

Public Relations Report

By Rose Marie Smith

It has been a pleasure to represent so many wonderful women across the province in my work as Interim Public Relations Coordinator. After meeting with an interested group of Women's Institute members, the question – "Why hasn't the FWIO advertised what they do?" – was put forth. Yet that is our task, because promoting what we accomplish for our families and our communities is paramount to swelling our Branches with new members.

It is conceivable that a Branch in Sudbury knows nothing of the accomplishments of a nearby Branch, let alone a Branch in Brantford or Windsor. It is up to all of us to promote the Women's Institute.

To help address the lack of knowledge from Branch to Branch, I'm suggesting that each Branch compile a list of at least 10 of their accomplishments to distribute at their District Annuals. This will help with Branch recognition at the local level. Paring the list down to five items, along with dates, and sending it to the Area level for collation to be distributed at the Area Conventions will enlighten the membership at that level. What about the provincial level? Please send the Area compiled lists to me and I will endeavour to include a few in each newsletter.

To address the need for the public to become aware of the accomplishments of the WI within each community and across the province, approach your local newspaper and ask that a short column be included on a weekly or monthly basis. This column could be devoted to informing the public about the WI. A "Did you know?" column or "Blue Hats for WI" article or simply "WI Facts." Should you run out of items from your area to report, there are hundreds of items you could pull from Dr. Linda Ambrose's book *For Home and Country: The Centennial History of the Women's Institutes in Ontario*. Keep your column short

and to the point. Even two or three facts are enough to generate interest.

Press releases are another way to promote your Branch, District or Area. I found the book entitled *Getting Publicity* (ISBN 1-55180-312-7) by Tana Fletcher and Julia Rockler, printed by Self Counsel Press, a tremendous help. It provides sample press releases and the wording can be easily changed to suit by following the format given. Why reinvent the wheel? Check out your local library for a copy.

By working together to highlight an initiative in your District, all Branches can generate much public awareness through the media about the Women's Institute. Take advantage of media opportunities by mentioning past WI contributions to your local community. Get to know local reporters and invite them to all newsworthy functions. Contact editors

and provide them with positive feedback about local coverage your Branch, District or Area has been given. We must increase our efforts to promote the Women's Institute across the province.

I would love to hear from you. I would like to pass on information about how you promote your Branch, District or Area. Please provide the appropriate contact information regarding your WI so I can give credit where credit is due. Who knows, your idea may be adapted and work wonders in another area of the province. I look forward to hearing from you!

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Burford Community Honours Carol Force

The Burford community recognized area resident Carol Force with its annual "Citizen of the Year" Award last fall. Burford Times publisher Bill Johnston who presented the Award to Carol noted that she is well known for her involvement in the Women's Institute at all levels. Carol is a member of the Tansley Women's Institute and has served at the District, Area and provincial level of the organization. In addition, Carol manages to be involved in numerous other community groups, including the Burford Fair Board, United Church and Figure Skating Club, as well as the Claremont Rebekah Lodge. Carol is also a volunteer driver for the Cancer Society.



As a mother and grandmother, Carol takes delight in her family, her crafts and her community. "She has a wonderful sense of humour and a zest for life that continually propels her to try new things," said Mr. Johnston. "People have enjoyed the fruits of her dedication to this community if they've ever gone to the fair, or the annual figure skating carnival, or a church supper, or the many other special community events."

Reading from a nomination letter, Johnston continued, "Carol is often in the background, but she's always there, smiling, working and encouraging others."

Mr. Johnston concluded by reading from another nomination letter: "If you want the very best model for a citizen, then I cannot think of anyone who represents community commitment without attitude or self-importance better than Carol. Nor could you find anyone more likely to help in any situation. Carol's commitment to the community is exemplary, her humour contagious and her appetite to do good insatiable." Congratulations Carol!

Extracted from an article that appeared in a fall edition of the Burford Times.