

**Soroptimist International Garstang**

**Programme Action Annual Report – 2023/24**

Welcome to Garstang Soroptimist's Programme Action Annual Report – a report that not only records our achievements over the last 12 months, but also acknowledges our 50<sup>th</sup> Centenary year. Half a century of friendship, fundraising, advocacy and support for women and girls, locally, nationally and internationally.

We are very proud of our club and its achievements – 'small, yet perfectly formed' is a phrase that resonates with us. Throughout the year we continued to grow in number by welcoming new members – Barbara (transferred across from Preston), Paula, Hilary, Su, and Trish. They joined the existing active members, listed here as a record of their involvement and thanks for their contributions - Annemarie, Fiona, Gail, Hazel, Jackie, Janet, Joan B, Joan H, Kathy, Lesley, Maureen, Muriel, Nora, Ruth, Susan, Yvonne, and our honorary member, Judith.

The highlight of 2023/4 was our '50 for 50' activities, delivered in celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> year. All members were involved with activities ranging from knitting 50 hats, knitting and stitching 50 squares for a blanket for fistula patients, undertaking 50 hours of voluntary work, making 50 slices of cake for the coffee tasting event, potting up 50 plants, making 50 jars of home-made marmalade, decorating 50 bottle lights, crafting 50 hand-made cards, baking 50 biscuits, making 50 scarecrows, collecting 50 tins/jars of food for the food bank, doing 50 minutes of balsam bashing, and 50 hours of care for a trainee Guide Dog for the Blind.

We celebrated our 50 years with a Charter lunch in October at Wyrebank in Garstang. It was an honour to have both Hazel and Nora in attendance, two of the founding members of Garstang Soroptimists. The event was well attended and, as a result, led to a collaboration with Wyrebank for them to be our local collection point for all our donated items.



Keeping us busy throughout the year were the following PA activities:

### **Collections:**

- Stamps - another 5kg collected, sorted and snipped;
- Coins – another 2.5kg in coins plus a collectors pack and 18 banknotes collected; old and new; British and foreign currency;
- New underwear and bras – another 74 knickers/pants and 42 bras collected;
- WOW women – 8 new profiles added and helping us to promote the International Women’s Day theme of ‘Inspiring Inclusion’. We now have 12 new profiles to published;
- Food items – over 50 tins and packets of food for the local Salvation Army foodbank;
- Spectacles – more than 40 pairs in support of SI Preston’s collection for Save the Children Fund
- Cleaning products – over 50 items of cleaning products, destined for the women leaving Fylde Coast Women’s Refuge and settling into a place of their own.
- Ink cartridge recycling – one full box sent off, saving 1.2kg of waste from going to landfill and raising £17.80 for our charities

### **Profile raising:**

- Garstang Soroptimists were present at the annual Scarecrow festival, and hosted a stall at the Garstang Jumble trail and the Oaklands (Leonard Cheshire Home) open day.
- We hosted 8 Orange Cafés at Booths and Garstang Arts centre. Orange apparel and our neckerchiefs helped us to stand out from the crowd.
- We planted over 50 (more like 300....) daffodil bulbs in October, to accompany the tree whips we planted last year.
- We wrote and despatched over 50 ‘Cards for Kindness’, offering words of friendship and connection to residents in local care homes.

### **Dedicated fund-raising events:**

- Coffee tasting – over 50 ‘tasters’ joined us for this event at Garstang Arts Centre and raising over £580 for Fylde Coast Women’s Aid.
- Quiz – 70 quizzers put their thinking caps on and joined us at The Wheatsheaf pub for a quiz night, raising over £714 for Fylde Coast Women’s Aid.
- Parched peas – the peas were back on the menu and selling like.....parched peas! Over the two nights at Garstang Victorian Festival we raised over £630 for Lancashire Mind;



### **Lobbying and advocacy:**

It was another year of petitions and lobbying local MPs – Ruth’s sewing skills were put to the test with a fabulous felt dog being sent to local MP, Ben Wallace, to highlight the issues around ‘fast fashion’. Petitions signed ranged from local phone masts, keeping rail station ticket offices open, making knife crime prevention compulsory in the education curriculum, support for the Trussel Trust, stopping forcing women and girls into sex for water, and lobbying against the closure of Girl Guide activity centres.

### **Summary:**

Overall, it’s been another action-packed year of community-focussed activity, fund raising and advocacy, all with the interests of women and girls in mind. We would like to thank all members, their families and friends, and all the local Garstang businesses who have helped us to maintain our focus on standing up for women and girls.

Here’s to the next 50 years.....

Jackie Whitely & Gail Porter

Programme Action leads 2023/24

