

# Pot Pourri

Writer's block occurs when an author cannot write. It may be caused by many things, including lack of inspiration, too much stress, too many diverse ideas, or a combination of the above. Rather than agonize about a theme for this column, I decided to present a selection of ideas that have come up for discussion in the last few months.

## Volunteer Hours

It became clear at the PRO workshops in September that those members who receive both sides of the Volunteer Hour form have little problem recording volunteer hours. They understand the Why, When, Where, Who and What explanations to their questions.

**Hint:** Several Branch Public Relations Officers reported that they record the number of hours during the monthly role call. This simplifies the process for all members.

## Videos

Effective Public Relations is a half-hour video of sections of the PRO workshop held in Mount Brydges. The value of the Women's Institute, the features of the new *Effective Public Relations Manual*, the uses of the WI presentation folder and the reasons for recording volunteer hours are discussed. It is suitable for a meeting about the value of good public relations, or as a supplement to the *Effective Public Relations Manual* for workshop purposes. It may be borrowed from the FWIO Provincial Office.

**Note:** The Supply Order Form has a list of other videos available on loan from the Provincial Office.

## Budgets/Goals

FWIO Board Directors and Executive have spent many hours developing a vision of the future of FWIO, a mission statement, strategic aims and goals to achieve these aims. These have been reported in *Home & Country*, and members have been asked for their opinions. All committee chairs and officers present yearly budgets which indicate their priorities and plans for the year. The approved budgets then give the committees parameters within which they may carry out their goals.

In the same way, Branches, Districts and Areas are encouraged to set goals and develop budgets, so that members know the yearly plans and priorities. Yearly plans should take into consideration:

- the individual member's needs for personal growth
- community action and involvement
- the WI network that gives women a voice provincially (FWIO), nationally (FWIC) and internationally (ACWW)

## Presentation Folders

Each Area, District and Branch should have a supply of presentation folders and brochures available at all times to provide background information about the WI to guest speakers, prospective members and convention venues (etc.). The *Effective Public Relations Manual* has a list of "Who gets What" to use as a guideline.

## Musings

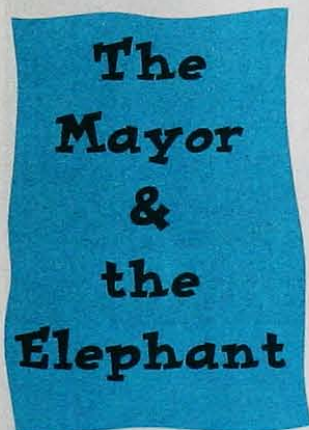
More and more members are requesting that *Home & Country* be mailed directly to their homes. To offset the costs, they have suggested subscribing to the newsletter, rather than having it paid for from fees.

Another suggestion coming from members is that FWIO fees reflect the true value of WI membership to individuals. The FWIO Provincial Office provides tools for members to use for education, promotion and networking. It provides staff to answer individual requests and meet the needs of the members and the public interested in WI work. It provides a meeting room for members and committee meetings and storage space for the many supplies members order. Before 1994, these were all provided to FWIO by OMAFRA.

The Provincial Office also provides links with the provincial government and other provincial organizations with which we share common interests. It also provides the link with the national and international bodies of WI.

Members gain so much in personal growth, in having a voice in global decision making and in getting involved in community development. Members are requesting educational and leadership workshops, provincial projects, resource material and information from the provincial level, all items that used to be available through OMAFRA. Yet today's fees do not even meet the same living standard that they did in 1897. The 25 cent fee in 1897 equaled about 1/3 of a man's daily wage. In 1996 the average daily wage in Canada, according to Statistics Canada, was \$152.40. Applying the 1897 standard, FWIO fees should be about \$50 yearly!

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If you work for a circus and put posters all over town saying "The Circus is Coming to Town on Monday," that's advertising.



If you put the posters on an elephant and parade him through the town, that's promotion.



If you lead the elephant through the mayor's flower garden, that's publicity.



If you get the mayor to smile about it, that's public relations.

