

Women Involved



By Carol Helfenstein

Here are some thoughts on how to promote the WI and at the same time celebrate the International Year of Older Persons:

Respect and Recognition of the Older Person

Have a senior writer, poet, musician, historian, naturalist or teacher, etc., share his or her life story with you. Invite them to do a reading, play music, tell tales, or debate the teaching methods of today vs. yesteryear. Invite young and old alike to attend your meeting, perhaps a 4-H or seniors' group. Prepare an information sheet about your visitor so members can have questions prepared. Ask your local paper to feature a story about your visitor.

Learn About Older People in Industry or Agriculture

Invite an experienced, older farmer to give their views on farming today. Ask how they have managed to stay abreast of change and where change is taking farming. Ask them where women are in farming today.

Ask each member to research an older person in the community who is still working in industry or agriculture. Explore with that person their prospects for the future of that sector. Prepare a short report for the next meeting, run off copies and turn these into booklets to be taken home for others to read.

Seniors Concerns in Your Community

Invite a group from a seniors' home in your community to your meeting. Ask them to explain the advantages and disadvantages of being a senior. Invite another service club to this meeting. Have your most outgoing member conduct the meeting, encouraging participation and debate if warranted. As a result of this discussion, consider developing a community project in partnership with the service club you invited.

Outreach Project

Working with other local service clubs, build a wheelchair ramp, plant flowers or help decorate at a seniors' home. Or have a fund raiser for a chair lift in a local theatre. These are perfect photo ops with your community newspaper.

Garden Meeting

Invite the local horticultural society to speak to your Branch. Offer to help plant flowers and shrubs around a picnic shelter or children's or seniors' centre. Or help establish a rock garden in your community. Plant a tree in recognition of every senior over 90 this year, accompanied by the installation of a plaque. Buy a bench or two and dedicate them to local seniors. Place the bench in a spot chosen by the oldest senior in your community.

Health and Happiness Day

Have a facilitator discuss how to organize and market a health and happiness day for seniors. Ask seniors-oriented businesses to set up a booth for the day. Booths might include travel agencies, retirement homes, health organizations, fashion stores, financial planning businesses and entertainment. Work with other service clubs to share responsibility. South Grey District did this recently and were successful. Take it on as a District project.

Theatre

Go see a play with seniors performing. Write a play. Or a song for a sing-along. Encourage a local writer to walk through the art of writing poetry. Then write some! Maybe an "Ode to a Senior Friend."

Senior of the Year Program

Organize a Senior of the Year Program. Have a musical night in the community at which annual winners are announced. Give out computer generated certificates to all seniors nominated.

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Profile

From the Desk of the Public Relations Coordinator



By Carol Helfenstein

From my father who was a lawyer and my mother who was a social worker, both in St. John's, Newfoundland, during the Dirty Thirties, I learned caring, persistence and the work ethic.

Those attributes, for which I am eternally grateful, helped me through my education in Sarnia and in Toronto at Teachers' College, and through my years as a teacher.

Marrying a handsome Swiss in 1958, who loved agriculture, introduced me to the world of farming, the need to work 18-hour days and the experience of nurturing three children from birth to independence and happy career choices.

We farmed in Bruce County, which meant the pleasure of neighbours who were warm, fun-loving, hard-working people who believed in community.

Slipping from black and white Holsteins to black and white print media in 1986 seemed natural. Thus, began my 12 years of reporting, investigating, caring, boosting and learning - including the new world of computer technology and the Net.

Now retired, I am still relying on those same attributes learned at my parents' side. I have several new passions - grandchildren, local theatre, writing and FWIO - and one passion of long standing - my husband Harry.

There is so much I would like to accomplish while with FWIO. The first is to show the people of this province that the Women's Institute is a wonderful, caring, modern organization. The second is to overcome the Women's Institute's size, geography and supposed "older image."

I want to initiate, within a year, an electronic capability for over half of the 12,000 members, so that through their own, their family or their community computer they can develop the ability to receive, download, comment on and respond to messages sent via the Net or Web. Year two, the second half!

With persistence, caring and the work ethic, much of this can be achieved.