



By Cindy Lockhart

Once again the Women's Institute is "Branching Out" with new ideas, new teams and new members.

How does your Branch keep current members encouraged and enthusiastic? How do you invite potential members to your meetings? Why is the Women's Institute important to you? These are questions that we all need to think about.

No one person can take on the job of membership recruitment alone. We all need to be a part of a team that works together. Membership needs to be our top priority. As our members get older and decline positions, we need new members to keep our Branches alive. Our senior members of our Branches are our continuity; let's not forget who they are and how

they can help us. But what is your Branch doing to attract new people?

I want your membership recruitment and other relevant ideas to share with others across the province. Perhaps something you have done has brought new members to your Branch and maybe that idea will work for another group. A short survey will be distributed to each Branch, possibly through your Provincial Advisory Councillor (PAC) at your District Annuals, asking how your Branch sustains and attracts members. Please take the time to fill out this survey, be honest with your responses and return it to your PAC member before April 30, 2001.

I encourage you to invite potential new members to your meetings. I would like to see more workshops giving you ideas and resources on how to go about this. And, if your Branch has a problem, whether it's declining membership or they're thinking about disbanding, let's work together to solve it!

New membership packages are being

shipped to new members when their fees are sent to FWIO. This package is something new, so your comments would be helpful.

I have a list of about 300 names of women who want to join our organization that were gathered from the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and the Women's Health Matters Forum & Expo held in Toronto. That's a great start! But let's get our thinking caps on and see what else we can do. I challenge each Branch to set the goal for the upcoming year (from April 1, 2001, to March 31, 2002) to get two or more new members.

Keep me informed. I'm only a call, fax or email away. If I can be of any help or you just want to share ideas, please contact me. Remember, we are women involved, women interested and women informed. So keep on inviting!

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Snippets from the Education Coordinator

Ontario Volunteer Service Awards

Honour the volunteers who help your organization function. Nominate them for the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. The awards are also a way to thank volunteers for their continuous years of commitment and dedicated service to a group. Youth volunteers (under the age of 24) are recognized for two or more years of continuous service. Adults are recognized for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and, new in 2001, 50 years of continuous service. As well, there are the provincial Outstanding Achievement Awards for Volunteerism and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. What a great way to build profile for your organization and the nomination form is easy to do! For the forms check out the following website at <http://www.gov.on.ca/mczcr/english/citdiv/honours/vsa.htm>

IYV Public Relations Toolkit

Use the IYV Public Relations Toolkit and promote your organization and the International Year of the Volunteer. There are ideas for press releases and tips for working with the local media. The Toolkit can be downloaded from <http://www.iyvontario.on.ca/english/prtoolkit.htm>

IYV Calendar

What is going on in your community for the International Year of the Volunteer? The IYV Ontario website wants to know what you are doing for IYV. Forms are available to complete so you can get added to the calendar. Check out the website at <http://www.iyvontario.on.ca/english/calendar.htm>

IYV Superstore

IYV promotional items are available at reasonable prices! Buttons, lapel pins, canvas bags, key chains and mugs to name a few. The posters come in two sizes for the cost of shipping and handling. Go to IYV's main website at <http://www.iyvcanda.org/main.php> and click on Superstore at the top.

Good Enough Information Systems

Dr. Gillian Kerr, President of Good Enough Information Systems, writes a column to help organizations with technology issues. Some topics have been virtual meetings and teleconferences, getting a starter website and what kind of computer should you buy (etc.)? Find these and other articles about technology issues at

http://www.charityvillage.com/charity_village/research/rtech.html

For additional information, check out these websites:

- United Nations – <http://www.volunteer.ca>
- International Association of Volunteer Effort – <http://www.iave.org>

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My Heart, My Hands -

A Celebration of Volunteerism in Canada

A recently printed book by author Betty Steele, *My Heart, My Hands - A Celebration of Volunteerism in Canada*, includes a brief history of several community groups. There is a chapter on the Women's Institute, IODE, Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions. What a great read during this International Year of the Volunteer. To order a copy, phone Stoddart Publishing at 416-445-3333 or fax 416-445-5967. The book is available to Women's Institute members for \$7.