SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Over the summer members of Soroptimist International of King's Lynn have kept busy with fund raising and social events, as well as club meetings.

They started in June with a wine tasting garden party at a member's house. This was great fun including a quiz and raffle. During the afternoon Pat Pinnington from Guides, King's Lynn gave a short talk on how the money donated each year from the Founders Grant helped local guides.

July is the club's charter month, and a BBQ was held at a member's house. It was a very enjoyable afternoon, but also the International Day of Hope. Members were asked to hang leaves of hope on a rosebush with their wishes for the future. The wishes made included - Hope that as the rose grows, people's kindness to one another also grows; hope that people will spend time really listening and showing empathy and understanding; hope for a world without violence against women and girls. Overall members hoped for a world of more understanding and tolerance for everyone.

In July the club heard from Penny Whitby of Vision Norfolk.

Vision Norfolk is one of the oldest sight loss charities in the UK. It was founded in 1805 as the "Asylum for the Benefit of the Blind in Norwich" by Thomas Tewell, a local industrialist who had suffered temporary sight loss and realised its implications for the local people.

The initial focus had been on providing accommodation and the charity still provides some sheltered accommodation.

The objective now is to provide a friendly and supportive environment where people with sight loss can access practical help, emotional support, and specialist resources. It operates from three hubs, Kings Lynn , Norwich and Great Yarmouth and the speaker Penny Whitby, is the hub co-ordinator at Kings Lynn. Penny has sight loss herself from Retinitis Pigmentosa, a genetic condition causing gradual – and eventually complete – loss of vision.

Penny stressed that there are many causes of sight loss, affecting all age groups – often the elderly but also children and young people for whom the charity has a specific support group.

Members were shown a range of spectacles which were obscured in various ways to mimic the effect of different visual problems. These enabled the members to realise just how difficult it would be to manage ordinary life with these conditions.

Penny emphasised the practical resources that are now available and the increasing value of technology – like text readers and voice activated devices. There is even an App gadget that will tell you the colour of an item of clothing.

Guide dogs remain valuable to many but Penny explained just how demanding the training and ownership of a dog is – only a third of the puppies proving suitable.

The emphasis of Vision Norfolk is very much on what those with sight loss can do rather than what they can't. They run a wide range of accessible creative, cultural, sports, and social activities designed to help people living with sight loss to stay active and involved. The list of activities available – and all free of charge - includes tandem cycling, sailing and hiking. The emotional effects of sight loss are acknowledged too and there are support groups and a befriending service.

The club agreed that the presentation had been both informative and inspiring.

The club meeting in August saw members getting to know each other. It was a great evening organised by member Kerry Heathcote. Based on a speed dating format, members had to ask each other various questions as they moved around. Everyone agreed it was a very good way to learn more about each other as well as being fun. Apparently, members were very good, as we all talked lots!

Our final summer event was a walk around the town's cycle lanes, starting in the walks we followed the path to Lynnsport where we found Salters Sanctuary and Gaywood River. We explored the areas behind Springwood. The route then went through Fairstead to reach Gaywood Park where we stopped for a well earned break and enjoyed some great refreshments. The final stretch was along the path behind Gaywood and beside the railway track before we made it back to the Walks. Many of the walkers had not been to the areas visited and were very impressed on how well they were looked after as well as how rural they felt especially being so close to town.

The morning finished with a visit to The Red Mount, another first for some members.