

# JWIO to FWIO — when to switch

*There was a time when turning 35 automatically terminated a woman's membership in the Junior Women's Institutes of Ontario. Since that age restriction was lifted in the early 1980s, individual JWIO members have had to decide for themselves when — if ever — to leave 'the Juniors' and join the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. Is there a right time to "move up" from the JWIO to the FWIO?*

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When Susan Grimwood became a charter member of the Niagara District JWIO back in 1969, it was because she was "too old for 4-H, but too young for FWIO".

She says her mother (Doris Eller, an active FWIO member) was the catalyst behind the formation of the JWIO branch, which has mushroomed from six to 22 members during the past 16-1/2 years.

"I had been active in 4-H during my teen years, but when I left 4-H at around age 20, I felt I was too young for the regular WI. Most of us girls wanted to belong to some kind of rural organization — but we didn't want to go to meetings with our mothers," recalls Mrs. Grimwood. "When I joined JWIO, I looked upon it as a link between 4-H and joining the regular WI."

Mrs. Grimwood says she began to feel a bit uncomfortable with her JWIO affiliation a few years back when she "just didn't feel like a Junior anymore."

"I'm in my late '30s now, and I don't consider that old — but it's not exactly young, either. My children are both elementary school age, and I somehow started to feel the time had come to leave JWIO — which I associate with young, single ladies or mothers with pre-schoolers — and to make a commitment to FWIO," says Mrs. Grimwood.

Making the break was not something Mrs. Grimwood did on a whim. Her decision to leave JWIO followed much soul-searching, but in retrospect, she is sure she did the right thing.

To ease the transition, Mrs. Grimwood elected to belong to both the

**Ann Hauprich**



Niagara District JWIO and the Fonthill WI for a year and a half while she weighed the pros and cons of remaining 'a Junior'.

"I think making the change gradually made it easier; I knew I had to choose between the two because it was just too demanding to belong to both groups at the same time. In my heart, I knew the time had come to make the move up to FWIO and now (nearly a year later) I know I did the right thing. But I have many good friends in JWIO and I knew leaving the branch meant I'd have less time with them. That part was hard," she explains.

On the other hand, she hastens to add, she's been warmly received by the Fonthill WI. "They treat me like royalty — they're so happy to get younger members. We're interested in the same issues and I feel my ideas are respected," Mrs. Grimwood says.

She thinks it's a shame the JWIO is getting away from its original man-

date as a "bridge" between 4-H and FWIO. "The two organizations aren't really that much different anymore. I know of a JWIO member who is 54 and I know of FWIO members in their '20s... it seems to me the original purpose of JWIO has been lost in recent years," says Mrs. Grimwood.

Rena Cunningham and Lulu Heales are two FWIO board members who think the JWIO and FWIO now have so much in common, they might as well become one group.

"Why don't they just drop the 'Junior'?" asks Mrs. Cunningham. "We share the same aims and objectives and it seems a lot more could be accomplished if we pooled our resources and became one organization."

Mrs. Heales believes both the FWIO and the JWIO are missing out by operating as separate organizations. "We could benefit from the fresh ideas brought in by younger members and they could benefit from the knowledge and experience of the older members," she says, adding: "I wish more JWIO members would take the time to attend FWIO functions... I think they'd realize our interests are more similar than they might have imagined."

## She'll be staying...

Karen Lajeunesse may be pushing 40 — but she has no plans to drop the 'Junior' from her Women's Institute title.

"Just because I'm getting close to 40 doesn't mean I'm ready to quit the JWIO," says the Fonthill mother of three, who serves as public relations officer with the Niagara District JWIO. "I really enjoy doing things with the ladies in my JWIO branch, and I'd hate to break ties with that group."

The 22-member Niagara District JWIO is, indeed, an impressive bunch. A quick scan of the branch's 1984 and 1985 activities and a sneak peek at its 1986 plans help explain why Mrs. Lajeunesse remains enthusiastic about her involvement with the group.

In May, 1984, for example, Niagara District JWIO participated in a short course entitled "More Cents Than

Dollars" in which members learned more economical ways of cooking, including finding substitutions for higher priced foods, such as combining plant proteins to recipes in ways that provide balanced proteins found in animal foods.

The guest speaker at the JWIO branch's June 1984 meeting addressed the role of the Commission Against Rape and Sexual Assault (CARSA). The theme of the September 1984 meeting was "Get to know the Federated Women's Institute." That meeting included a slide presentation on the ACWW triannual conference in Vancouver. November 1984 saw the hosting of a Harvest Dance to raise money for the Brock University Science Development Fund and UNESCO's Co-Action Project #71

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