

## **Friendship weekend Report**

The week-end of 15<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017 saw Soroptimists from all over Ireland convene in the Shearwater Hotel, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. When SI Ballinasloe celebrated Ms. Maria Finnegan becoming National President, every member knew the work involved in making the National Friendship Weekend successful.

The working group consisted of six members and the wider membership were briefed at monthly club meetings. Sponsorship was sought locally with a great response. The program took shape, following the enable, educate and empower structure.

The workshop adopted the theme of Women in the Workplace with a focus on the cost of domestic violence to the economy.

- Dr. Nata Duvury shared her research showing the hidden costs to families and communities of violence against women.
- Ms Margaret Martin, National Director of Women's Aid showed us how to help women in abusive situations/relationships.
- Journalist Ms. Geraldine Lynagh shared tips on how to use the media more effectively to get our message to a wider audience

The social side of the weekend gave participants the option to:

Visit Clonmacnoise, Visit Walled Garden, Walk in Garbally Pk., and/or play 18 holes at Ballinasloe golf club.

The gala dinner entertained 140 people, with Rachel Goode singing beautifully and Galway County Council presenting certificates of welcome and appreciation to President Maria. The after dinner speaker Ms Olwen Dawe was inspiring.

In conclusion, SI Ballinasloe have celebrated our 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of our chapter recently, and it was an honour to host the annual Friendship Weekend.