

Thank you so much for sending in your reports for your newsletter- let us hope the other clubs will be represented next time. I am sorry I am not with you at the Regional Meeting I am on a Soroptimist trip to Tasmania.



I will be meeting up with my friendship link club from Townsville in Melbourne and then meeting soroptimist friends in Tasmania.

Notes from President Angela

Having had, I hope you all agree, a very successful and enjoyable first Region Meeting for me as President I am now experiencing visiting our clubs and finding out what a friendly and welcoming region we are! Clubs are doing wonderful work on their projects both at home and abroad and I am now having the opportunity to find out about them. I am sorry that I was not able to represent you at the Four Regions Dinner on 19th January because of the snow!! I am looking forward to our Region Conference Day where we will be launching new ideas and listening to inspiring speakers. An exciting Region Event on 9th March marking International Women's Day is planned, I know that lots of you will already be having /or going to events of your own but I thought it would be a big chance for us to unite as a Region on this important occasion.



At the last Regional Meeting Past President Hilary Rowbery handed over the Regional Chain to new President Angela Edwards. Also pictured are President Elect Jackie Emery and Vice President Sheila Ash.



At the Regional meeting we all stood up for Malala who was shot by the Taliban.



Past Federation President Jackie Mosedale came to talk about bee keeping – a very interesting talk.

Notes from Helen Schortz your Regional Membership Officer

As the New Year began, our Federation Board has been considering different types of Membership and different types of Clubs for the 21st century. This is in no way meant to retract from the existing club structure which is clearly "gold standard". However, in order to keep pace of changes in our society we may be looking at "satellite groups" with a "light touch" basis or "associate membership". Do not be alarmed as these are only being trialled at present and there will be a presentation made at the Regional conference entitled "Building the Future of SIGBI".

At our next Membership Regional Meeting we will be discussing the New Membership Statement and if you think your club is working in this way:-

1. We are an International Women's voluntary service organisation working to improve the lives of women and girls at a local, national and international level
2. We put Programme Action at the heart of our work, aiming to Educate, Empower and Enable women and girls to reach their own individual and collective potential
3. We believe that any woman may come along and contribute positively to our goals
4. We offer different types and club formats to accommodate the needs of our members
5. We encourage members' participation in activities, which enable them to contribute to society whilst enjoying fun and friendship
6. We are efficient, using technology to inform and keep us informed
7. We are flexible in the way we do club business so we can focus on Programme Action
8. We share best practice in an open and generous manner and develop new skills
9. We are an organisation others seek out as partners

And finally some really good news about our new members! Our Federation Councillor, Hilary Rowberry has been calling our new members to find out whether they have been enjoying their membership, what they have enjoyed most and whether they feel involved in Programme Action etc. The overwhelming majority are having a great time and feel very supported by their mentors and the other members of their club. They are extremely motivated by Programme Action and want to spend most of their club time involved in this as well as enjoying fun and friendship.

Their message to us is "Keep supporting and encouraging us to contribute new ideas to our clubs"

Report from Hilary Rowberry your Federation Councillor

My Federation activities to date have included participating in a tele-conference and being a silent witness at the FMB meeting in these we discussed:

1. African Federation – There are 2 FMB members on the Task Force to take this forward. A lot of work has been started and the FMB is supporting them as much as possible. Other Federations are now involved in the talks.

2. Soroptimist International - you should recall from the Federation Post that the SI Board agreed in August 2011 to pursue Charitable status as well as becoming a Limited Company by Guarantee. This involves a review and rewrite of the SI Constitution and consequently a look at the processes, policies and procedures that sit behind it. I shall keep you informed on the progress.

3. Membership Statement- following the consultation with Federation Councillors, Past Federation Presidents and some of the younger person's focus group the final statement was agreed by the Board at the October FMB. It appeared as an article in the December Soroptimist News. It would be good to know if you have had any comments about it.

4. Different Types of Membership are being investigated and consulted on – the initial consultation is now complete. Jenny Vince will give us more information to us in her talk "Building the future of SIGBI". I will help disseminate this to all clubs.

5. What else do we do? All Councillors are responsible for:
 - looking at petitions for charter
 - looking at applications for organisational development grants
 - responding to correspondence from the SIGBI office.
 - phoning new members to check how they are settling into SI membership
 - writing a work plan for their committee.

Ashford Club



Soroptimists in Ashford provided 3 sewing machines and argan oil mills to a small village (Doutmanroute) in southern Morocco in order that young girls can produce products for sale that not only sustain their own families but also contribute to their village.



Beckenham and District Club



SI Beckenham and District wanted to try something practical to make a difference on the subject of trafficking. We researched and decided to work with Stop the Traffik to increase the awareness of taxi drivers to trafficking as it has been established that many victims are now being moved within the UK using taxis.

Local firms were located, letters were produced along with an awareness flyer showing what to look for and how, anonymously, to report anything

suspicious to the Police Trafficking help line on free call 0800 783 2589.

Club members delivered these personally to 34 addresses, explaining SI's wider work to combat trafficking. They obtained 12 email contact details which enabled us to follow up with electronic copies and a thank you. One member also blitzed the taxi rank at Bromley South Station for us. In all 9 firms had disappeared or merged in the recession, some just noted our visit, but we had a good encouraging response from 13 in all (including big groups), with 5 immediately displaying the information in the office and 6 promising to draw their drivers' attention to it.

We are now awaiting responses from SGS Société Générale de Surveillance who are responsible on behalf of TFL for licensing taxis every year in our area. We have asked them to consider including the awareness details during the next annual cycle of renewals. Fingers crossed they respond as positively as our members did when asked to be involved in the delivery needed for this work to succeed.

At the beginning of the season we gained two new members, Councillor Maggie Mansell, a scientist and past Mayor of Croydon, and Carol Hunt, South East Region Fundraiser for a national charity. Another new member will be joining us in our annual coffee morning and BBQ raised £900 for our Christmas charity-giving, and our members contributed £230+ to club funds through an Auction of Promises. Our stall at the Thornton Health Festival, the annual World Food Day Lunch at Croydon College, and several donations, raised sufficient money to fund the third year of LOUD & PROUD, the public speaking competition for year 6 girls. The Final of this will again be hosted by The Mayor of Croydon in the Council Chamber, on International Women's Day. Nine schools with 18 competitors will be taking part.

Croydon & District Club

Our theme this year has been 'Education: Science for Girls' and our programme of speakers has included women scientists. Sue Appleton Croydon Borough Forensic Manager, fascinated the 50 guests at our autumn supper with

an insight into her work. For our forthcoming Inter-Club Friendship Supper on 14 March [notices have been sent to all Region Clubs], we are fortunate to have as our guest speaker Mai Nguyen, a top civil engineer, specialising in tunnel engineering. Through her activities in schools and universities, Mai has introduced hundreds of London's young people to tunnel engineering and last November received an award for her inspirational work.

We are currently working on our programme for the new Club Year when our theme will be 'Health and Wellbeing'. This will include a joint 3E project between Croydon Club and Club Banjul in Gambia, which will be managed through the personal contacts of two of our members.

March. We are now reaping the benefits of the two years of concentrated recruitment effort by our membership committee.

On the fundraising front, we've had enormous success in a short space of time. The Bollywood evening previously reported on, raised £1000 towards the science awards we offered this year as part of our 85th anniversary celebrations. In addition

East Grinstead Club Sackville School Year 9 Good Citizen Award

SI East Grinstead Presidents Jane Griffiths and Angela Edwards presented their Clubs Good Citizen award to year nine Winner Alex Muggeridge at a Celebration Assembly on December 18th. The award recognises people who give to the community and who help at home and at school. It gives over 200 young people in year nine a chance to think about life, and it sets them up for future jobs because the finalists interviews are before a panel of club members in the Mayors Parlour.



Gravesend Club Showing their work to the community

An illuminated Christmas Tree at Christ Church, Gravesend in December was a visual display of some of our work in the community. Designed and decorated in Soroptimist colours by Pamela Debnam (fourth from left), it showed photographs of events and projects recently undertaken by the Club. Soroptimist literature and magazines were displayed alongside the tree.



Members of the Club spent a morning at Holy Trinity Primary School, Gravesend reading stories and poems on the Christmas theme and talking to children in each class about its history, traditions and celebrations. One of the stories was read in two languages at assembly. This was our celebration of International Literacy Day – postponed for a variety of reasons but better late than never, you might say. Four members visit the school each week during term to listen to children read.



Our annual Fun Quiz Night on 12 January raised over £500 in aid of our Friendship Link Club, SI Freetown, Sierra Leone. Pamela Debnam and Sheila Knight and their husbands set the questions and conducted the evening, which is traditionally a

highlight of the club's fund-raising events. A team from SI Medway Towns scored the highest points. The raffle was drawn by Region President Angela Edwards.

Medway Towns Club 10 year support for children in South Africa

At the Durban Federation Conference ten years ago members of S.I. Medway Towns met a Welsh lady, Niki Lee, who has transformed the lives of hundreds of young people in a remote bush area of South Africa. Through her vision, dogged determination and sheer strength of will, hundreds of children are now fed, educated, have a chance of a normal life and are able to dream of achieving their full potential. Members of the club went out as volunteers in 2005 to discover that about 50% of the local population were suffering from HIV or Aids; old women were looking after their orphaned grandchildren in mud huts with no income or government support; some children had no-one at all to look after them and malnutrition meant that some children had not the energy to walk to school. To the children in this area Niki had already made changes which were nothing short of miraculous. And the work goes on. Niki has founded a charity called Zisize (Zulu for "self help") which has built schools, toilets, homes for child headed families, an orphanage and two children's centres.



The project has developed through sponsorship, donation and the help of volunteers and S.I. Medway's support began ten years ago with a donation of £20,000 to have two rondavels built to accommodate the volunteers who come from all over the world. They also provided £10,000 to help fund the cost of a pick-up truck, the only vehicle capable of withstanding the dirt tracks that pass for roads.

A feeding programme is also in operation. Now that the Government provide one main meal to children on school days Zisize is only needing to feed 600 children at weekends and during school holidays when many children would otherwise not eat at all. S.I. Medway Towns are some of the many who sponsor monthly food parcels which help to alleviate the worst of the suffering of some very needy families. Some members have been privileged to work out there and have seen at first hand what a difference a sack of corn, rice, flour, salt, candles etc. can make to the lives of these destitute families. Zisize continues to grow from strength to strength and S.I. Medway are immensely proud to be associated with it.



Food for People in Crisis

S.I. Medway are helping to support the food banks organized by The Trussell Trust. These food banks provide a minimum of three days emergency food to people experiencing crisis for many reasons such as unemployment, illness, delays in receiving benefits or just receiving an unexpected bill on a low income. Members bring contributions to their monthly meetings and deliver to the food bank locally. According to the Trussell Trust "A box of food makes a big difference. It helps to prevent crime, housing loss and family breakdown. The food is all donated by the public and sorted by volunteers. Frontline care professionals such as doctors and social workers identify people in crisis and issue a food voucher to be exchanged for food at one of our food banks".



Medway Soroptimists celebrated Xmas in a cosy farmhouse in Rainham in traditional style with each member bringing goodies to fill six hampers with Xmas food, treats for the Mums and presents for the children living at the Women's Refuges in Medway. Some of the treats will be wrapped up and given by the children to their Mums and everyone gets to dive into the box and choose gifts and food for themselves. This hopefully ensures that these ladies, who often arrive at the refuge with nothing but the clothes they are wearing, feel loved and cared for this Christmas.



Regional Events: This is just a brief summary of events – please refer to the website but also flyers attached with this newsletter.

SI Beckenham and District
Speaker on 18th March 2013.
Caroline Goode senior Police person (female) from the Metropolitan Police who will be coming along with a case study of "**Violence against Women**" and how the Met deal with it.

SI Beckenham and District
International Evening
Saturday 22nd March
An International Supper with an Illustrated Presentation –
Tales of Afghan Women -
By our own Jackie Paling
The evening starts with bucks fizz
There is also a raffle for Hope for Tomorrow – cancer charity.

SI Canterbury Fashion Show
on Thursday 1st May cost £5 in
Harvey Hall at Kent and Canterbury
Hospital 7-00 for 7-30

SI Croydon and District
Inter-Club Friendship Super
on 14th March 19:00 for 19:3
at The Chateau. The guest speaker
this year is Mai Nguyen a civil
engineer specialising in tunnel
engineering.

SI Eastbourne and District
Advance notice of
60th Anniversary Celebration Lunch
at the Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne
on Saturday, 1st March 2014

SI Gravesend and District
event for International Women's Day
9th March 9-00 – 1-00 £3-00
Northfleet School for Girls
Hall Road, Gravesend
Human Trafficking and
Healthy Relationships

President Jenny invites you to the
75th Anniversary Lunch at St Julian's
Club, Sevenoaks. TN15 0RX
on Saturday, 23rd March 2013 12.30
for 1pm Closing date 8th March
Details of the menu on the website

SI Tunbridge Wells and District
Water Aid Speaker 19th March
cost £2-50 includes glass of wine/soft
drink and free raffle ticket
7.30-9.30pm
Christ Church Hall, High Street,
Tunbridge Wells
Details of raffle prizes attached
to this newsletter

Regional Event for International
Women's Day on 9th March
Join me on the Bridge
More details to follow at the meeting.

Regional Meeting dates for the rest of
this Regional year:

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 this
newsletter. I would like articles by 31st
May for the next newsletter please.
Denise Staplehurst Newsletter Editor.