

2001 – The Year of the Volunteer



Program Ideas for 2001-2002



Volunteerism!! The United Nations has announced that 2001 will be “The Year of the Volunteer.” We find this echoed in the 2001 Associated Country Women of the World Conference theme – “Volunteers Make Visions a Reality.” The Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) has also chosen 2001 to be “The Year of the Volunteer.”

Some of you may be thinking, “Been there, done that!” And you’re right. Who knows more about volunteering than a Women’s Institute member? Women’s Institute members have been volunteering in their local communities, counties and across the province since the inception of the organization. The Education Committee encourages Branches to reestablish and revive volunteerism in our and other organizations.

Some community organizations that thrive on the help of volunteers have a high turnover of people for various reasons. Obviously, those people who come and go from these volunteer positions don’t know about the Women’s Institute. After all, some say that our organization is the best-kept secret!

Remember, when your Branch helps support other high profile community organizations with their projects, media reports will benefit both groups. The public will view the WI as a vital part of the community and new members may be attracted.

Keep in mind, however, that it is important to revitalize your Branch. Don’t funnel all the Branch support and energy into one group to the point where that is all your Branch does. Your Branch’s help may become expected and it may become a chore!

Maybe the key is to choose a new project each year. Publicize your Branch support of the new project and make it known in your community that is where your Branch support and energy will be directed that particular year. Then choose another project the next year. Find out about new projects by having programs and speakers at your meetings from various other community organizations.

Read on for some ideas for programs and speakers during the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001.

Agricultural Issues

- Without volunteers, the importance of agriculture would not reach the non-farming community. Host a luncheon or evening meeting to honour those volunteers that promote agriculture in your area. At the same time, provide information on the various agricultural organizations and present the opportunity for people to volunteer for these groups.
- Farm Safety – The ROSE Health Program suggested and gave us information on how to sponsor “First Aid on the Farm” and other health and safety courses offered by St. John’s Ambulance, one of FWIO’s Health Partners. As a Branch, attend one of the local Farm Safety Days that teach children and adults about the importance of safety around the farm and home, including the operation of farm machinery and the more widespread use of machines such as lawn mowers and tractors. To book a trainer for your Branch and your community call your local St. John’s Ambulance branch, or

call their provincial office at 416-923-8411. Or visit their website at www.sja.ca

- Host a community meeting relating to voluntary water testing and water resources as part of rural/farm safety.
- Agriculture in the Classroom – Volunteers bring the importance of agriculture to schoolchildren through hands-on programs in the classroom and at local fairs. Learn more about these programs by asking a volunteer who works in this area to speak at a meeting.
- Request a speaker to inform your group about the activities of your local County Federation of Agriculture. Farm Hiker Tours and other programs sponsored by the Federation of Agriculture help to kindle a person’s desire to learn more about agriculture and where our food comes from.

Business and Industry

- As a Branch, encourage local businesses and industry to sponsor a Volunteer Fair. Businesses and industry receive the publicity from their sponsorship of the Fair, and your Branch will benefit from the publicity surrounding the organization of such an event. Other volunteer organizations would likely participate too!

Citizenship/Culture/Community

- Citizenship in our communities is an area where the Women’s Institute has always played a vital role. Perhaps members could volunteer in programs that help new Canadians get established in your community.