

As I have given up my membership role I have agreed to produce the Regional Newsletter. You can see I have decided to use a similar format to the membership newsletter as I am familiar with this.



So please send me your articles – it is your newsletter to advertise your events and report on your activities.

## Notes from President Angela

*President Angela with Alison and Jane in their 1912 outfits for the change of insignia at Belfast.*



Statement by Angela: *"It is a very exciting feeling to be at the start of my Presidential Year and I feel honoured to be asked to take on this role. When I walked down the replica Titanic staircase in Belfast, to receive the chain of office from Federation President Pat Black, I was extremely proud to be a Soroptimist and to be representing the South East England Region. I have some very interesting and inspiring things to share with you all and am really looking forward to my first Regional Meeting."*



*My first Official Duty as Regional President was to attend SI Folkestone Presidents lunch and what a lovely way to start my year. President Jan Doyle, club members, family and friends put on*

*a delicious carvery lunch and the speaker was Jan Hemlin UKPAC chair---what more could you ask for. I really enjoyed it and THANK YOU to SI Folkestone*

## East Grinstead 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

SI East Grinstead started their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations with a friendship evening at Sackville College, one of their local charities. It commenced with a short service in the chapel followed by a reception in the medieval dining hall. It was attended by Federation President Maureen, friendship link members from Sweden and Denmark, members from SI Gravesend, SI Lewes, SI Ashford and our South East England Grant of Friendship member from Moldova.

Saturday Morning saw Federation President Maureen cutting the ribbon at the opening of the clubs exhibition at East Grinstead Museum. A visit to the National Trust home of William Morris in the afternoon was followed by a Golden Banquet at the Meridian Hall.



The weekend finished with a quizzical walk around neighbouring Lingfield where members from SI Medway Towns, SI Eastbourne and friends joined club members and joint Presidents Angela Edwards, Jane Griffiths and Alison Skinner for a ploughman's lunch at Alison's home.

*"My intention as Region President is to visit every club at least once and I welcome any special events that clubs would like me to attend. I spent a very enjoyable and I might say vibrant club meeting with SI Medway Towns there was a definite buzz in the air."*

## Notes from Helen Schortz your Regional Membership Officer

. "The Belfast Conference was superb and I have been re-enthused! From surveys being collected by Federation from new members the most important points raised were:

- a/. Get them involved in Programme Action as soon as possible
- b/. Encourage the development of friendships
- c/. Give them a practical mentor

In fact I think that the points should apply to all incoming members and could boost retention. So to use Bruce Forsyth's catch phrase: "KEEP ON SOROPTIMISING"

Read the new "Easy Stage Guide to Recruitment" ---- on the SIGBI website--- it is full of good ideas and was written by our own Denise Staplehurst.

Denise's Membership Newsletter also gives some interesting and effective tips. It is well worth reading--- and you just need to use this mnemonic:

- M**ake membership matter, as it is for the future of our organisation;
- E**valuate your current practice and work to improve all you do;
- M**otivate your club members into Awareness, Advocacy and Action;
- B**e focused and efficient at your club meetings;
- E**mpower club members to use their skills and try new initiatives;
- R**eview your membership materials, including a club website;
- S**timulate members, identify issues, and make a difference;
- H**elp others locally, nationally and internationally;
- I**mplement policies to support and mentor new members so they are stimulated to stay with us;
- P**lan for an organisation with members that work together in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Report from Hilary Rowberry your Federation Councillor

Having just taken up the Federation Councillor post I was straight away involved in :

1. Several sessions at the Belfast Conference to meet the Federation Directors and be put onto the Organisation and Development Committee with Director Ann Hodgeson ( to whom I am accountable). We are already looking at a new Extension pack to support members setting up new clubs.
2. Giving my new view as part of feedback research on the role of a federation councillor
3. Voting on reviewed club roles, Regional roles and Federation roles which I hope you will now be seeing and approving soon.

I have a Skype conference to tune into in early December and several papers to read and respond to.....so I may have lots to report in the next newsletter!

## Gravesend Club

Gravesend continues to keep development under review. In the year in which the Club celebrated 60 years of service and friendship, members agreed to 'experiment' with a new way of working by meeting once a month instead of the traditional twice. Members have been kept up to date via regular email reports from the President, minutes posted on the website and the Club's monthly newsletter. The Club's November meeting analysed progress of the current Development Plan and it was agreed to plan next year's programme along similar lines.

In the meantime, service work carries on as usual. Most recently, members met to fill 17 boxes of Christmas gifts for 12-15 year old boys for the Mustard Seed Mission's Love in a Box project, which supports underprivileged children throughout Eastern Europe.

Every year members serve afternoon tea to people who look after a family member or friend on a full time basis, giving them an opportunity to chat to others and take a few hours' break from their caring roles. The event took place at Gravesend Community Hospital on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.



*Shehla Dutta, President (2<sup>nd</sup> from left); Farida; a guest speaker and other members of SI Karachi*

During a recent visit to her homeland, the club's President Elect Farida Usman visited SI Karachi Central to discuss the possibility of setting up a Friendship Link. Karachi Central won the SIGBI Environmental Sustainability Award 2012 for their Back to School project, rebuilding a school devastated by the floods in Pakistan and giving the children an opportunity to continue their education. Last year Gravesend Club made substantial donations to the UNICEF/Soroptimists for Pakistan Flood Relief Appeal. The Club's annual fun quiz night, which supports the work of our Friendship Link Club in Freetown, Sierra Leone, takes place on 12 January 2013.



*Pictured are: Immediate Past President Isobel Kesby, Membership Officer Pam Armitage and Gravesend President Valerie Boswell. (With apologies to Pam who blinked as the camera clicked!)*

Our three delegates to the National Federation's annual Conference in Belfast responded readily to the request to 'wear something purple' for the Stop the Trafficking Rally which was staged outside the Conference Centre to raise awareness of the growing numbers of men, women and children affected by human trafficking throughout the world.

## Report by Denise on Friendship Link visit to Nara in Japan

Several years ago when I visited 63 I met President Juliet from Versailles club and we formed a link and have exchanged visits. Versailles was also linked to Nara in Japan and so we formed a 3-way link across 3 Federations. In November four of us visited Nara for its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations. What an interesting country and we were so well looked after. We had a conference and an invitation to visit the Mayor as well as many opportunities for sightseeing, visiting shrines, temples and experiencing their culture with tea ceremonies and delicious food.



*The group in Japan outside the town hall you can see the chrysanthemums behind as this a special festival for the blooms.*

Regional meeting dates through the year

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec Regional Meeting
- 23rd. February Regional Executive
- 2nd. March Regional Conference Day
- 25th. May Regional Executive
- 15th. June Regional Meeting
- 7th September Regional Executive
- 21st. September Regional AGM

I hope you have enjoyed reading my first newsletter. I am away in Tasmania for a Soroptimist link visit so I will miss the next meeting. I would like articles by 2<sup>nd</sup> February for the next newsletter please. Denise Staplehurst Newsletter Editor.