

WI Educates Students in Oxford County



Oxford District WI certainly set an example for grade ten students in the Oxford District by inviting them to attend an information fair last May. Through the hard work of a dedicated District and funding received by the Oxford City Optimist Clubs, over 500 students were bused to Ingersoll Collegiate to visit dozens of displays. The District was so pleased with the outcomes of this session, they are in the planning stages to host another one next year!



ROSES Bloomed at Madoc Hall

After attending the ROSE Forum – North Hastings knew that they could make ROSES Bloom in their communities. So with the assistance of 6 Branches in the North Hastings District a session was planned. The Madoc ROSE Fair featured several guest speakers including; Melissa Watson-Whaites on Alzheimer's Disease, Dr. Janet Yorston on Power Attorney and Wills and Yvonne MacKosz who spoke on caregivers. This informative session attracted over 70 people!

Community Building Activities

Community Kitchens

Community Kitchens give people the opportunity to get together to share the cost, planning and preparation of healthy meals. Members usually meet twice a month, once to plan four or five entrées and to organize the purchase of food, and once to prepare the meals. Since a licensed kitchen is not required, groups meet in homes as well as church basements, Neighbourhood Houses and community centres.

Some specialty kitchens exist in Vancouver. One "cultural kitchen" provides an opportunity for Vietnamese women to learn about Canadian food products, and how they are prepared. Another has a "Canning Kitchen" where participants put up canned goods such as fruit, tomatoes and jam. Other kitchens specialize in vegetarian, ethnic, and special needs cooking. The interests of the group decide the focus of the kitchen.

Community kitchens are popular for a variety of reasons. Food costs less because it can be bought in bulk. It also takes less time to prepare because it is cooked in quantity - and sometimes frozen for later use. People most appreciate the way community kitchens provide an opportunity for people to get together. Many people have become close friends through community cooking. Some have discovered common interests that have led to the formation of new groups focusing on a variety of social issues.

Organizing around Hot Issues

People often organize around a single issue. They get together because they are annoyed or angry about street prostitution, extra taxes, or an ugly building scheme. Often the issue is a proposed change or addition to the neighbourhood that is seen as undesirable. Those in favour of changes or additions often describe this kind of activism as NIMBYism (Not-In-My-Back-Yard syndrome), a selfish attempt by residents to keep their part of town just as it is, in defiance of some larger public good. They rarely mention how the first towns arose out of the natural tendency for people to band together to oppose disruptive outside forces. A potential threat may be just what is needed to mobilize citizens.

In Vancouver, residents in Hastings/Sunrise found strength and common purpose in the discussion surrounding the proposed redevelopment of Hastings Park. Oakridge had no neighbourhood organization until community planners began talking about redevelopment - when suddenly the need for a neighbourhood "voice" became clear. Kitsilano residents found the need to organize over proposed zoning changes that threatened older houses and low-cost rental accommodation. Glen Park neighbours got together to deal with an unsatisfactory development proposal for an abandoned supermarket site.

Sometimes an issue can serve to invigorate an existing organization. On one east-side block in Vancouver, neighbours decided to petition the city for paving and lighting in their lane. Their group grew as they contacted neighbours across the back lane to support their request. This in turn strengthened a Block Watch already in place.

*Excerpt from the Citizen's Handbook;
A Guide to Building Communities (2003)
by Charles Dobson.*

