

Here's some advice on

By Carol Stewart-Kirkby

In the last issue of **Home & Country**, there was an article about lateral thinking (Hats off to this idea! p.8). It talked about using different ways of thinking about a problem in order to reach a solution. One of the most common problems facing organizations in the 1980's is declining membership and the need to recruit new members. Here are some ideas on how to tackle those problems from women across the province.

NEW DUNDEE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

New Dundee boasts the second largest number of members in a WI branch in Ontario — 71. President Gladys Cressman said, "It's wonderful the way the branch is growing." She suggested the members of New Dundee are not afraid of change and they enjoy working together as a team. "We are an institute of 1987, not an institute of the 1950's," she added.

The WI branch is the only group for women in the community of New Dundee, so the average attendance at meetings is 50. "I think we offer an interesting program. Not only do the women learn something each time they come to a meeting, but we also have fun," said Mrs. Cressman.



Gladys Cressman

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The branch is getting new members all the time, and some of them younger women. "A lot of people come as guests of members for the first couple of meetings, and then they become members," Mrs. Cressman explained. She said talking about WI and its activities and programs (word-of-mouth), is one of the most successful ways of attracting new members.

Mrs. Cressman said the WI members are not afraid of going out and asking for the speakers or special programs they want. For instance, at a recent meeting, Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services John Sweeney was the guest speaker. "It was just a matter of asking a year in advance," explained Mrs. Cressman.

A positive attitude about WI is also a helpful tool when trying to recruit new members. "I don't mind talking about institute. It's something I know about and really enjoy," said Mrs. Cressman.

WINCHESTER WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Edna Trory, secretary of Winchester WI, said the branch has gone from 49 to 79 members in the last couple of years. She believes this is due to farm people coming to town upon retirement and then joining WI.

However, the branch does its share of advertising to attract new members. Rather than focus on what happened at the meeting the branch just had in the newspaper reports, the branch announces what is going to happen at the next meeting. "We always make sure members of the community know they are invited to attend our meetings," said Mrs. Trory.



Edna Trory

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And those meetings cover topics from public speaking to the Atlantic fishing industry to a panel of immigrants talking about their experiences.

Also, Mrs. Trory explained, the branch is known for its trips — some one-day excursions, others longer — to all parts of Ontario. She feels they attract some members.

Like New Dundee, the members of Winchester are encouraged to bring guests to their meetings, and in some instances the daughters of members become interested in joining.

NORTH GREY JUNIOR WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Three years ago, North Grey JWI had a membership drive. President Marg Benedict said word-of-mouth seemed to be the most successful method then and continues to be today.

The branch has 32 members and is "very, very active," according to Mrs. Benedict. She believes having a high profile in the community is one way of attracting new members. "People see what we are doing, become interested and join," she explained.

Also, the branch has press coverage of its meetings each month.



Marg Benedict

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BROOKSDALE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Cathy Morris, secretary of Brooksdale WI, describes her branch as "young thinking". Like New Dundee, Mrs. Morris said the members of Brooksdale are willing to change with the times.

"We have a fairly young membership. The members are friendly and helpful. I feel that we have a good network established within the branch," said Mrs. Morris.

Brooksdale has always been a very active branch and involved in the local community. "We have a fairly high