

# HOME & Country

A Magazine for Rural Women

Home & Country is a publication for rural women's groups in Ontario. It is published by the Rural Organizations and Services Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Home & Country has two objectives:

1. to provide a communications link between rural women's groups in Ontario
2. to provide educational material relating to organizational and individual leadership development.

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## Deadlines

Please observe the following deadlines when submitting stories or photographs to Home & Country.

DEADLINE: October 20 — December, January issue

DEADLINE: December 20 — February, March issue

DEADLINE: February 20 — April, May issue

DEADLINE: August 21 — October, November issue

## Front Cover

Four MacDonald Awards were presented to students who have successfully completed their first two semesters of the Family and Consumer Studies program at the University of Guelph. Each award is valued at \$300. The MacDonald Awards are presented annually by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. Pictured are the winners; Andrea Duke, Barbara Van Damme, Lisa Toth, and Joy Walker; as well as FWIO representative Dorothy Petch (seated right). (Photo courtesy of the University of Guelph).

## Index

Assertive communications .....	4
Between the Lines .....	5
Letter to the Editor .....	5
Anniversary at museum .....	6
OFWN elects officers .....	6
Butler Project update .....	6
Recycling quiz .....	7
Perennial herb garden .....	8
Writing grant applications .....	9
Make your exhibit stand out .....	10
What's Happening .....	12
Information .....	14
Area conventions .....	15
Members' interest during summer .....	16

# Squelching stereotypes

## Editorial

Carol  
Stewart-Kirkby



I read an interesting opinion piece in a Rural Voice magazine recently. It talked about farmers' concerns regarding the image urban people hold of them. (In other words, the picture of the farmer in his bib overalls, sucking on a pipe, holding a pitchfork.)

I have talked to several farm and rural groups in the last five years who are equally concerned about their image and how urban people see them. But, as the author of the Rural Voice article points out, sometimes, we can be our own worst enemies when it comes to establishing an image. A farmer says or does something at a public meeting that goes a long way towards reinforcing some of the stereotypes we wish weren't there.

This article made me wonder if, like farmers, women are sometimes their own worst enemy too. I know I am guilty of falling into some of the stereotype traps I abhorred when I was in my late teens, waving the equality banner. For instance, I always thought women and men should share household responsibilities on a 50/50 basis. My husband will be the first to tell you, I take absolutely **no** responsibility for maintaining either of our vehicles. And it doesn't stop there — I take no responsibility for **anything** mechanical in our house. On the other side of the coin, I am responsible for all the grocery shopping and the food preparation. We make very few attempts at trying to share either of these duties equally.

When it comes to other areas of our lives, are we, as women also proponents of the images we would prefer to see vanish? When you are asked to arrange for people to serve a dinner at church, do you immediately turn to the women's guild, the men's group or the youth club? Be honest now. I'm sure my first thoughts would be to ask the women's guild.

If someone is discussing their health, making several references to their doctor. Do you ask where HE is located, or where SHE is located? When someone talks about their child's day care worker, do you ask HER name or HIS name?

These, I'm sure, seem like picayune examples, but just like the farmer in the public meeting, one small action, thought or word can often cement the stereotype.

I'm trying to give my three year-old son a broader picture of what **every** person is capable of. It's very hard. One morning I almost choked on my corn flakes when he declared that "girls don't play ice hockey". I reflected on the hockey he has been exposed to — his male cousins in minor league and the National Hockey League on TV. He had come to a logical conclusion based on his information! It's difficult to combat that kind of logic, but it's important to try.

I believe unless we are more aware of how the small things we do and say play a role in the big picture, we will lose sight of that picture all together. It's OK to march on Queen's Park waving that equality banner, but if you aren't living those beliefs, the stereotypes will live on forever.