

Lunn Grew Up With Global Perspective

By Lori Jamieson

You can make some deductions about a person's life from comments and gestures - and from the children's artwork and bits of philosophy stuck to her frig.

Donna Lunn, partner in a Belmont area family dairy farm, mother of three children ages 10 to 15, part-time student, and President of the Ontario Farm Women's Network, has a printed serviette front and centre on her frig, proclaiming that "The hurrier I go, the behinder I get." Lunn talks frankly about the hurrier pressures on agriculture, on farm families, and on farm organizations, but she concentrates on finding solutions, not about the task becoming overwhelming. She says a "global-thinking," shared by many others in the Network, helps to stretch the barriers of what is possible.

Lunn's father, who served with the Armed Forces, was always being transplanted from one place and sometimes one country to another - with his family in tow. "I was always the new kid on the block, always having to fit in, and just because we did something one way didn't mean our new neighbors would do it the same way. As a result, I don't have a problem accepting a totally new idea."

The important thing in the Network, she says, are the common areas of concern, and not the individual differences. "The whole idea of the network came from a feeling that something was needed, and that came both from those of us newly involved in farming, and from people who had always been in that environment."

Right now, network members want to push ahead with a public relations effort to raise the image of farm women. "I have to be in the barn and the fields and the house - what's my role?," she says. "And if I say I am a farm woman, an urban person doesn't know what I do, or

why my concerns should be important to them."

We're a paradox to urban women, because we still enjoy our hobbies like gardening and canning and quilting, but we run heavy machinery, and use computers and are organizing and being received as professionals."

She likens the current void of recognition to that faced by nurses until they became "a profession of recognized decision-makers in their own right."

Lunn is encouraged by the establishment of the Canadian Farm Women's Network, and the growth of the Ontario Network's own newsletter. "Our time is so precious that we must do as much sharing as we can."

She says that the OFWN has found its own place among other farm organizations. "We haven't altered them - and there were some feelings that we would take away some other group's members; we haven't tread on anybody's toes, and where we can bridge, we do."

Lunn argues that the farm women's groups provide an environment for action that is more comfortable for members than the traditional mainstream agricultural groups. "It's not a question of gender," she says, "but of opportunity." She dislikes the idea of categorization - "a farm women's group is not 'just' anything" especially for members who come with "credible ideas and a let's get this done attitude."

Lunn says the OFWN is being noticed further and further afield. She's been requested to speak at a London business women's association meeting on food safety, and to the Canadian Mental Health Association in Banff in May on rural mental health. "Now they know we have something to say, and they've asked me to come and say it."

The volume of organizational and personal responsibilities is ever increasing, Lunn admits, and says the



Donna Lunn, President of the Ontario Farm Women's Network

first thing to go is time for herself. She says it can be a continuing cycle of giving up personal time, and then resentment at having to do that, and guilt for feeling resentful. She says that the lesson of 'nurturing the nurerer' comes hard to many women, who are used to putting almost everything else before themselves.

Lunn credits the support of her husband, "who never says 'this has to stop,'" and the discipline needed for her part-time university studies with maintaining her sense of balance - most days.

She says that in supporting a group and the people in it, it's important to recognize the work of others. "Really support whatever they've done, and the sacrifices that might have resulted - that gives them the same chance to offer support to you."

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