

Women Involved



By Carol Helfenstein

Sound Organizational Skills at Work in Southampton

After 29 years, the WI Branches of the Central area of Bruce County drew huge crowds to their Craft Show, even on the wettest and windiest day of the summer of 1999.

Much of their success relates to the excellent organizational skills the group has demonstrated and here are a few statistics.

History

Originally in Port Elgin, this long-running Craft Show is held close to the Canada Day weekend in the town of Southampton. It was originally a Bruce Centre District project. At that time the profits went to local hospitals and other charities. Today, eight Branches are involved and they divide the profits equally for projects in their own communities.

Present Statistics

The show is run from 10 a.m. to 8 or 9 p.m. About 40 WI members from 8 Branches partner with the Mount Hope Church women's group. These women provide about 120 pies for the one-day event and run the food booths.

Vendors

Many of the 200 vendors return year after year. This is a juried show and all aspiring vendors must send pictures or samples of their crafts. Members of a Judging Committee of eight circulate throughout the arena to observe the booths, vendors response to visitors and questions and the quality of the crafts for sale. Those not meeting the high standards will be notified that they must improve to qualify for another year.

Publicity

The Organizing Committee is well aware of the importance of advertising and allocate a budget of approximately \$3000 for the one-day event. That includes brochures, posters, radio and print advertising. The show is dubbed "The Cadillac of Craft Shows" and the women have maintained that level of excellence over the years as the size of the crowds indicate. The Publicity Committee gets word out starting in January to all local hotels, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds and provincial parks when these places are booking accommodation for the year ahead. Their cooperation is of huge importance in the publicity of the show.

Results

Well over \$100,000 flows through the show in one day. Booth charges go to pay the bills incurred: the rent for the arena and grounds; wages for teens working the gates; advertising; and, the cost of the food that goes into the booths (etc.). The sale of food at the four booths and the \$2 admission for approximately 5000 visitors goes directly to the WI groups, and is their main source of income.

Records Kept

In the past, records were kept by pen and paper. Now, the Organizing Committee has computerized all vendor information. This means quick and accurate access to vendors for the next year. Likewise, the bookkeeping is being computerized and can be used to analyze and evaluate the success of the show.

Spreading The Good Word

Information on how to organize a similar event is being recorded for the benefit of other WI Branches. Eventually this information will be posted on the FWIO web site. Watch for it!

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Value of a Volunteer

Town & Country is a weekly half-hour television program focused on the towns and countryside of Ontario. This program, produced by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, is dedicated to community issues, people and places across the province.

The upcoming season of Town & Country will be featuring segments entitled "The Value of a Volunteer." The special work of volunteers with the Women's Institutes, 4-H Clubs and Agricultural Societies will

be highlighted. How the three groups produce strong leaders and communities and promote agricultural awareness will be briefly documented.

The 200,000 regular viewers will learn about the value of volunteering. And hopefully be inspired to volunteer with the Women's Institute!

Motions:

- That the FWIO Excellence in Agriculture Award, recognizing the contributions of women to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, be presented in the recipients home area (if from Ontario) during the Area Convention.
- That FWIO send a letter to Past Presidents of FWIO informing them that the position of Executive Officer to the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada is up for election at the November Annual meeting; if they are interested they can apply to the FWIO Provincial Office.
- That the \$10,000 Canadian dollars allotted by FWIO to the ACWW Conference in 2001 be a loan to the Conference.
- That FWIO accept the recommended changes to the 4-H Regional Scholarship Application Form as suggested by the 1999 Scholarship Committee.
- That FWIO produce a professionally designed and formatted Annual Report for the year 1998-1999.
- That FWIO accept the recommendation of the Marketing Committee to produce a poetry book using the poetry collected over the years from Women's Institute members.
- That FWIO invite a select list of guests to join Women's Institute members at the Provincial Office for the official launch of the Expanded Health Education Program and that FWIO rent an appropriate tent and hire a suitable caterer.
- That FWIO take part in the "Value of a Volunteer" story to be told by broadcasters on the Town & Country television program.