

World Rural Women's Day – October 15 (each year)

This year, the Associated Country Women of the World's theme for World Rural Women's Day is "Access to Land and Water is the Key to Sustainability." The following is a copy of ACWW's statement regarding this theme and World Rural Women's Day. The Statement will also appear in the April-June edition of *The Countrywoman*. This theme is also illustrated in the ACWW leaflets Women Feed the World and Water for All.

Statement from ACWW about World Rural Women's Day 2003

"Access to Land and Water is the Key to Sustainability"

As the 21st century progresses, access to land and water will become increasingly critical to the sustainability of rural communities. ACWW, as the largest organization for rural women with a membership of nine million in over 70 countries, is working to improve the quality of life for its members who mainly depend on agriculture and food production for a living.

Development strategies aimed at increasing access to land and water are of fundamental concern to ACWW since these resources are essential to all agricultural activities. In some countries women struggle to gain access to land for planting crops and rearing livestock, and even for building homes for their families. Women produce over 50 per cent of the world's food supply, yet own a scant 2 per cent of the land and receive only 1 per cent of agricultural credit.

Every year the absence of clean water and the lack of sanitation and hygiene are the cause of death for millions of people from water-related diseases. As traditional water carriers, over-burdened women and girls in many developing countries spend much of their day searching for clean water and fuel.

As an organization, ACWW helps communities to help themselves by providing funding for food growing initiatives and for clean water and sanitation projects. These schemes incorporate and make maximum use of low-cost appropriate technology, which can be built and maintained by the community.

In order to alleviate hunger and poverty, there is an urgent need for all social, political and economic frameworks to guarantee secure land tenure and clear rights in relation to water. Without access to these vital resources, the goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved.

Hilda Stewart,
ACWW World President



In Support of Seniors

Ingleside Women's Institute Treasurer Mary Hiscocks (left) presented a \$100 cheque to Lorilyn Emmell (right), Director of Outreach Services with the Ingleside Support Centre. The Ingleside Branch holds their monthly meeting at the Centre and is glad to help support its seniors' programs. Emmell was the guest speaker at the Branch meeting and explained the Centre's 13 programs.

Submitted by Verla Gallinger, PRO,
Ingleside WI, Stormont, Eastern Area.

The View from My Balcony Window

By Georgina Schisler

*Today, there is ice and snow everywhere.
The trees are bare.
Except for one small patch of blue, the sky is gray and bereft.
It is winter.
Green, rolling meadows, dandelions and crocus,
dainty blue forget-me-nots,
Sweet promises of spring.
Winters may come, but we are never bereft,
For the heart has memories that times and seasons
can never touch.
What sweet balm for the days when the sun
is reluctant to shine.*

In May 1955 when I first moved to Cook's Mills in Crowland Township, I fell in love with it. The grass was greener, the sky was bluer and the birds sang sweeter. Canada Geese honked through the day and bullfrogs in the creek joined in the chorus at night. Life was sweet! I thought to myself, life doesn't get much better than this.

Then one day my sister-in-law invited me to attend the Crowland Women's Institute. Did I go? Yes! Did I like it? I had a wonderful time. I remember thinking I would like to be a part of that group. That was a long time ago, but I still remember the warmth, the friendliness, the good fun and fellowship. I wanted these people for my friends. When they asked me if I would like to join their group, you know I said yes!

I already knew I had made a wise decision when I said yes to Clyde Schisler when he asked me to marry him and move to Cook's Mills, and I made a second wise decision when I joined the Women's Institute.

Let me tell you what Crowland Women's Institute has meant to me. It has meant golden afternoons of fun and fellowship. I remember that even on cold, drizzly days it was always warm and friendly at meetings. I remember my husband remarking more than once, "You always come home cheered up and feeling good from a meeting at the Institute." And it was true! No matter how you left home, a bit tired, discouraged or worried, you came home feeling better and smiling.

So to those of you today, I say take the time to join an Institute and make the friendships. You'll learn so much and have such good times. Enjoy it all, and then one day if the sun doesn't shine, you'll have the windows in your heart filled with such good memories and dreams and friends.

Georgina Schisler is an Honourary Life Member of the Crowland WI, Niagara, Hamilton Area. This story was written for a recent Branch program entitled "What the Women's Institute Means to Me."