

PLAY IS NOT ONLY FOR CHILDREN

Play!

Team Play!

Leisure Time Play!

Play is for all seasons and all people. We want to talk about the "away from home" part of our life. Let's narrow it down even more - exclude the work part of each day. Some of us work at home and some away from home but, wherever we work, many hours are spent on striving toward a sense of fulfillment.

Now for the spare time at our disposal: The time allotted for play; the hours we do "things" that interest us most. A time to play, to dream, to communicate, to read - that extra dimension that takes us from 'commonplace' to the 'top of the line'.

What is the significance of play?

It can be a way of expending surplus energy, a way of relaxing, a way of making life more challenging. Play will continue to become even more important in the leisure society of the future. Through play, we confirm our existence and affirm our worth. Because of this, it becomes doubly important for everyone to fill their leisure hours with activities that are meaningful to the individual. Play in the broad sense allows us to look for a vacuum and expand into it.

In a world where there are only a few winners, many losers and a small proportion of participants, we quickly learn 'no man is an island' but 'all' are part of the 'whole'. It is only because of a combination of talents that team play can be successful.

The dreams of our co-founders became dependent on team play, resulting in reality - the founding of the Women's Institute. The team play and group thinking has continued on through every meeting, every program, every project at branch level, resulting in the broadening and strengthening of the Women's Institute. It has allowed a group of women to tolerate a diversity of ideas and opinions and still stick to chosen standards and priorities.

Because of team play and group thinking, we are a group of women who must be dreamers, to think of a destination; planners, to map a plan; and pipers to set the tune, and still allow all members a chance to decide who they are, what they are and where their priorities lie.

We have come so far but we all must believe that the most important, most significant achievements are still ahead. There really are only two ways for the Women's Institute to go rot - or burn. The members can take the first option, the cowardly route, and accept the accomplishments of our predecessors or choose the second, a courageous stance and move forward.

As Women's Institute members, we are constantly being urged to be objective in our thinking, but if we remain in the middle of the road, we risk the danger of being run over by both lanes of traffic instead of by only one. Doing nothing has consequences just as surely as doing something has.

We may not be able to change the world. That may be true (although we may be able to improve a small part of it) but we do not have to give in and join the deteriorating elements in it. It's up to us to decide what we are, rather than what we are not.

Margaret Zoeller