

SI Mullingar & District – August 2020

Greetings from SI Mullingar & District as we continue living with COVID-19. In March as restrictions commenced we were floating high and looking forward to closing off a great year. In the previous 3 months we had enjoyed a Wine Tasting & Buffet social evening, a very well support Christmas charity fund raising lunch, a most enjoyable celebration evening for International Women's Day, enrolled a new member and presented over €8,000 to nine different charities at our March meeting. We were ready for our AGM.

Six months on and life has been very different for all our members. Between us we have experienced what has hit our population at large - closing businesses, health challenges, unemployment, cocooning, missing family, change of jobs, long exhausting working hours, restricted travel, cancelled holidays, learning coping skills and in all of that on reflection it is clear that the fundamental of Soroptimists "Best of Sisters" and Friendship at our core still keeps us united as a club. Great credit is due to our secretary Anne Melly who kept in touch with us week on week. Restriction to 2 km and cocooning was probably the toughest time but in one way or another, members helped each other while respecting people's privacy and the way they wanted to cope. Members left shopping on door steps, sat on walls and chatted to others who were cocooning, iPads were were setup for the ever important church services for some, greeting cards were exchanged with bouquets of flowers sent to those who had to cope with non COVID health challenges.

Rhubarb tarts, banana breads, lemon cakes were all exchanged while legs were walked off dogs and still COVID kgs appeared. *What about the hair* - was always on the list – length, colour, home trimming and when will we get an appointment! As members we were no more than a telephone call away from each other. We knew we had someone we could call on and a solution would be found. Small group garden coffees took off as soon as freedom was granted.



And then the announcement for face masks to be used. In the beginning these were not so readily available so one of our Soroptimists stepped up to the need and took the good work of her sisters making face masks and made them available to any member who wanted them. All you had to do was send an e-mail of request and she delivered to your door the beautiful face masks at no charge – generosity at its best.



We thought we would have no problem having our AGM in September with an Early Bird – but with restrictions still in place we are now going virtual and getting Zoom setup with our members where no one will be left behind. We have arrangements underway with our local planning authority for the planting of our Soroptimist tree to celebrate Soroptimists 100th anniversary in 2021 which will also be our 30th Anniversary. Let's hope we can party then and make up for all our lost time.



International Women's Day Celebration – supporting International FGM and SIGBI Federation Projects



The last club outing before COVID-19 restrictions was for our celebration of International Women's Day with a fantastic event in Bloomfield House Hotel with a max audience of 200. In the theme of *Women Inspiring Women through the Power of Their own Story* three guest speakers told their inspiring stories and



little did we know that night how much we could take from their story for the next 6 months to come – “never give up even when the going gets tougher and tougher”. Our raffle raised about €1,100 which we donated to the International Project FGM, Federation Project Women in Nepal and our local International Project Tanzania Heavenly Homes Orphanage.

Joining IWD celebrations with President Michael D Higgins

On the 6th March, President Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabrina held a celebration of International Women's Day at the Aras. SI Mullingar were thrilled to have been included in this celebration and President Noreen Abbott and Programme Action Officer Sarah McCormack attended. Michelle Maher



another club member was also there through her own work interests. That day there was no hand shaking and while we



chatted and wondered about restrictions we had no idea of what was to come. It was wonderful to meet Marion Johnston Dublin who got the first celebration of IWD in Ireland in 1976 who shared with us later the article posted in the National papers after the event.

Building partnerships and working with others in supporting local charities

At our March meeting we presented over €8,000 to nine different charities. Each of these organisations came and made presentations at previous club meetings. One of these charities included TEAM HOPE preparing the shoe gift boxes. We did not just donate money but we also bought plenty of children's clothes and worked with TEAM HOPE in filling the boxes. This created another new partnership for us and members really enjoyed the shopping and getting the bargains.



We also have another new partnership established with First Responders Mullingar. They made a presentation to our members and guests and we funded a Defibrillator for an area we have identified in Mullingar. The machine will be installed in this public location with a recognition plack to Soroptimists. First Responders will be training our members on CPR and anyone who wishes to get involved further in this essential community work will be supported.

Friendship making Buffet and Wine Tasting Evening given by SuperValu Mullingar to Soroptimists and Guests



SuperValu Mullingar treated us and our guests to a wine tasting and buffet evening. We took this opportunity to invite our sponsors and our Soroptimist friends who are always there to help us. Our raffle on the night raised €850 while a great friendship evening was had by all.

Soroptimists and Santa Grotto make possible the creation of a Children's Animation Film



For the past number of years the Manager of Harbour Street Shopping Centre Mullingar joins with us to identify a Children's Charity where they will donate the takings from their Santa Grotto and we Soroptimists will also donate to this same charity. This



year we received €852 from Santa Grotto and the charity for this donation is Helium Arts supporting the creation of an animation film with children with severe diabetes as the actors which was shown in the cinema in Mullingar recognising the support of Soroptimists



Christmas Social and Fund Raising Lunch – raising our profile and funds for charities



We had a fantastic Community Social and Charity Fund Raising Christmas Lunch attended by President Catherine. Catherine was delighted to meet with TD Robert Troy now Minister of State for Trade Promotion



who is Ireland's representative on the Council of Europe for the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence.

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