

Common Threads

By Donna Russett



Planning the future of the Women's Institutes of Ontario was under discussion at the provincial level throughout the early 1980s, culminating in the publication of a revised Constitution and *Handbook* in 1987, the 90th anniversary of the organization.

To continue as a strong and credible voice in this province, however, funding and a strategic plan for the future were essential. The development of a Strategic Plan began in November of 1987 when the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO) Executive examined the strategic planning model and looked at the long and short-term goals of the organization. They spent many hours developing a plan to carry us into our second century (see Strategic Plan as printed in the Winter 1993 *Home & Country*, page 6).

Part of the Strategic Plan included taking over the production of the *Home & Country* publication, and we are pleased with its appearance and content. The raising of a capital fund of \$1,000,000, from which the interest income is to assist in running the office, is also a part of this Strategic Plan.

At fiscal year end - September 30, 1994 - the Headquarter's or Capital Fund stood at \$315,603. Last year, at District Annuals,,

members voted against our Development Officer exploring beer companies, lotteries, and several other possible sources of funding. The FWIO Executive and Board of Directors have taken this as an indication that members would rather raise the funds themselves than compromise their principles.

In the past several years, figures from the donations report revealed three-quarters of a million dollars was spent by Branches across Ontario. This year, that amount is over \$800,000. If the Headquarter's Fund could have that kind of support for just one year, our goal would be realized.

A motion was made by one of the Board Directors, and carried at the recent Board Meeting, to encourage each District to have a special fund raising event in June (WI Month) and then designate the proceeds to the Headquarter's Fund.

Another direction the Strategic Plan has taken is to seek out communities of women with similar interests and needs in the hope of forming new Branches. Attracting new members to existing Branches, through addressing the concerns of the changing family and community, is also part of the action plan.

Planning and delivering provincial Leadership Development Workshops is a major component of the Strategic Plan. I was encouraged at Area Conventions by the newer members who were so eager to be a part of Workshop '95 being held in January.

We will continue to carry out our Strategic Plan by putting a Task Force in place to look into streamlining the organization's structure. A Task Force has been struck with a co-ordinator and one representative from each of the four regions. As we move into the 21st Century, we need to look at ways to make our organization work more efficiently and effectively. Please forward any ideas and suggestions you may have to the Provincial Office or your Board Director.

After all, it is the ideas, suggestions and support from all levels of the Women's Institute that are our common threads.

Donna Russett is the President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario.

Provincial Organizations or Programs that the FWIO Support In Some Way:

- AGCare - Agricultural Groups Concerned About Resources and the Environment
- Agri-Food Education Inc.
- Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame
- Foundation for Rural Living
- Great Lakes Health Effects Program
- Ontario Agriculture Hall of Fame
- Ontario Agricultural Museum
- Ontario Breast Screening Program
- Ontario Farm Environment Agenda Initiative
- Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- Ontario Health Care Initiatives
- Recycling Council of Ontario
- Royal Agricultural Winter Fair
- Women and Rural Economic Development

Tips from a PRO

By Marg Atkins

To remain effective as a PRO, whether it be at the Branch, District, Area or provincial level, you must learn how to deal with people. You must build a positive relationship with other PROs, members and media contacts. I like to think it's similar to baking a cake from scratch.

PRO Cake

Flour for bulk
Sugar for sweetening
Milk for blending
Eggs for texture

or X number of members to give encouragement, faith and support or skills needed for effective writing and communicating or the ability to listen, hear and add a little humour, if necessary or the ability to meet challenges, contact media personnel and know your subject

Baking Powder for rising action

or the key to refining your skills and meeting your goals

Mix these ingredients together and create a masterpiece! Your concentrated effort and your dedicated action will undoubtedly produce an excellent product. To serve, cut a large slice, smile, and remember to say thank you to all who assisted.

And, no I did not omit the salt! You, as PRO, are the salt. You make things happen. Without you, the organization will fizzle and fall flat. So, every once in a while pat yourself on the back for a job well done!

Marg Atkins has completed her last term as the Public Relations Officer for the FWIO.