

By Mary Janes

## Will You Accept the Opportunity ...

### - to sharpen your writing skills?

In the past three and a half years, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) for the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) has written approximately 10 media releases per year and distributed them via mail, email and fax to over 200 print, radio and television outlets across the province.

Preparing the PRO LINE and Board Reports has been a different writing challenge, for a different audience. Writing this column has led me to consider the future of FWIO and how public relations can help that future develop. That consideration has been an inspiration for all columns.

I have also had the opportunity to work with committees in preparing texts for brochures, displays, a PR manual and several Fact Sheets – again, a different challenge. Another aspect of writing has been the several hundreds of letters of thanks, recognition, encouragement and information.

### - to meet interesting people?

Working with *Home & Country* editor Janine Roelens-Grant and graphic artist Debbie Thompson Wilson has been a special perk in the PRO position. Over the years there have been many other highlights – telephone, television and radio interviews, learning about making videos from Steve Hagarty and developing a radio sound image with Classic Radio Sounds.

It has been a distinct pleasure getting to know author/professor Dr. Linda Ambrose, participating in a seminar with the father of the healthy communities movement Dr. Trevor Hancock and the Singing Policeman Dominic D'Arcy, having coffee with motivational speaker Norman

Rebin or spending time with astronaut Dr. Roberta Bondar. There are many interesting people, both within and outside the WI, with whom the PRO may come in contact on a regular basis.

### - to use your creative ability?

Brochures and displays don't just happen. Putting heads together to discuss ideas and develop creative ways of getting the WI message out is definitely a challenge. I have worked with many talented WI members willing to share their abilities. Sometimes they have needed a little encouragement to get started, but usually their belief in the value of the organization has overcome their hesitancy to participate.

### - to share your leadership skills?

One of the biggest challenges of the PR position has been to try to attract the attention of editors with interesting aspects of our activities. Editors are always looking for unique situations and projects that will be of interest to a wide audience. WI offers many diverse opportunities to many people, but their attention has to be gained before they are willing to take part.

Another challenge has been to make all members recognize the importance of a positive attitude and enthusiasm. These two attributes are the best public relations tools a volunteer can possess. Along with that is the realization that each member is a public relations officer in her own right, even if she does not hold the position.

The third challenge has been to deliver information and training in such a way that members feel they have been enriched by the process. As an organization for personal growth and community action our objectives have a strong appeal for the public today, as much or more than they did in our past.

### - to become involved in shaping tomorrow's world?

The most exciting part of being on the FWIO Executive and Board has been contributing ideas to help plan the future of Women's Institute. The Public Relations Officer has been part of a team building an organization ready to meet the challenges of its second century. We have worked hard to develop a broad vision and a strategic plan to carry out that vision, to restructure the provincial organization in order to make decisions more effectively, and to develop a program focus on Safe & Healthy Communities.

This fall, applications will be accepted for the position of FWIO Public Relations Officer, with the term starting after the November Annual meeting. For more information about the position please refer to the *Effective Public Relations* manual and/or contact me.

### If you ...

- have a strong commitment to the values of WI,
- have an interest in the long-term objectives of FWIO,
- are enthusiastic about being a member of a worldwide network of people, and
- have the time to give to a challenging job full of opportunities,

...then **you** are the person FWIO needs.

Please apply before September 30. Application forms are available from the FWIO Provincial Office, Phone: (519)836-3078.

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