definitely something to celebrate!








In May one of our members, knitted 5 cardigans, 7 hats and 1 bag, all donated to Baby Basics MK.

Another sack of 50 clothing items was delivered to YMCA MK.

This month also saw the restart of our Lunch clubs at MK Act's refuge. We hold every two weeks and are now getting around 3 to 5 women come along to learn to cook and to socialise with each other to help build up their confidence. We love putting on this club for the women.

June and our growing group of supporters know what our charities need. They tell their friends and then we just help to redirect the donations to the relevant charities.

This month the homeless clients at UnityMK received just over 140 items of clothing, while more than 50 work clothing items went to Works For Us working wardrobe. Another 2 refuge lunches held this month, one was a lovely curried seabass dish and we are even incorporating a little bit of exercises into the sessions. Not only do they benefit but we do too.

On the 3 rd of June a number of us enjoyed a lovely trip to the Rennie Macintosh Museum in Northampton and also partook of an afternoon tea, very scrumptious and we can highly recommend.

I had forgotten just how busy June was. Over two weekends - 6 to 7th and 13 to 14th June the 2025 Annual Vigil Orange the world and White Ribbon Craftivism exhibition raising awareness to end violence against women and girls was held at Westbury Arts Centre. And hot off the press we now have confirmation Unity Place will hold the Craftivism exhibition at their premises from 28 September for 2 months. Please share this with your friends and visit.

On the 9th June we provided a summer buffet for the clients at UnityMK. Members donated sandwiches, soft drinks, cakes and chocolates. It's a lovely event, much appreciated by the clients and is becoming a firm part of our annual schedule of events.

More donations were given to our charities. A friend of ours in Leicester is a keen knitter and this month provided us with 30 knitted toys donated to Baby Basics MK alongside members donations of much needed baby items. The month ended with another 500 grams of medicine blister packs recycled through the Boots scheme. One of our green pledges.









July and you might think a quite month. Of course not, we Soroptimists don't sit around during the holiday period. We continue helping others, while also having fun.

The lovely charity choir Hearts and Music have supported us for the last few years putting on fantastic musical evenings and this year we held it in the summer. They did not disappoint. We received some lovely feedback, one person said "I love to see this choir and tonight's entertainment was the best yet they had seen". We had a great time and raised £458 which will be split between Baby Basics MK and SAASSBMK (Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Services Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes).

Our next project in July was via one of our members. Her son was taking part in "Help for Heroes" Saafas drive to Bosnia to help an orphanage of children. They were asking for shoeboxes filled with educational, practical and fun items for children aged between 4 and 14. We were able to supply 3 shoe boxes plus additional items and our members son took over 11 shoeboxes to the children at the orphanage. We provided warm clothing, books, drawing materials and toys.





YMCAMK asked us to help with the mental health wellbeing of their clients. Following discussions, we donated £75 towards them purchasing a bookcase and we are donating books with another 21 books this month.





August and we have continued to have some fun ourselves as well as carry on with our projects. Miss Quiz has become a permanent part of our annual fundraising events. She organises the quiz, while we just turn up with the tea and biscuits, make up a table and try very hard to not come bottom - while enjoying ourselves and learning something new. This year's quiz raised £307 for Baby Basics MK and SAASSBMK. Thank you, Miss Quiz, and to all those who came along and took part.

This months fun day out was visiting the wonderful Kathy Browns Garden. And you guessed it there was also tea and some wonderful cakes involved, some of us were greedy and had two cakes! And even though it was warm the gardens were a joy to walk round and certainly gave us ideas for our own horticultural hopes. Our August meeting is a time to relax and have our own summer party. This year's theme was linked to SIGBI's women's health campaign. We agreed to raise funds for Breast Cancer Now. Our clothing theme was pink and purple, with members bringing sandwiches and gorgeous cakes and agreeing not to go near the weighing scales the next day. What a wonderful evening with the members raising £255.

More donations were made in August including:

- 50 knitted bears from our Leicester friend, along with a knitted cardigan and baby blanket from one of our members and 1 nearly new pram provided to Baby Basics MK.
- 700 grams of medicine blister packs recycled via the Boots scheme.
- 100 items of clothing from our Horwood friends delivered to UnityMK for their homeless clients.
- 7 clothing items for Works For Us working wardrobe.
- Our second 50pence challenge to help furnish MK Act's new Refuge is now up to £104 at the end of August. Let's see if we can get it up to £125 by Xmas! If we achieve this along with the £400, we gave last year, we will have donated £525 towards furnishing the new refuge, helping MK Act to provide a safe home for more victims of Domestic Abuse and help them start new lives.

A great year so far. Thanks as always to every member, supporter, charity partner and friend who helps make this work possible.

Happy reading everyone.
Sue Key, Chair

Milton Keynes Fawcett Group - Latest Blog



Click here to read the latest blog from Milton Keynes Fawecett Society. July's blog will be of interest to the quilters and the sewers in the group. The weaving of stories and myths, the embedding of secrets and data in textiles can be found in most textiles dating back centuries. We have the Bayeux tapestry arriving here with its stories written in yarn. There is a rich history to be discovered and the important role women played. (There is an Image of Milton Keynes One World Quilt in The City Discovery Centre Archive Copy of image taken from the Biography produced for The Women Who Made Milton Keynes exhibition, 2017).

Latest edition of Global Voice newsletter now out



In this issue:
• Registration opens soon for the SI 2027 Convention,
• Members invited to Join the Gender Medicine Working Group
• Recent updates from SI AGM, SI Annual Report and SI Brand Resources
• Recent SI Voices blogs and podcasts

To read the full article **click here.**

Our Twitter feed and web page - don't forget to have a look

Click here to see our Milton Keynes Soroptimists Facebook feed and what we are currently talking about

Soroptimist International

Click here to see our Milton Keynes Soroptimists web page and what we are currently talking about

Click here to go Back to the top

Or scan our new QR code which will take you to our website with all our contact details, diary/event dates.

SI:MK support these local charities:

mk act Domestic Violence Intervention Services

YMCA

Works for Us

Baby Basics

Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Service
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes