

By Donna Russett

LINKS

Most people with low literacy skills never return to school or sign up for literacy programs. Instead, they cope as best they can in a world that demands sophisticated reading, writing and numeracy skills. There is hope! Soon rural Canadians will have LINKS – Linking Institutes and Neighbours with Knowledge and Skills – to help them with some of their everyday literacy tasks.

LINKS is the national project chosen by the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) at their literacy awareness workshops held in 1998. LINKS has a distinctive style and symbol, the butterfly, for use on all promotional material. Although national in scope, LINKS will be local in design. Branches, for example, may act as a mentor or "buddy," they may be a resource centre where participants can be assisted with difficult-to-read documents, or they may choose to help seniors.

LINKS will match volunteers with individuals who need help with practical tasks

involving reading, writing and numbers. All of this will be free, on a confidential basis. The LINKS Project is meant to be flexible, so that each Branch can participate as they deem appropriate for their community and given their resources.

As a first step, Branches should contact their local literacy groups. LINKS volunteers will not serve as tutors. That is the job of many local literacy groups. But the expectation is that it can be a two-way referral system.

Each Branch has received a new video and Workshop Kit. The Kit will help each Branch learn about LINKS and decide what kind of project is best for them. A Media Kit suggests opportunities for publicizing your local LINKS project. It also includes draft press releases and radio spots.

In 1998, many Branches took advantage of the media materials. According to the National Literacy Secretariat, it was the most publicized project they have funded to date.

FWIC hopes that all Branches will hold a workshop to introduce LINKS by the Summer, 2000.

Donna Russett is the FWIO Executive Officer to FWIC. She can be reached at RR 3, Stirling ON K0K 3E0, Phone/Fax: 613-395-4305.

Correction – As noted on page 5 of the Winter 1999-2000 *Home & Country*, it is not a history of FWIC that will be ready for Convention 2000, but a history of the Women's Institutes in Canada.

Applause, Applause!



The Bowen Road Branch had a busy 1999. Branch President Joan McNeil (right) applauded member Dorothy Dorae (left) for her work with the local literacy council. Dorothy received 25 pairs of mittens and 29 books for use by the Adult Literacy Council of Greater Fort Erie. Life Member Margaret Russell was chosen as Fort Erie's "Senior of the Year;" the town's Mayor Wayne Redekop presented Margaret with a plaque. Another long-time member, Vera Bateman was recognized for knitting 272 baby sets for the Guardian Angels Program. To commemorate the International Year of Older Persons, the Branch purchased two concrete benches for the local cemeteries.

Submitted by Barb Wilkie, Public Relations Chair, Bowen Road WI, Niagara.



"If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade."

- Tom Peters



Lending a Hand for Literacy

It was a tremendous effort by Northumberland West District members, and they were well rewarded. They raised nearly \$600 from a craft and bake sale organized to fundraise for their local Read Centre in Cobourg. This District's effort was in support of the Literacy Project initiated by FWIC. District Public Relations Officer Dorothy Harnden is pictured working the bake table.

Submitted by Dorothy Harnden, PRO, Northumberland West.