

STORT VALLEY ROTARY

NEWSLETTER

December 2022



Supporting our community
#HelpingHerts



Watch out for our exciting
programme of Events in 2023

PRESIDENT'S PREAMBLE



Fellow Rotarians
and Friends

Rotary is a global network of 1.4 million neighbours, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to

create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves

Stort Valley Rotary, within its area of influence, is now delivering on these ambitions, and I will give you some examples: -

- Helping Herts is delivering financial support and educating charities to promote themselves and take on board the latest digital tools: £350,000 raised over the last two years and 29 Hertfordshire charities benefiting.
- Our Speaker Network is growing our networks with around 3,000 viewing our talks live or through our YouTube channel. Interestingly twice as many people view through YouTube than watch live on the evening.

Find us at:
stortvalleyrotary.com

IN THIS ISSUE

- Child Contact Centre - , Lynne Ling
- Becoming an Olympian - Rowan McKeller
- Bishop's Stortford BID – Gina Thomas
- The Role of a Whip - Julie Marson MP
- Helping Herts - Indie Unsung Hero Award
- Sustainable Fashion for Helping Herts
- Stort Valley Rotary President's Dinner
- President's Dinner - Pics

- Our partnership with BuildAid is delivering support to disadvantaged families in parts of the world where help is badly needed.
- Our regular meetings and outings deliver excellent companionship to members and friends

There is lots more we can do but the limiting factor is resource. Please go to our Website www.stortvalleyrotary.com and register your interest in working with us.

A Merry Christmas and our best regards for 2023.
Gordon Morrison, President



NEW INITIATIVES & A PAID SUPERVISOR AT BISHOP'S STORTFORD CHILD CONTACT CENTRE



Stort Valley Rotary has been a long-time supporter of the Bishops Stortford Contact Centre (formerly The Portland Centre) with Irene Hinshelwood, until recently a regular volunteer, keeping us informed of its work. At the October meeting we welcomed the new Chair, Sarah Fahy, and Secretary, Lynne Ling to tell us about the latest planned improvements. This initiative has been spurred by the growing population in our town. The Charity's new name better identifies its purpose and it now has a part-time paid supervisor. Of course the supervisor will work with its valuable team of volunteers.

Children are too often the main sufferer from family breakdown. Strained relations and antipathy often prevent the children seeing the estranged parent, who is most often the father. The Centre's premises, in the Hub Church in Portland Road, provide a safe, friendly and neutral place where the children, in the age range 5 to 14, can spend time with one or both parents. Others, including grandparents for instance, can also be involved. Meeting rooms are set up in a child friendly way and all meetings are discreetly supervised. Typically five families and three volunteers attend each Saturday morning.

The families get referred to the centre by various agencies, the CAB, several welfare and housing organisations etc but often by the Family Courts as a requirement of a settlement. Frustrated parents can be violent, they may have addictions and appropriate training equips volunteers to recognise and deal with these propensities. £25 a head is charged to each parent for up to 10 sessions although concessions do apply in straitened circumstances. It is hoped that over these sessions the families move to establishing regular contact with the estranged parent of their own accord.

The Gilfere Trust, a local charity, has given The centre significant additional financial support. The organisation also aims to provide a discreet sign posting service to introduce the parents to other services available to them which will improve their lot and in turn benefit the children.



The service was established in 1999 and they are clearly now confident that in its new form it will continue to be a valuable service to Bishops Stortford's growing community. Our President Gordon thanked Sarah and Lynne for their interesting talk.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY HAS A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN
CHARITIES NOT ALWAYS IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE PUBLIC EYE**

ROWAN McKELLER – BECOMING AN OLYMPIAN



Rowan lived in Scotland until she was 10. The daughter of rowing parents, she showed a photo of herself competing with her father in the double sculls. She thought she was the youngest ever

competitor.

In 2004 the family moved to Hertfordshire and she joined Broxbourne rowing club as a junior member and continued to row competitively whilst at school. She won a rowing scholarship to Berkeley University in the USA where the training was very hard. She also had to work hard on her academic subjects because failure meant being thrown out. She survived and progressed into the top boat which was an 8. In her third year they won the US collegiate championships and in her last year she was made rowing captain.

By 2015 she was in the GB under-23 squad and won a silver medal in the junior pair at the World Championship, in 2016 she was in the junior 4 and took 4th in the World Championships. In 2017 she became a member of the senior team and was training full time at their base in Caversham Berks. In 2018 she was a member of the 8 crew that took a silver medal at the World Cup and went on to take a bronze in the pairs.

The team was building up for the Olympics in 2020 and she explained that the coach dictates which boat you row in and with whom. He then decides which is the best combination and they are put together in the boat which he thinks has the best chance of success. This might be the 8 or the 4. In the meantime, they row all the boats from single skull upwards. In 2019 the top boat was the 8 and they won silver in the European championships and bronze in the World Cup. She is also a member of Leander Club at Henley and rows in training and in events such as the Henley Regatta. This is different to

rowing on still water on a lake where there are several lanes side by side. She said she prefers the lakes to the river.

In 2020 Rowan was the top athlete in the squad and a member of the 4 crew which was designated the top boat that year. However Covid then struck and they were all sent home. Team selection was back to square one and all training was done on dry land on equipment in her home. When they were able to return to training it was very stressful and only two of the original 4 crew kept their places. There was only time for one event before the Olympics, the European Championships. They were third for most of the race but got pipped by the Irish at the end. It was far from ideal preparation but better than some teams who had no races before the Olympics.



Once at Tokyo they had strict separation from others even at the airport and in the village. No family members were allowed anywhere near, so she found the experience difficult. In their first race they messed up and came last so in order to reach the finals they had to do well in the repechage. In that race they regained their form and won, so were able to progress. In the final they knew that realistically they were going to be fighting for third place as the Australians and Dutch were untouchable unless they made a mistake. In the event they managed to hold off the Irish

crew until a few meters from the line and so finished fourth. She was happy enough with their performance as she said they had given it their all and had nothing left at the end.

Rowan said the Olympic experience is unique and normally it would be enormous fun meeting athletes from all over the world. Unfortunately, her team had to catch a flight home only 24 hours after her event so she had very limited time to see the village or buy souvenirs. She did have a photo of herself on a scooter in the village looking very happy.



Since the Olympics she has continued as a full-time rower in the Olympic squad and is hoping to maintain her form so that she can go to Paris in 2024. They have a new coach who has improved their performance and two of the members of the 4 have been replaced with younger rowers. They all get on well and have gelled into a very strong unit. The 4 has won two golds in World events and also the European Championships in 2022. The 4 also slotted into the 8 and won a World silver. So at the moment their confidence is really high as they are World no 1. Rowan said rowing had taught her so much about discipline and teamwork which is essential to win races.

The Women's 4 has been nominated for Team of the Year in the Sunday Times awards, so any vote from members would be most welcome. They are however up against the Lionesses who have received much greater publicity.

In answer to several questions she said that in training they get a meal between each session which gives them the input required after so

much expenditure of energy. They get very little time off and even have to forego family weddings and the like. You must be totally dedicated in this sport where training is calculated over a long period building to a peak at the right time. You cannot dip in and out and still maintain your fitness. Apart from pulling on the oars she has to steer as it is a coxless boat which she does this with her feet. The confidence in the current 4 is great - in a race the plan is to start as best you can and then settle into your regular pattern for at least the next 1000 meters. If another team goes off like a bomb, you must not respond. You just know your regular pace is better and you probably will pull them back by 1500 meters from which point you accelerate to the line.



Previously she said she has just hoped her legs would hold out to the finish but now with the teamwork and confidence in the boat she knows she will last and have some extra for the last push. It is a great feeling. She prefers the 4 combination to the 8 as it is difficult to get all those personalities to gel together into a happy unit, whereas the present four have no issues at all and the younger ones invigorate the older two. Her best time on the rowing machine for a single pull over 2000 meters is 6min 37 secs, which drew admiration from the watchers who know about rowing or use the machine in the gym.

Gordon wished Rowan luck and said we all looked forward to watching her in Paris.

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS INTERESTED IN HIGH
ACHIEVERS IN OUR COMMUNITY**

GINA THOMAS TALKS ABOUT HER WORK WITH THE BISHOP'S STORTFORD BID



There are over 300 BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) spread across the UK. They are voluntary associations of local businesses in a geographical area whose aims are to promote the members' businesses by working together. A small levy based on their rates pays for the service.

Gina Thomas BID Manager, works for Bishops Stortford BID three days a week. 310 diverse local enterprises subscribe to the service and the organisation have just secured an extension for another 6 years of operation, clearly a measure of its value. They publicise their work widely with a Newsletter, in local newsletters, by Twitter and Facebook (have a look) and in the local newspaper where Gina has a regular column.



Our Club have helped on various initiatives such as treasure trails which give us both publicity – all aimed to increase footfall in the town. The latest is pantomime themed trail linked to the upcoming Southmill Arts production of “Jack and the Beanstalk”. Working together means that the businesses have a stronger voice in making representations to the various authorities when the plans of others can impact on the local economy. A case in point is the long overdue Old River Lane Development being promoted by East Herts Council and now out for consultation. Ensuring the scheme integrates well with existing businesses is a concern.

BIDs are covered by legislation setting the ground rules for their operation, so business ventures thinking of joining know for example that the levy they pay is ring-fenced and the operation is fully accountable. A Board of 15 members meet regularly to set local priorities and discuss particular plans or focusses with Gina. This year a special emphasis is on Place-Making – making the street scene more attractive.



Gina, who is based in BSTC Windhill offices, is the sole paid employee of BS-BID and clearly enjoys her work and radiates enthusiasm. Her 3 days a week seemed hardly enough time for what she achieves. Incidentally she is also busy mum with a teenage family to look after as well.

STORT VALLEY ROTARY VALUES ITS CONNECTIONS WITH COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN THE TOWN

JULIE MARSON MP - HER ROLE AS A WHIP IN PARLIAMENT



It is one of the privileges of being in Rotary that we can attract distinguished speakers who are willing to share their experience of working in organisations that play critically important roles in our society. They help us appreciate complexities of which we have only a relatively superficial understanding.

It was a pleasure to welcome Julie Marson MP for the second time, having talked to us previously about the role of an MP from her personal experience. She joined us on Zoom directly from the House of Commons.

She has been appointed to the Government Whips Office. Most of us have a stereotype in our minds of what a Whip looks like and does: male - and bullying MPs into supporting whatever party leaders have decided! Julie could not be more unlike the stereotype and neither is the role, as we learned.

She did not underplay the importance of the role in managing the complex business of the House, but we learned that Whips also have a most important pastoral role with their party's MPs. She is one of 15 Whips and each currently has 30 MPs to liaise with. She is there to give personal support where appropriate and assist them gain access to Ministers, both for help and to further Constituency issues, suggest legislative amendments or better understand party policy. In practice she is the conduit for those MPs to feel that they can have a say and make a difference and are not just Lobby fodder! She ensures that ministers are made aware of any strongly held views on any of the issues being raised. This aspect of the role is an important contributor to the maintenance of morale, as well as ensuring the disciplines to carry through government business. Whips do not have the right to speak in the House, but they do have privileged right of access to ministers.

However, the prime role is delivering the Government's business each day and ensuring that all her 30 MPs have all the necessary papers and fully understand whether an item requires attendance and/or voting (3 line underlined – both required, 2 line -attendance and permission required to miss a vote, 1 line – voting is requested but not required to attend). If a Bill is considered a matter of individual conscience, then it has a free vote. MPs may arrange a "pairing" with a member from the opposition party and this has to be registered with the Whips Office and followed through.

Julie has to make sure that "her" MPs turn up to vote as required. When a vote is called, she will be present in the lobby checking.

Understandably the stereotype arises from this discipline and the sanctions that are applied for not observing the "rules". The most serious sanction is "withdrawal of the whip" and thus the likelihood of losing the seat at the next election. Extenuating circumstance will be considered and also the closeness of the potential vote. However, there is no doubt that this system is supervised very closely and taken very seriously. Future promotion prospects could be influenced!



Finally, Julie took us through the complexity of the parliamentary legislative process with its 1st, 2nd and 3rd readings and the involvement of the House of Lords. It was quite clear that without a whipping system the process would be unmanageable. What Julie brought to us was an understanding that the necessary disciplines are tempered by the pastoral role and that she is enjoying the opportunity to participate in this important process of Government.

STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS KEEN TO UNDERSTAND HOW CRITICALLY IMPORTANT ROLES WORK IN OUR SOCIETY

HELPING HERTS IS THE UNSUNG HERO AT THE BISHOPS STORTFORD INDIE AWARDS 2022



Helping Herts, the official charity of the Stort Valley Rotary Club, has been announced as the winner of the Unsung Hero Award at the Bishop's Stortford Independent Community, Sport and Business Awards 2022. The

awards ceremony took place on Thursday November 24 at South Mill Arts Centre.

The awards were overwhelmed with nominations as the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges of the current cost-of-living crisis have emphasised the extraordinary work carried out by people leading ordinary lives.

The Unsung Hero award, sponsored by Stort Chemicals, was created to celebrate the individuals and organisations who beaver away behind the scenes to make life better for others.

Gordon Morrison and Jim Tatchell, founders of Helping Herts, attended to collect the award which was presented by Mathew Sanderson, Sales Manager at Stort Chemicals. At the ceremony Gordon and Jim were credited as being "an unstoppable fundraising team through combining their business acumen with philanthropy". They launched Helping Herts, a county-wide campaign, with the backing of Stort Valley Rotary Club, to support good causes after the Covid-19 pandemic, when many charities were struggling to survive.

Though focussing their efforts on twelve organisations dedicated to child welfare, the Helping Herts campaign raised an impressive £210,000 in 2021 and £126,000 in 2022 so far.

As well as coming up with innovative ideas to generate money for the charities, Gordon and Jim organised two intrepid charity walks in 2022. Earlier this year they walked 180 miles of the Hertfordshire Way together over two weeks, before inviting supporters of their sponsored charities to complete a leg each as part of a wider event.

As they drive Helping Herts forward, both Gordon and Jim are drawing on a wealth of experience in the business and charity sectors.

Gordon, the president of Stort Valley Rotary, has been awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Hertfordshire in recognition of his charitable work and has also chaired two charities to improve outcomes for children with cancer. After a successful career in construction, Gordon established the Chaldean Group of Companies to manage the Chaldean estate in Much Hadham.

Jim is also a Rotarian and a member of the Stort Valley Council in addition to his work as a hands-on trustee of Bishop's Stortford Food Bank. He uses his business experience as founder of a clutch of companies, including Circadian FX, to lead Exidex, which stands for the Experienced Individuals Ideas Exchange. Before the pandemic, Jim was a founder member of English O'clock, a language-speaking group to welcome people of other nationalities to the town.

Gordon Morrison said: "Stort Valley Rotary created the Helping Herts initiative to gain interest from the people of Hertfordshire in the work that our partnering charities deliver. It is wonderful that our efforts have been recognised."

Jim Tatchell said: "I was genuinely shocked and delighted to receive the award on behalf of Helping Herts. It's great to see the recognition of the work put in by the whole team to create something that is making a real difference across the county."

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY APPRECIATES RECOGNITION
FOR THE WORK IT DOES IN OUR COMMUNITY**

HERTFORD CHARITY FASHION SHOW PUTS THE SPOTLIGHT ON SUSTAINABLE FASHION



The much-loved boutique, Mint of Hertford, hosted a catwalk of pre-loved clothing recently at the Hummingbird restaurant in Hertford to promote sustainable fashion and raise money for the charity Helping Herts. Over £1750 was raised for Helping Herts, the official charity of the Stort Valley Rotary Club. Helping Herts support 12 children's charities across Hertfordshire to help them maximise their fundraising potential and improve the lives of the children and families they support. A dazzling selection of preloved clothes were modelled by regular customers of Mint, ranging from casual wear to evening wear and showcased a selection of brands from the high street to high end designer labels. The clothes are all available to purchase in store and a selection are available via the Mint website.

A raffle took place after the fashion show with lots of luxurious prizes on offer which were donated by local businesses.

Throughout the show Sioux Wilde, the owner of Mint, emphasised that by buying pre-loved clothes, we can contribute to slowing the fast

fashion cycle and reduce clothing waste. The fashion industry produces more CO2 emissions than aviation and shipping combined!

Sioux Wilde said: "We were blown away with the love from our loyal customers and if we have changed one person's mindset, I've done my job. We loved raising the money for Helping Herts and are already planning next year!"

Sarah Clancy, Digital Marketing Lead at Helping Herts, spoke at the event about Helping Herts and how the money raised was going directly to children's charities. She said: "We are so grateful to Sioux for putting on such an incredible cat-walk show and the generosity from the fabulous guests who bought raffle tickets, helping us raise money for Helping Herts. The money raised on the night will really make a difference to all the charities we support."



CLr Sue Barber, Mayor of Hertford, attended the event. She had recently presented the boutique with an award at the Hertford High Street awards for best fashion and said: "Mint provided a fantastic selection of clothing – indeed as they say "Guilt Free Designer Glamour". It was a truly magnificent night that saw an array of outfits all worn by local women of all ages. The emphasis on upcycling and sustainability is high in most people's minds and Mint of Hertford shows how it can be done and what can be achieved. All this was in a good cause to raise funds for children's charities across Hertfordshire."

STORT VALLEY ROTARY IS EXCITED WHEN THE ATTRACTIVE COINCIDES WITH THE WORTHY

Stort Valley Rotary President's dinner hailed a success

Gordon Morrison, President of Stort Valley Rotary Club, hosted the Annual President's Dinner on Monday 28 November at Hanbury Manor in Ware.

It was a successful evening with over 60 Rotarians, family and friends in attendance. Gordon used the opportunity to celebrate the success of Helping Herts, the official charity of Stort Valley Rotary. The campaign has raised over £125,000 in 2022 so far, which will be split between the twelve children's charities involved, representatives of whom were in attendance. This will have a huge impact on them and their ability to help vulnerable children and their families.



Gordon said: "I would like to thank everyone who attended the dinner, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the supporters of Helping Herts including High



Sheriff Sally Burton, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire Robert Voss, Lady Verulam, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council Richard Roberts, as well as Stort Valley Rotary Club members and wider supporters."

Lyn Moore, winner of the Helping Herts Hero Award, announced during Helping Herts week in July, attended the dinner and was presented with a certificate to thank her for all the volunteering she has done for Home-Start Hertfordshire.

Gordon has big ambitions for Helping Herts in 2023. From fundraising walks around The Hertfordshire Way, all 180 miles of it; to Helping Herts week, a week to celebrate all things Hertfordshire; and many charity events in between. The target is to raise £250,000 for the partner charities to really help them have a huge impact on the community they support.

There are many ways businesses can get involved, including a corporate fundraiser, sponsorship of an event, event participation, or branding on the Helping Herts website. If you would like to get involved in the campaign please email: hello@helpingherts.com

**STORT VALLEY ROTARY ENJOY CELEBRATIONS AND,
FROM TIME TO TIME, DON'T MIND DOING IT IN STYLE**

A few snaps to remind us of the enjoyable evening. A grand celebration at the sumptuous Hanbury Manor with valued friends. An appropriate tribute to our president Gordon Morrison who steered us successfully through the difficult Covid years.







FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS

Thursday 15 December

NO MEETINGS IN DECEMBER
Informal Christmas Lunch - Pearce's Farm Shop

www.stortvalleyrotary.com



E: stortvalleyrotary@gmail.com

T: 01279 881607