

By Carol Helfenstein

The winter 1999-2000 issue of *Home and Country* includes an excellent program guide (see pages 8 and 9) for Branch Education Coordinators on the chosen theme - "The New Millennium." Indeed, it is the intent of the Editorial Committee to make such a guide an annual feature. Tied to these programs is the challenge for Branch Public Relations Officers (PRO) to promote the individual programs and the year as a whole. I recommend that PROs attend the program planning meetings to pick up on the enthusiasm members have for their chosen topics. That enthusiasm will then be reflected in the promotional material developed. That is the challenge for every PRO!

Here are some ideas for PROs:

1. As soon as the annual program is set, create a press release that lists the topics, and the convenors and their phone numbers. Make the press release as concise as you can. Be sure to include the vision statement that reflects your Branch, a warm invitation for guests to join your Branch meetings and the day, time and location of all meetings. If writing a press release is not your strength, make it a joint effort with a couple of other members. Send the press release to your local weekly and weekend paper, radio and TV stations (Attention: Farm Editor) and cable company.
2. Take time to meet with the media. Ask if they can regularly announce your monthly meeting and print your press releases. By talking to them personally and showing your belief in WI and your enthusiasm for Branch programs, you may get their support. They may even consider sending a reporter to cover a program.



3. Be sure to find time in your conversation with the media to tell them about some of the long-time members who have given so much to your Branch. The Grandmother's Legacy may be of special interest. And don't forget to tell them about your newest member and why she joined.
4. Have the "techie" in your Branch create some computer-designed posters that list your program topics, the convenors and their telephone numbers. Include a clean version of the FWIO logo (available from the Provincial Office), a location map and even the vision statement that best describes your Branch. Turn this poster into a brochure, print 200 and pass them out anywhere and everywhere!
5. Here is a new idea! Phone your municipal office and ask that your program, including meeting dates and times, a vision statement and a location map, be posted on the municipality's webpage. Include a photo of your members and their names. This will add human interest.
6. Go one step further. Maybe someone in your Branch who enjoys computers could develop a webpage for your group. Then have it linked to your municipal and county webpage and to the FWIO webpage.
7. Make one meeting during your year a public interest evening. Invite two members from each and every organization in your community. Ask them to bring brochures about their organization to share. Make sure your meeting is concise and well run. Watch the clock! Print special programs for your guests for the evening, including the Ode and Mary Stewart Collect, so everyone can join in! Organize a special social time after the meeting. Award



"Appreciation Certificates" to people and/or organizations who have been supportive of WI, or because they have made a special difference in your community.



8. Develop a community-based calendar for the year 2001 that includes the program ideas and dates for WI. Your members with computers can help. Each month could represent one family in your Branch, or maybe special buildings or scenes, all the kids in your community at play, or the oldest members of your community. Be creative! Sell them back to your community and buy a second hand computer for your Branch so members can learn computer skills and join the computer age. Use your Branch computer to communicate (email) with schools in our far northland, remote villages, kids locally who need more "family," or seniors living with family or in retirement homes who no longer get to meeting. Make this computer available to WI members who want to practice.

Make 2000-2001 a banner year for programming and publicity. Step right out!

Come "Surf the Web"

Take a trip on your computer. Visit the FWIO website at www.fwio.on.ca

Needed - New Friends!

The database I initiated some time ago is growing, and with this kind of linkage Women's Institute members will be able to talk to each other across the province and around the world. Join today and become part of an FWIO network to share ideas, information, success stories, and more!

To join this network, send your name, email address, positions within WI, and your Region, Area, Subdivision and District information to cally@hurontel.on.ca

I look forward to your enthusiasm and input!

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