

EXTRA

see news

August 2020

Soroptimist International South East England Region Newsletter

President Lorna's message



AS I WRITE this last article as Regional President, I am reflecting on a very unusual presidential year. All the hopes and plans you make as you take on a role like this start to take place, and then you get served a curve ball called Coronavirus. We did however plough on. My theme was 'Secure in the Present and Securing the Future'. Never did I think it would be so relevant. We started with a Royal Protection Officer and will finish with a female Firefighter. In between we heard from the Air Ambulance, a Fighter Pilot, Employers for Carers, so relevant during the pandemic, and how equality has been affected during the lockdown.

I set you a challenge to raise £1000 for the Air Ambulance by giving up two cups of cappuccino in a year, never thinking you would not be able to go out and meet your friends for a cuppa. I hope that if you have not yet given our Treasurer your donation you could do so soon.

The Air Ambulance is still transporting Coronavirus patients, but I am advised that as soon as this stops we will be able to visit. Whilst it will be in Grace's year, she is happy for it to go ahead, so watch this space for further details.

The year will finish in Belfast virtually. Both Grace and I have provided photos, each wearing the Regional chain, so you should see this if you have signed up for conference.

My Executive Team will be in touch about the next Region Meeting, for which we are doing a great deal of planning. I know some people still do not want to mix and are shielding and some are desperate to meet up. The hotel, under current regulations, are allowed 30 people for business meetings, which ours is classified as. As we all know regulations can change on a day-to-day bases. It might finish up with a bit of both, with some of us in the room with a recording of the meeting sent out afterwards via Zoom. We are currently seeking permission to record our speakers, and the hotel to see if that is possible. I know that this will be difficult and I do so wish we could all meet as usual, but I will do my utmost (my old school motto) to be fair and try to please everyone.

The next big project I hope you will join me in, is taking part in the WOW Festival on International Women's Day weekend at the Southbank London from March 05 to 08, 2021.

I, together with some other regional presidents, are in early discussion to see if we can get a stall at this wonderful event to showcase our 100 year history and our vision for the next 100 years. The reason for taking part is to raise our profile, get new members, and showcase our projects. Some of you have already said you would be interested; the likely commitment might be as little as one hour on a stall. Of course this is assuming we are able to meet once more in person.

I would like to say a big thank you for all the support I have had from both my Executive Team and the Region in general in such a difficult year; your support has meant a lot to me.

Medway and Maidstone celebrating World Friendship Day July 30, 2020



Joined by Friendship Link Clubs SI Accra (Ghana), SI Heswall (UK), SI Osnabruck (Germany) and SI Voorburg (Netherlands)

365 years of Soroptimist service came together to celebrate World Friendship Day on July 30. The recently amalgamated club of SI Medway and Maidstone decided to bring together their Friendship Link Clubs in a Zoom meeting to celebrate friendship, and to meet one another.

20 Soroptimists from three Federations were represented – SI Heswall and SI Medway and Maidstone from SIGBI, SI Osnabruck and SI Voorburg from SI Europe and SI Accra from the newly formed Africa Federation. Each member introduced themselves and gave a brief account of their Soroptimist role and interest, and between us we have a total of 365 years of membership.

Project work (Programme Action) was discussed and gave lots of ideas for future work and project sharing. It was felt the stars of the show were our Soroptimist sisters in Ghana – they were amazing in what they had to say. SI Medway and Maidstone already work with SI Osnabruck on a UN School project and SI Accra with Kente Sashes, it is hoped that we can work with our Friendship Links to find more joint projects.

As we look forward to celebrating 100 years of Soroptimism next year, and 75 years since the formation of the Medway Towns club, we will look forward to meeting our Friendship Link members in person in early June 2021 but, in the meantime, we will hold another Zoom Get Together in September when we hope that members from our Le Quesnoy Friendship Link will be able to join us.

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



SI Tunbridge Wells' masks on sale in town centre newsagent

CORONAVIRUS HALTED ALL physical club meetings but this did not stop members from working out a way forward. After the initial phase of lock-down, SI Tunbridge Wells rallied and communicated by Zoom. We also set up a social bubble and transferred our sewing skills from bags and bunting to making masks.

Members of the club have been busy making face masks, over 3,000 to date. Some members cut and sew in isolation others meet on a regular basis working together to construct and insert the masks into individual packs including Soroptimist information leaflets.

Using the hashtag #Masks4All, the project quickly became a production line producing masks in small, medium and large sizes in a variety of fabrics for all sexes and ages, including children.

Many of these we have donated to local organisations, charities and residential care facilities, including Chamberlain Court Care Home and other care homes, Aspens, The Women's Refuge, Nourish and Mbedza. Some have been purchased further afield by those who have heard of our fundraising activities .

SITWD masks have also been made available to the community of Tunbridge Wells, in return for modest donations, through social media and from outside the home of one of our members.

As people moved out of lock-down and ventured outside to buy food and everyday essentials we diversified and approached a town centre newsagent and coffee shop. This has meant we

have increased our profile and the public can now select a mask along with their newspapers and lottery tickets. We have been delighted at the response from members of the community.

Funds raised allow us to continue to support local, national and international charities. So far we have donated:

£800 to the Empowering Girls in Nepal Project.

£500 to Nourish Foodbank.

£600 to West Kent Refuge to fund new sofas.

£1,000 to Mental Health Resource Reachout Youth project, which gives young people a safe space to connect in these difficult times.

All of these donations fully support our programme action with emphasis on people, good health and well-being, ensuring healthy lives, ending poverty in all its forms, and gender equality.

This report demonstrates that despite the difficulties caused by Covid19, we are active and working in our community. The mask activity has raised much needed funds and the list of donations will grow as we have more funds to allocate, particularly amongst local charities.

An added bonus has been that our local profile has been raised considerably as the masks have sold in their thousands, and each one has had a small label giving details about the Soroptimists. Potentially, therefore, some 3,000 people who selected our masks were reminded of us or learnt about us for the first time.

CAROLINE AUCLAND, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS REGION REPRESENTATIVE



SI Immediate Past President Mariet Verhoef-Cohen

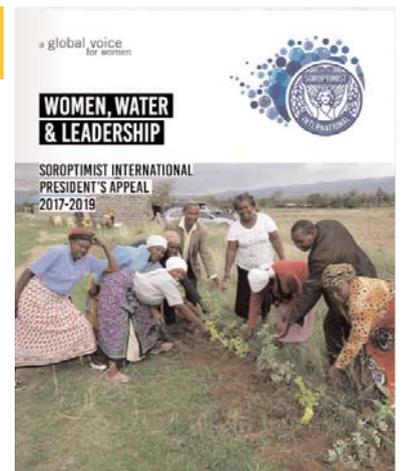
Women, Water and Leadership

I AM PLEASED to share with you the final report of SI Immediate Past President Mariet's Appeal, 'Women, Water and Leadership'. Please do read the report:

<https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/flip-books/women-water-and-leadership/?page=1>

This is a comprehensive report setting out the wide range of projects undertaken and the excellent results of which we should all be very proud.

CAROL INFANTI, APD ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT





Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists Supporting #UNLOCKTHEDOORS



In the July 2020 edition of SEE News, APD Carol Infanti reported on the Justice and Care initiative, 'Unlock the doors of modern slavery' to mark the UN World Day Against Trafficking Persons (July 30) to raise awareness of the plight of human trafficking victims and promote and protect their rights.

Members of SI Medway and Maidstone agreed to support this by each taking a photo of ourselves outside our front door with a sign which read '#UnlockTheDoors'. For those of us living on



our own this proved in some instances to be a challenge itself, but with some creativity and determination we each achieved it.

The photos were put on our club website and posted on our Facebook page with the hashtag #UnlockTheDoors and tag @justiceandcare.

Justice and Care acknowledged our support and confirmed they will collect all posts together and deliver a montage to the UK government.

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



SEPTEMBER 2020 WILL see the return of Indian Premier League cricket. So what's so special about that? The Rajasthan Royals, a top cricket team, have received sponsorship from Niine, an Indian sanitary towel brand. The brand name will be seen on the back of the teams purple shirts.

In 2019, the Indian Premier League had 462 million viewers. Discussions about periods are taboo, and menstrual stigma is a cause of gender inequality. It is hoped that this newfound visibility will challenge India's archaic attitudes and fears about menstruation.

According to Unicef, 71% of young Indian women are unaware of menstruation until their first cycle, and many men remain entirely ignorant of periods until at least they get married.

Source: The Guardian, August 25, 2020



JEANETTE LEE, THE Region's Benevolent Fund Representative, was delighted to report that the raffle held at the July Region Zoom meeting raised £238, more than is raised at our 'normal' Region meetings. So a big thank you to everyone.

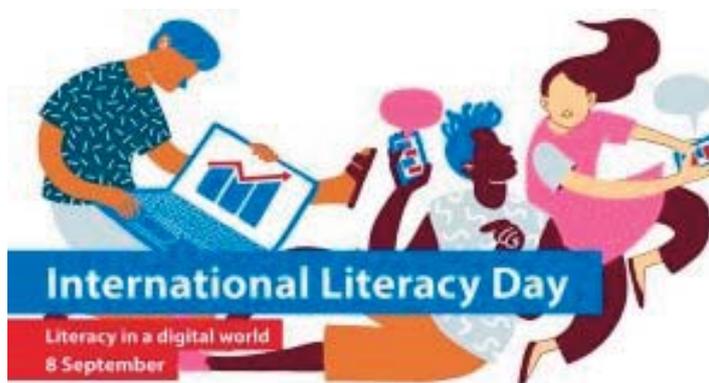
The Benevolent Fund was established in 1939 as a relief fund for the assistance of Soroptimists who had fallen into financial difficulty, either through ill health, misfortune or advancing years. It took until 1942 for the Benevolent Fund to be formed and incorporated into the Federation Constitution.

The Benevolent Fund has its own Constitution and is a Registered Charity (No 211840).

Today the Benevolent Fund is still funded by, and available to, members from the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland. The levy per member currently is £2.

Many years ago, a beneficiary may have retired on a modest salary which has not kept pace with the cost of living. Why should women have to reduce their standard of living just because they have retired? The reasons given in 1942 are just the same today. Today's beneficiaries range in age from the mid-40s to the over 90s.

Copy for the September 2020 issue of SEE News should be sent to pat.painting@btinternet by September 28, 2020. This edition will be issued to the Region early in October.



The importance of literacy

SEPTEMBER 08 WAS proclaimed as International Literacy Day (ILD) at the 14th session of UNESCO's General Conference on October 26, 1966.

Since 1967, International Literacy Day (ILD) celebrations have taken place annually around the world to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society.

Despite progress made, literacy challenges persist, and at the same time the demands for skills required for work, evolve rapidly.



EACH YEAR THE International Day of Peace is observed around the world on September 21. The UN General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

The 2020 theme for the International Day of Peace is "Shaping Peace Together."

Celebrate the day by spreading compassion, kindness and hope in the face of the pandemic. Stand together with the UN against attempts to use the virus to promote discrimination or hatred.

South East England Region Annual General Meeting Saturday September 19, 2020 at the Holiday Inn Maidstone-Sevenoaks, London Road, Wrotham, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 7RS

The number of attendees for this meeting will be restricted to 30.

You will receive details from the Region Secretary.

Registration is now open for the Belfast Virtual Conference October 30 and 31, 2020, 13:30 to 17:00. Registration Fee is £60

Programme for Friday October 30

Welcome and Opening of Conference

Greetings from International President Sharon

Keynote Speaker : Lady Hale

"If I can do it, so can you."

Live Q&A session with Lady Hale

Update on Federation Project: Empowering Girls in Nepal

Federation Reports: Federation President Isobel Smith and Federation Director of Finance Ruth Healey

A Celebration of Membership Part 1: Soroptimists Rising to the Unique Challenges of 2020 showcasing how Clubs, Regions, National Associations, Countries and members, have found new ways to stay connected, look after each other and grow membership.

Keynote Speaker: Professor Susan Black

Live Q&A session with Professor Black

Programme for Saturday October 31

Opening of Second Day

A Celebration of Membership Part 2

Keynote Speaker: Dr Alison Gardner

"Building Communities Resilient to Modern Slavery"

Live Q&A Session with Dr Gardner

Programme Action Best Practice Awards

Keynote Speaker: Jane Garvey

"Speaking Up"

Live Q&A Session with Jane Garvey

Closing Ceremony

Change of Insignia

Farewell from Northern Ireland with Celtic Storm