

## LEARN ABOUT THE WORK OF THE U.K.'S SILVERSMITHS & JEWELLERS CHARITY

Brecken Branstrator, GIA GG

It's important for the industry to take care of its own, and the U.K.'s Silversmiths & Jewellers Charity (SJC) is doing just that for anyone in the nation who is or once was part of the trade and needs some sort of financial assistance.

The charity is nearly 200 years old—it will celebrate its bicentennial in 2027—but has transformed since its start, when it was called the Goldsmiths and Jewellers Annuity Institution. While it was and still continues to be a support system for silversmiths and jewelers in need of financial help, it used to be something that one could pay into and then get money back from once they needed it.

Now, the charity is funded through several efforts, including two large annual events, a benefit dinner and a golf day, Charity Manager Julie Griffin told GemGuide. It is also supported by chief benefactor Goldsmiths Company in London, and they solicit donations from the wider industry in general. There is also a raffle held at the Jewellery Valuers Association's annual conference in Loughborough, U.K., with proceeds now going to SJC.

The charity embraces every sector of the industry, whether manufacturer, wholesaler, valuer, or retailer, providing regular or one-off grants to assist both current and retired trade employees or their spouses anywhere in the U.K. who find themselves in need.

They find most of the people they help through recommendations, e.g. websites in the U.K. through which people who are struggling can find charities that may be able to help them. There is also the British independent organization Citizens Advice, which offers confidential information and advice to assist people with legal, debt, consumer, housing, and other problems in the U.K., and suggestions or



*The Silversmiths & Jewellers Charity raises money through one-off donations and annual fundraising events, like its annual dinner held in London's Goldsmiths' Hall. (Image courtesy of Silversmiths & Jewellers Charity)*

applications may come to SJC through that agency. Lately, the charity has also been trying to ramp up its social media strategy to raise awareness.

"It's quite hard to get yourself out there, really, because unless people find they need to apply to a charity or they support the charity, until that point, they don't take as much notice," said Griffin, who has been working in her role as charity manager for 15 years.

Griffin not only comes from a trade background herself but is surrounded by it—she worked for a diamond trader for more than three decades, and her father, husband, and sister have all been involved in the industry as well—so she is tapped into what's going on and a network of industry peers.

And, before she stepped into her current role, Griffin had experience volunteering with the charity as part of the fundraising committee, so it's a passion that runs deep and now includes even writing letters to some of those the charity helps or calling them on the phone just to chat.

The charity's work now includes around 40 people helped on a regular basis, meaning a monthly payment from SJC as well as a holiday bonus at the end of the year.

An example of the one-off funding applications supported by SJC this year was a 49-year-old self-employed jewelry designer, who sold her jewelry through her website as well as at galleries and exhibitions in the U.K. and Europe.

Last year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, followed shortly after by skin cancer. Both were caught early and are treatable, though treatment is ongoing. To manage financially, she first sold stock and received Employment and Support Allowance, though that was temporary. Her husband also saw a reduction in workload and income, but he took on part-time jobs to help. The charity's trustees awarded a one-off lump sum to help reduce immediate financial pressure, and the applicant has been invited to reapply should circumstances get worse.

Another example is a 62-year-old man who worked in the jewelry industry since the late 1970s. In December 2024 he suffered a stroke, leaving him initially hoist-dependent. He is now mainly wheelchair-dependent, though he can walk short distances with a stick. He also suffers from anxiety and depression.

In March, he was discharged from the hospital into temporary housing, and the next month was offered



*The Jewellery Valuers Association invited the Silversmiths & Jewellers Charity to its annual conference in Loughborough, U.K., for the third year, raising £4,000 for the charity during its raffle. (Image courtesy of Silversmiths & Jewellers Charity)*

permanent housing in a warden-assisted complex but couldn't move in until it was furnished. So, the hospital approached SJC to inquire about providing support, and the trustees agreed to provide a cooker, fridge-freezer, and vacuum cleaner.

"We will look at anybody that we think that needs help, and if they meet the criteria, if they're in need, if they've been in the industry, and they can prove all of that, then we will see if we can help," Griffin said.

For anyone in the trade who wants to be involved, donations can always be made on the [SJC website](#). Griffin also invited trade members in the U.K., whether living there or visiting, to attend the charity's events. Additionally, if any trade members know someone who is in need of help, point them in the direction of SJC or [reach out to the charity directly](#) to make the suggestion. ♦

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