



British Ladies Society holds annual general meeting Society recalls ups and downs of past year

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It was an evening to say thank you and remember the ups and downs of the past year and the British Ladies Society went all out welcoming their new committee and bidding grateful farewell to their old one. On June 6, British Ladies Society held their Annual General Meeting at the Radisson Blu at 7 pm. Keeping an organization as large and as active as the BLS is not easy, but the society has groups of committed volunteers who keep the association going. On Monday evening the BLS introduced their members to their new committee headed by Anne Napier.

Support

In her speech the Guest of Honour Jenny Gaskell, wife of the Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy, Kuwait, representing Maria Pilar Fernandez Baker, BLS Patron and wife of the British Ambassador took a tongue in cheek look at the varied life of the wife of a diplomat posted in farflung countries. After her travel tales, she paid a fitting tribute to the BLS, one of the most active expatriate social groups in Kuwait, which provides effective support to the community of expatriates living away from Britain. "In all the places I have lived, I have never experienced a social group as welcoming, as friendly, as active and as useful as the British Ladies Society

here in Kuwait. What I love about BLS is that they welcome everyone, whether they are young or old, whether they have kids or not, whether they are working or not whether they are first time abroad or professional expats, there really is something for everybody here."

The highlight of this year included various activities such as monthly meetings, fashion show, bazaar, Halloween Party, Girls, Nights Out, Coffee Mornings, Mums & Tots, Library, walking and playing bridge.

Activity

Apart from the introduction of the new committee the highlight of the evening was the charity cheque presentation, a major

activity of the society and the announcement of charities for 2011/12. Jenny Gaskell handed over a cheque of KD 5,161 to Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice. "The dream of Bayt Abdullah has become a reality and hopefully it should be open by the end of this year," said a representative from Bayt Abdullah.

The UK charity for the year was Breakthrough Cancer and they received a cheque of KD 5,856. "To me Breakthrough is such an important organization. Without their work many women around the world wouldn't be here today," said Karen Webster, a member of BLS whose life has been touched by cancer.

Fondness

"When I spoke with the Charity they asked me to pass on their huge thanks to you. They said that every penny you have raised will make such a significant difference to their work, helping them make life changing discoveries, develop new drugs and keep thousands of families together for longer."

In her Presidential address, Julie Mallon spoke with fondness of the year that had passed. Apart from thinking on her feet quickly, what Julie also realized was her strong loyalty to the association.

"Something I certainly learned is how the BLS is a fountain of knowledge and good friendship." And as the American President Wilson said, "friendship is the only cement that holds the world together."

Recalling the remarkable women like Baroness Emma Nicholson, Sara Akbar who spoke at the monthly meetings, she mentioned, "These women epitomize the power of femininity and the female which again is what the BLS is about."

Her most memorable moments also included ironing scores of designer apparel for a recently held fashion show. "That was the most frightening moment in my whole year as President," she smiled. "I had to iron every single

item of clothing that you saw at the fashion show and they ranged from KD 70 to KD 850." Paying a tribute to her team and to the members," she said, "As we know a symphony cannot be composed with a single instrumentalist, we all play our roles and I think this is true of the BLS. For those of us who have been here a while I am often struck by the importance of the BLS and we must not underestimate the role we as a society play.

"One of the things that have not changed is that the BLS is about being family. Much of the vitality of friendship lies in the honouring of differences, not simply in the enjoyment of similarities. And that is apt for our society," she concluded.

Tradition

The BLS which has been active since 1993 has nurtured a tradition for raising money for charity. This year they have nominated Hayat Cancer Centre from Kuwait and Help For Heroes from UK. Masha Tolyada, a BLS member and cancer survivor was provided support by the Hayat Cancer Centre for her treatment. Donna Al Shaya, a volunteer with the group said, "The Hayat Cancer Centre which was started by a dynamic Kuwaiti lady Laila Al Qatami, provides treatment to cancer patients who otherwise would not have been able to afford the expensive treatments." They have a committee which goes through the details and makes the decisions whether to pay. The presentation of the charity cheques was followed by the announcement of the new committee and raffle.