

Writing PRO reports can be daunting

Thinking about why you are writing a report can make a good report even better

By Carol Helfenstein

It is time to write another report for your local paper and you find the chore, just that, a chore! Or have you just put down your pen, read over your hour-long effort and think it is boring? Remember, think about why you are writing the article - to educate, to inform and to motivate readers to remain and become interested in WI.

Read and consider the two sample articles below.

Sample Article 1:

Hilltop WI Branch holds October meeting

The Hilltop WI Branch October meeting, held at the Community Centre, was opened with the Mary Stewart Collect and the Ode. There were 23 members in attendance and one guest. President Jean Muir reviewed new business and jobs were assigned for the December fair.

Members collected Pennies for Friendship and the roll call was "A picture of a building in the community, past or present" for the history books. All 23 members had interesting roll calls. Jean Martin provided some good entertainment. Gert Coffey reported on the agricultural project. The Tweedsmuir Books and many fine scrapbooks were on display and everyone enjoyed looking at them.

President Jean Muir reported to the Hilltop members that the rally at Canyon was as busy as ever and there were many reports given. Canyon Kinettes were in charge of catering.

Dana Hollands and Dot Brown served the lunch after the meeting. The next meeting will be held on November 17 and the guest speaker will be Bill Bird.

Sample Article 2:

Women's Institutes - not all work!

Good humour and laughter - order of the day at Hilltop WI meeting

Members of Hilltop WI and their visitors arrived at the Pine River Community Centre on October 12 delighted to be back together. This sense of fun and fellowship continued throughout the evening that focused on the WI annual project of recording the history of the community through Tweedsmuir History Books. The History Books go back to 1921 when the Branch was first formed. Many local historians have referred to them for details of the community's past. Old photos and news articles are always welcome.

President Jean Muir reviewed her impressions of the annual Bright County Area meeting in Canyon earlier in the month. With good spirits Jean included some wonderful jokes told at the Annual Meeting and 'hammed' her way through her report, never missing an item to be passed on for future consideration. President Muir included details of members support of the Phonebusters information meeting about telemarketing fraud to be held in The Valley on October 22 at the Legion Hall. A crowd of over 100 is anticipated and people can still phone for details at 282-0202.

Members browsed through the excellent collection of Tweedsmuir Books and private scrapbooks, reminders of their community's colourful past. Many interesting photos of the past year were added - pictures of the fire at the Community Centre and family photos of original homes and barns. A rare photo of the 1856 log schoolhouse on the 4th concession was donated by Beth Glass.

The November 17 meeting is at 9:30 a.m. at the Community Centre. The guest speaker will be Bill Bird, an emu breeder living near St. Johns.

The WI welcomes new members to enjoy the fun and fellowship and the opportunity for personal growth and community action. Joan Walters, the Membership Chair in the Hilltop area, can be reached at 519-371-4234.

Points to consider when writing your PRO report:

Good titles set the tone.

- The title of Article 2 offers more incentive to read on; the reason why you have a title.
- This title also has a kicker - Women's Institute - not all work! - to "kick" people into reading on. A kicker is often in bold italics and the font size is smaller than the main title.

On to the body of your article!

- Opening paragraphs are important because 50 per cent of people do not read past them.
- Remember the words "motivation to read on" as you read over these opening paragraphs.
- Which of the samples has an opening paragraph that encourages you to continue reading?
- Which paints a picture and gives you a sense of having been there?
- Are readers somewhat curious about the Branch?
- Which article had paragraphs that kept to the topic revealed in the title?
- Which article gave readers information that might be pertinent to them (rather than just pertinent to a WI member)?
- Which article told readers a little more about being a WI member? Could readers share something from these paragraphs with someone else?

PRO Reports keep Women's Institute deeds, projects and purpose before the public. This is how to recruit new members month after month. Never lose sight of this opportunity. Always include a contact name and a phone number. Offer to take a potential new member to your next meeting. Remember, let the principles and ideals of the Women's Institute shine through in every report you write.

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