

Dear Friends,

Here we share with you some of the highlights of the past year in our Club and Region.

We returned to working with Hilary Rowberry as President, after two years of three groups sharing the Presidency. Our younger new members have



stepped up to the mark and are taking on some senior roles in the club.

The UK is at present in lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of our members, isolated at home, have taken on the challenge of the **Knitting Project** for the **Queen Mother's Clothing Guild**. We also knitted fun bottle hats for *Innocent* fruit juice bottles. For every bottle sold, *Innocent* made a



donation to help disadvantaged and disabled people get back into society.

**Programme of Action:**  
**Rocket Girl** school and Brownie **STEM** project inspired



by the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first moon landing: The Ada Lovelace Day was used to encourage local girls to study STEM subjects. A whole day, hands on event, was designed to reach girls in a local primary and secondary school plus



Brownies and Guides. Using strong, dynamic, female specialists and a local business, we aimed to break down gender stereotyping and show girls that there is a huge opportunity for young women



to join the currently poor uptake in engineering skills. These STEM

ambassadors carried out workshops, talks and demonstrations, encouraging girls to think positively about their education.

This project was an extension of the highly successful "Battle for the Ballot Box" which focused on the suffrage movement described in the last Newsletter.

The money raised from **Waitrose Community Matters green tokens** and a grant from **East Grinstead Town Council** helped finance the above event.

Many **Women's Refuge Christmas Boxes** were again generously compiled by our members in support of the women and children recovering from domestic violence at home. We had some touching and uplifting replies this year:

*'I can't believe this. I haven't had a Christmas like this since I was a child', 'This gift has made my Christmas', 'It is such a difficult time and this has been lovely. Thank you', 'I love my box of delights, so thoughtful'* - as well as receipt of a hand-made card from one of the younger children. We will continue!

**Ghana Education Project:**

We are a long-time supporter of this project. Tunbridge Wells Girls School started a school in Ghana which is now thriving. We support three students through their education. We just teamed up with SI Tema, near Accra in Ghana as a Friendship Link. We will continue our support of the school through them also.



**Inspirational Women in the Community:**

Local businesses were asked to nominate inspirational women who had contributed to the community. The final three chosen were Karen Dobres, Lewes Football Club; Jess Love, BBC Surrey and Sussex; and Mandy Dyer, East Grinstead Mental Health Ass. These women have gone



over and above in their support for community groups. Sarah Fanner opened the meeting with Hilary Clinton's speech at the UN 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference. These women are outstanding, positive role models having

made a significant difference in their field. The club members all wore orange in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

**UN Women's International Day:**

Marjorie Cole, one of the first three female **Chelsea Pensioners**, talked to us about her life. Unmarried, living in sheltered housing, after nursing three terminally ill loved ones; she felt it was time to help women like her join the men at the the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. It was the home for 300 male retired military personnel. Women doing the same job fought for acceptance there also. Marjorie, 75, was a Sergeant in the Army, feels she has found a new family and gives



back as much as she can. There are 13 women Chelsea Pensioners now. A heart-warming story.

**South East England Region (SISEE), UKPAC SIGBI, Friendship Links**

The SISEE annual **Jacquie Emery Award** writing competition asked Year 6 boys and girls the question "Are men and women equal?". The aim is to encourage young people to research and communicate in all its forms: class and home discussions, media and written research. Some interesting results. Here

is Elodie from a local school who won in our club's district to go through to join the Region's finalists.



**Our members have been very active** in the Federation: attending the UKPAC Conference, SIGBI Conference

in Bournemouth, the International Convention in Kuala Lumpur. The Region has benefitted from two of our members as Federation Councillors, one Minute Secretary, PA officers and recently two Regional Presidents. We have become the largest club in the Region with 38 members. We have welcomed our new, younger members, who have brought a new vibrancy to an already active club.

The final highlight of the year was the trip by four of us to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Friendship Link, **SI PUNE METRO EAST, India**. The trip strengthened the Friendship ties and also introduced the group to more of the wonderful world of India. A trip to Kerala, organised for 12 of us, was the icing on the cake.



**More:**

This is just a taster of what the members have been up to over the past year. There was also the **fun** of garden parties, cocktail evenings, theatre trip, music therapy classes, Medau Therapy, mince pies, art club, strawberries and cream, meals out, Living memory Exhibition in the local Museum, Club stand at the Volunteer Fair, Community box garden – all have some element of **fund raising and/or projection of SIEG**.

Through a club member, we have been supporting a local young mother to get a university education and a path to a new beginning for her and her child.

We continue our support of **Crawley Open House** for those who have hit the lowest point in their lives and need help. We even had a talk from an artist introducing her book on *The Never Closing Door at Open House: portraits of My Homeless Friends*. She had done just that, while talking to them, she drew them. So interesting!

One member collects used tights to go to the **Hamlin Fistula Hospital**, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to help with the cure of horrific damage in childbirth. The body of the tights are ideal to hold dressings in place.

The monthly **Coffee mornings** started with EG Dementia Mental Health Ass, is evolving to help the lonely to look forward to a morning out with people to talk to. Activities are being introduced by those attending, bringing fun and interest to the meetings. It now has 18 members. Sadly, this has had to stop for the time being until we get out of this UK wide Lockdown.

Two of our valued members died during the year. We were to plant two trees in a reserve in their memory, but have not been able to get together to do this – Yet!

Finally, at our upcoming virtual AGM, we will be financially supporting, not only those already mentioned, but also: **EG Mental Health**, our charity for the year; **Tadpoles** – swimming for those with problems; **Crawley Open House**; and the Queen Victoria Hospital charity – **CREW** which helps children with medical problems to get back their confidence; and the **SIGBI Nepal Project**.

We, the members of SI East Grinstead, wish you a happy and Covid-19 free year.

Keep Safe!