
Farm Women's Network meets in November

By Carolyn Murray

As Canadian farm women continue to gain recognition for their essential role as partners in agriculture, they too are recognizing the need to network with other farm women to develop and enhance their professionalism. Farm women will be offered opportunities for this growth at the Fifth National Farm Women's Conference, hosted by the Ontario Farm Women's Network, to be held November 21-23, 1991, in London, Ontario.

Conference organizers have chosen the theme "Sharing Our Vision" in response to requests from governments and other institutions for farm women's ideas and suggestions for the shaping of future agricultural policies. High

calibre speakers will inform, entertain and challenge participants with a variety of relevant topics, including personal potential, family abuse, and the impact of "Growing Together" policies on farm families and farm women as professionals.

Several prominent Cabinet Ministers, including the Honourable Bill McKnight, Minister of Agriculture, have been invited to address the conference. Workshops and discussion groups will also allow for sharing concerns and potential solutions to agricultural issues.

"Sharing Our Vision" could be a family event. Child care will be available for conference participants. Various farm tours have been arranged for spouses - before, during and after the conference.

These are challenging times for farm families who are coping with fast paced economic and political change. The conference will address these challenges, giving farm women purpose through knowledge and understanding and strength through unity.

Any Canadian farm woman is invited to attend the Conference. However, registrations are limited and must be received by October 1, 1991. For more information, please contact your Provincial Co-ordinator of the Canadian Farm Women's Network or Betty Seminiuk, RR 4, Thamesford, Ontario, N0M 2M0, (519)285-2640.

Carolyn Murray, along with Connie Bontje, Chair the Public Relations Committee for the National Farm Women's Conference.

International Scholarship awarded to Bolivian

By Geraldine Campbell

After many phone calls and fax communications, the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario decided to sponsor Betty Varga-Rodriquez from La Paz, Bolivia, to attend the second Windbreaks and Agroforestry Symposium held at the Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology. The FWIO was glad to pay the airfare and registration fee for Betty to attend this June conference. The money came from the FWIO International Scholarship Fund.

This \$2500 scholarship is used to bring women from Third World countries to Canada for training. In the past, this training has focused on nutrition and health. But given the FWIO theme for the 1990s - "Women and the Environment" - it was fitting to sponsor Betty to participate in this Symposium. She was selected by the FWIO Scholarship Committee from several names submitted.

Betty is a Landscape Architect working for the city of La Paz in Bolivia. Betty received her University education in Bolivia, and then took post-graduate courses at Rice College in Idaho.

Most children in Bolivia, however, go to school for a few years between the ages of six and eleven. They leave because they are needed to help out on the farm. As teenagers, many leave the countryside to seek jobs in the cities. But they get only low paying jobs, if they get one at all. And so, the cycle of illiteracy and poverty continues.

Two-thirds of Bolivia's seven million people work in agriculture; although 15% of the gross national product is derived from this sector. By our standards, their farming methods are antiquated - men and oxen still work the small holdings and women still sow the corn crop by hand.

Betty is grateful to the FWIO for the opportunity to increase her knowledge about erosion and environmental protection. She came away from the

Symposium with new ideas (such as the use of twin rows for planting windbreaks and shelterbelts), and is sure she can use these ideas wisely in Bolivia.

A July edition of *Farm & Country* quoted Betty: "To protect our ecosystem, what we need most is knowledge. That is why I wanted so much to come."

Betty sees that an organization like the Women's Institute could have a great deal of influence on the rural women of Bolivia, and ultimately on the country as a whole. Community education is the key to improving rural life in Bolivia and that is something that the WI does so well!

*Geraldine Campbell
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