



By FWIO President, Evelyn Peck

As I write this, the days are lengthening and the snow banks receding. Many of us, particularly the gardeners and farmers, are turning our thoughts to a new season with hopes of favourable weather and bountiful crops. As we begin a new year for our Branches and Districts, my hope is that inspiring programs have been planned.

I was given a newspaper article about the increasing relevance and popularity of Women's Institutes in the United Kingdom. Young women in England are putting their names on waiting lists to join Women's Institute. They want to have the opportunity to learn cooking and sewing skills from the older Members. The young moms are living in austerity and want to get together to pool ideas, share resources and learn new skills. Other young women are sharing their enthusiasm over the Internet to increase awareness.

In our communities, some women have not had the chance to learn many of the traditional skills of homemaking. With our Back 2 Basics theme, there are so many modern ways to incorporate old basic skills. Many of our Members have a wealth of knowledge and practical skills and they would be great candidates to mentor the younger women. Is it possible that if we offered more relevant programs on topics that are needed by our neighbours, we would also have a waiting list of women wanting to join us in WI?

Our Provincial Board has been embracing Back 2 Basics learning. Last year, Members used an evening while at August Board to learn to knit ruffled scarves. Then in November we got very creative assembling fascinators worn in our skit after the Annual Meeting. In the evening after this April's Board sessions we had an interesting time learning to crochet with wire and beads to make a necklace. If only someone knew how to teach me to tat left-handed. I've always wanted to learn that skill!

Many of us who grew up in rural communities had the opportunity to belong to 4-H Homemaking Clubs and learn cooking, sewing and other life skills. Most clubs were sponsored by Women's Institute Branches and led

by WI Members. 4-H Ontario is celebrating its centennial in 2015. In preparation, a 4-H Ontario Alumni database is being developed to help reconnect former members and leaders and share 4-H stories and the impact that 4-H had on their lives. If you are interested, you may register online at www.4-hontario.ca/alumni or contact 4-H Ontario's Coordinator, Alumni Services at alumni@4-hontario.ca or 1-877-410-6748 x 466.

It was a pleasure to take part in the official reopening of the Erland Lee (Museum) Home. It was a great celebration with about 200 in attendance. The Erland Lee Community Committee proudly showed off all the renovations and restorations. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, made donations or assisted in so many different ways. Soon the Lee will really sparkle as the Board accepted one of the quotes for painting the house.

Board heard updates of plans for a Provincial Conference in Ridgeway on July 11-13, 2014.

The publishing date of our *Home & Country ROSE Garden* was moved back so that the very latest Board Highlights could be included in the Branch packages. Please check these for up-to-date news. These Highlights are also available on the FWIO website.

It was suggested at our Annual Meeting that we try to make 2013 the renaissance year of our organization. If we work together with enthusiasm and positive determination we can accomplish many great things. Let's try!

I am a proud lifelong resident of beautiful Prince Edward County. In this area of Eastern Ontario, Prince Edward is most often simply referred to as "The County", which explains my choice of title for this column.

