

# Between The Lines

Dear Women's Institute members:

It is credited to Socrates to have said, "One man finds pleasure in improving his land, another his horses. My pleasure lies in seeing that I myself grow better day by day."

Does our pleasure lie in seeing that our Women's Institutes grow better continually? The effort over the years has been to improve ourselves, and those things that affect our lives, day by day. And we have. Women are better educated, they hold more responsible positions in the work force, take more of a role in policy building areas, both in government and industry, and are generally more self-sufficient than they were at the turn of the century, when the Women's Institutes were very young.

How can we improve ourselves day by day? Each of us has been endowed with certain gifts. Within us there is the energy and the will to kindle and to release those gifts and to develop and uncover talents that are latent within us. We owe it to ourselves and to those around us to release those gifts. Are we true to ourselves when we do not develop our talents? When we do not become the persons we were intended to be?

To discover your gifts you might consider several things. What do you do well? What are you not very good at? You should consider something you might be good at if you were given the chance. What have you tried recently that went pretty well, and who encouraged you to try it? Are you often encouraged to try a new thing? We need loyal advisers in our lives. Who are yours?

As a group, we in the Women's Institutes should also be sensitive to our capabilities. We should be ready to address new, unusual and venturesome ideas.

In February, at an executive meeting, your Provincial executive recognized that there was a need in the rural areas of Ontario for child care during the busy summer months. Women were finding it difficult to cope with farm responsibilities and young children as well. Recognizing this need, and searching for a method of responding to it, a pilot project was launched. With the support of

the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario, your provincial secretary, Marcie Johnston, has successfully developed and managed this project in her district. Four students were hired under the Summer Employment Program and twenty farm families were accepted as participants in the program. Each student was assigned five homes, and during the summer months spent one day a week in each home, caring for the children and freeing the farm wife for farm-related duties. This answered a critical need in the area, supplied summer employment for students, and developed managerial training for the Women's Institute members responsible. We are grateful to Marcie for bringing the program to a successful conclusion. We hope that this creative approach to answering a need will be the spark to light new ideas in other areas.

In the recently released report *Women in Rural Life—the Changing Scene*, by Molly McGhee, many areas of concern to rural women are addressed, including child care. As you read the report, you might be thinking of a need in your area. What latent talent in your W.I. can be developed to answer that need?

Recently I attended a conference called *Sharing Approaches that Work*. At one point during the Conference I found myself in a group situation with two other women where we told how our projects demonstrated how a community need was met. Sharing the way in which the child care project was developed, I was with a woman who represented a home care group, and one whose group had organized a travelling lending library and resource centre for the very young. The home care group has an inventory of persons who will assist elderly and disabled persons in their homes with chores and other things which make it possible for them to remain in their homes. They also managed the Meals on Wheels Program. The travelling resource centre had books and toys for the very young on a loan basis. By having the opportunity of a change of playthings and books, more stimulating play experiences were provided for children. The interesting part of these three exchanges was that each project involved participants *going out* to the people to meet a need. As well, each age group was supported. The very young —

the parenting group — and the elderly.

How did these approaches work? First a group identified a need in the community. The tactics for addressing the need were developed. The volunteers and the funding were obtained. The project was publicized in the community. The training of participants took place and finally the project was developed into a working model. The final step will be an evaluation of the project, and undoubtedly each one will have been successful in meeting a specific need.

As we approach the fall season, and the beginning of a new term in our schools, I am sure that you will be interested to know the steps being taken to assure that our young people are becoming better equipped to deal with adult life. The Open Doors program, which was launched in February, will give our Grade seven and eight students an opportunity to hear from women in non-traditional careers. I would encourage you to ask if the program is being carried out in your area, and if not, perhaps the local school boards will provide their own. Women in non-traditional careers will be given guidance from the Ontario Women's Directorate on how to present their career choices to students as part of the guidance counselling in our schools.

We attended a session at which the new science core unit Food and Energy was introduced. This Grade nine science general level core unit will help students appreciate the value of people working in agriculture and the food industry. It will give them a knowledge of animals, crops and the environment and how they influence each other. They will study the production processing and packaging of food. They will study the nutritional components of food, and will study the Canadian Food Guide. An awareness of the variety of jobs in agricultural and food processing industries will be developed, and an appreciation of the value of our arable lands, and the water supplies.

With 1985 being the Year of the Youth I thought that you might be interested in these additions to our educational system. I will look forward to seeing many of you at Area Conventions and discussing your projects with you.

Most sincerely,  
Charlotte Johnson