

Working Together Shaping Tomorrow's World

"Vision without action is merely a dream.

Action without vision just passes the time.

Vision with action can change the world."

In preparation for the second century of the Women's Institutes, the provincial Board Directors spent a large part of March Board meeting developing a vision for the future of Women's Institutes. A vision statement is a long-term picture of the future, which may or may not be actually achieved. But it sets the direction for an organization within which growth and vitality are possible. A captivating, clear vision, which is shared by the broad membership, will encourage others to belong to a winning team and invest energy in it.

A vision statement differs from a mission statement. The mission statement is an action-based blueprint which evolves over time. Once the vision statement and the mission statement are established, an implementation or action plan (communication, marketing, business, strategies) can establish goals, specific steps to reaching those goals and a time line within which to achieve those goals.

The vision statement enthusiastically developed by the 37 Board Directors and Executive is: "Working together shaping tomorrow's world." It implies the total membership's belief in a better future; it refers to everyone working together for the same goals; it reflects team spirit and unity; it provides a reason for members meeting beyond the social one. With clear recognition of the work done by Women's Institute members, faith in the organization will continue to grow. With the growth in faith will come an increase in self-esteem and an increase in membership.

The important question for each member to consider is: Is this your vision of the Women's Institute? The Board Directors need to know whether their vision is also your vision before August Board meeting. In order for Board Directors to establish goals, policies and action plans, they need to know if they have the support of the members. Please call or write your Board Director, or write to *Home & Country* with your views, by June 30, or as soon as possible.

This "visioning" workshop was facilitated by Jim Brown of STRIVE!, a company

which advises Board Directors on the roles and responsibilities of boards and helps boards develop an effective, efficient process for making decisions.

There are four major challenges now facing the provincial Board of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. They include:

- discovering and proclaiming a vision and goals for FWIO to carry it into the next 100 years;
- restructuring the Board, allowing it to be proactive and responsive to members' and community needs in its development of policies that fulfill the FWIO mission;
- developing a clear structure for paid and volunteer staff who take responsibility for implementing Board policies; and,
- developing and following a strategy that values people, in keeping with the underlying values of the WI for the past 100 years.

At the November Board workshop, Board Directors learned that their role is to promote and plan strategies which broaden the scope of the organization (see *Home & Country*, Winter 1996-97, page 4). In the words of Jim Brown, "Let's learn from the past but not be hampered by it; the future of WI depends on today's decisions. We need creative thinking to address the needs of members. I believe that women in Ontario need what FWIO can offer for at least another 100 years."

Prepared by Mary Janes, Public Relations Officer for the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. She can be reached at 6868 Egremont Rd., RR 8, Watford ON N0M 2S0, (519)786-5511.

In preparation for the March Board Workshop Board Directors had to complete the following three tasks:

- talk to at least five non-members and find out why they are not members; make a list of their reasons
- make a list of reasons why they should be members
- write a newspaper article about what FWIO is doing that is newsworthy, dated 2002

The articles written by Betty Veitch and Billie Power are printed in the right column.

Women Involved

March 19, 2002

Five years ago, the Women's Institutes of Ontario celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the founding of their organization. At that time it was reported that the average age of the members was 70. As that statement was heard the thought flashed through the minds of listeners, "This is a dying organization." If members are so old, the organization is on its last legs.

Well there is life in this organization yet! The fantastic publicity given to our organization in the year 1997 was like a shot of adrenaline. Women who had not heard of the Women's Institute became aware and interested in becoming a part of a group which had survived for 100 years and had accomplished so much in that time.

Membership grew as individual Branches attracted new people and new Branches were established in new Subdivisions in rural communities. The life of FWIO goes on. Goals and activities that have been well-established over the years are being continued and new technology has opened doors and new avenues.

People are communicating worldwide by way of the Internet. Information and new ideas reach members daily from members in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Fax machines and videophones speed up communication. Local projects involving the immediate community continue to flourish under the enthusiastic direction of WI members.

And because of the advanced technology members are more aware of worldwide projects, especially in developing countries. Great steps have been taken to improve conditions in countries where AIDS has been rampant. Child labour is being reduced and more children are being given educational opportunities. Health conditions improve as mothers become more knowledgeable about sanitation and nutrition.

A dying organization! I think not! The 200th anniversary is only 95 years away.

Written by Betty Veitch, Board Director, Subdivision 14.

Focus on People

March 19, 2002

Today, the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) reported their programs - Parenting and Hands On Skills for Daily Living - have met with overwhelming success. These programs are mentored by volunteer WI members across the province. Government statistics have shown a distinct correlation between these programs and the drop in the rate of child abuse cases.

FWIO's continued focus on the health and safety of people has gone a long way towards raising their profile. In turn, this has led to a significant increase in membership. Sources say the reason for their continued and recent support can be traced back to the late '90s, when government assisted programs were so ruthlessly cut or eliminated. The needs arising from the situation caused FWIO to react, forcefully and positively, thus fulfilling their mandate - an organization for personal growth and community action.

Written by Billie Power, Board Director, Subdivision 9.