

# Women Involved

By Carol Helfenstein

The Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) now has a direct communications link with every newspaper in the province through an electronic bulletin board system. Every month I can download news items into a WI folder through the Ontario Community Newspaper Association (OCNA) Office.

The news item immediately becomes available to every newspaper reporter in every large and small community in Ontario. But, and here's the rub, most reporters will need to be advised that something interesting has been dropped into the WI folder.

Reporters in small communities are so busy that unless you, the member, drop by to advise, remind or cajole your local reporter into opening the file on WI, he or she might not get around to it. Do you see what your challenge is?

You have a wonderful opportunity to make a link with your local paper. We want our communities to know about the Women's Institute. And you are the direct link to communication!

Are you ready to test the system?

OK, here goes. Let's make a united effort to have our organization recognized as they work towards a successful Make May Membership Month Campaign. If you haven't used the sample layout I put in the WI folder for use in February, use it now to help promote Membership Month. Link with your local newspaper to produce a one or two-page spread about WI accomplishments.

Use the sample layout, but give the reporter additional information and photographs about happenings in your Branch. Change the invitation asking women to attend your May meeting. Be sure to include the details of your meeting - date, time, place, contact, phone number and program details. Now if the reporter wants to give the pages a truly local slant

they can interview you and replace the boxes with local information.

I will be recommending to the reporter that the paper's sales department go out into the community to sell ads to go around the layout. Given the WIs contributions to local communities, I think the sales rep will find this "an easy sell." If you have a keen sales-minded member in your Branch, she might volunteer to do some selling for the local paper.

So, have I challenged you? I hope so. We can share WI news with our communities through the OCNA folder system for a nominal fee. And that's good news! The success of getting this system up and running depends on you - the local Branch - to keep in touch with your local paper.

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## Take me to your next meeting!

I am going to try to communicate to you via The Net! Now this is new, so bear with me. Please give it a try! Either go to the FWIO home page on your own computer at home or find a nice teenage girl or boy or your librarian to guide you through finding me via the computer in your local library. Yes, I'll be there! Look for information from your provincial PRO under: <http://www.fwio.on.ca>  
Print me out and take me to your next meeting!

## Calling all email junkies!

Have you discovered a way to be of service to others using email? Share your story. Write to me at:

[cally@hurontel.on.ca](mailto:cally@hurontel.on.ca)

Would you like to share opinions with other WI members? Send me your email address and we can start a WI Think Tank via email. Would you like instruction on the ABCs of emailing? Let me know.

## A Branch IQ Test

As the new PRO for FWIO I get all the fun jobs! Here's an example - A Branch IQ Test. Grab a pencil and score your own Branch.

1. Your Branch provides fun and fellowship for your members. 2
2. Your Branch added something new to programming in the past year. 1
3. Your Branch has more members willing to do a task than you have tasks to be done. 1
4. Your Branch helped a family in the community (not a WI family) in the past year. 1
5. Your Branch assisted with a literacy program in the past year. 2
6. Your Branch helped at a library, museum or theatre this past year. 1
7. Your Branch helped with a school program this past year. 1
8. Your Branch had a guest speaker talking about women's issues. 1
9. Your Branch had a welcome visitor's night. 1
10. Your Branch invited a politician to speak about community issues. 1
11. Your Branch sends members to a workshop, District Annual or Area Convention. 1
12. Your Branch developed a resolution. 2
13. Your Branch helped a local food bank. 2
14. Your Branch created a new song book or wrote a play or poem about WI work. 1
15. Your Branch developed a plan to improve the local community (ie. flower beds, signage, etc.). 1
16. Your Branch helped seniors in your community in some way. 2
17. Your Branch helped families in other countries in some way. 1
18. Your Branch is going to consider new programming for regular meetings for the year 2000. 1
19. Your Branch is planning to be more action oriented for the year 2000. 1
20. Your Branch will be planning "A Year 2000 Project." 2

Now, add up your score and multiply it by

10. If your score range was:  
200-250 - BRILLIANT - an active, involved Branch  
170-190 - VERY CLEVER - an active, caring Branch  
140-160 - BRIGHT - an active, caring Branch  
110-130 - AVERAGE - think bigger and bolder!  
100 - Less than average - think big things for the year 2000!