

WI Enables People to Help Themselves

By Janine Roelens-Grant

Irene Richardson was born and raised near St. Marys, Ontario. After graduating Teacher's College, she taught elementary school for six years and then supply taught for another ten.

In 1987, Irene became a licensed Lay Preacher in the United Church, and served for the next four years as Minister in a small Union Church in her community. In July of 1993, she began a three-year course - Lay Pastoral Minister-In-Training - and was awarded the Ninetieth Anniversary Scholarship that fall to help further this education. Presently, she is a Minister in the Hibbert Pastoral Charge in Staffa, Ontario.

Irene married a dairy/cash crop farmer and has six children and eleven grandchildren. Last year, her husband, John, semi-retired. He now operates a 50-acre cash crop farm and helps his son and daughter-in-law who took over the other two farms and the dairy herd.

Irene first joined the Women's Institute organization in high school as a Junior member. She has been a member of the Uniondale Branch since 1961 and has held all the Branch offices, except Secretary-Treasurer. Presently, Irene is the President of Uniondale WI. She has also been President of the Oxford North District, President of the London Area and FWIO Board Director for Subdivision 23.

"I joined the Women's Institute and continued to become more and more involved because of the fellowship," claimed Irene, "and the fact that I always learned something at meetings." She added, "many different talents are needed in WI and there is an opportunity for all to participate."

While Irene was District President, Oxford County hosted the International Plowing Match. Both the Branches and the District



Irene Richardson (left) received the Ninetieth Anniversary Scholarship in 1993, from Margaret Eberle (right), President of the FWIO at that time.

realized enough revenue from running the official food tent to support major projects in their communities. Oxford North District, for example, had a hydraulic lift installed at Woodingford Lodge enabling physically challenged people to get into and out of the swimming pool.

In 1981, her District also completed seven

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agricultural kits and placed them in Board of Education offices in the County. The kits were complete with puppets, toy farm implements, soil samples, stories and lesson plans. The District still repairs and replenishes them each summer.

London Area hosted its first one-day convention in 1989. "We hoped to make it easier for young mothers and working women to attend," commented Irene.

"Women's Institute has always meant a variety of things to me," she explained. "By participating it means that I can help make life better for people in my own community, province, all across Canada and around the world. I am proud and happy to participate in an organization that acts across racial and religious lines."

"I have appreciated the fact that WI is always there. When my life was so full of other commitments that I could not be active ... beyond my own Branch, others [were], and the work, the fellowship and the growth went on. When I had more time to commit to it, the opportunity was there to do so," she added.

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"I find it difficult to imagine what the last 33 years would have been like without my involvement in WI," said Irene. "Certainly, both my family and I have benefitted in numerous ways and it is my hope that others have benefitted from my involvement as well. I look forward to being an active part of this organization for many years to come."

Women's Day at the Royal

Women's Day at the Royal, hosted by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO), will take place on Thursday, November 10. A luncheon will again be held in Cafe Royale, in the Upper East Annex in the Coliseum from 11:30 to 2:30.

In this International Year of the Family, we are pleased that the Hon. Elmer Buchanan, Minister, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, will attend as guest speaker. Knowing of his special concern for rural families and his interest in community

development, the committee has asked him to address the luncheon on "The Challenges Facing Rural Families in the '90s."

Ticket price is \$45.00 per person, and tickets are available from M. Dunn, RR 4, Stouffville, Ontario, L4A 7X5, (905)888-1280. Cost includes admission to the Fair, the luncheon and the Opening of the Royal Horse Show in the evening.

Although the Women's Day Luncheon has never been intended to include only Institute members, the WI has been the chief means of

support. In this International Year of the Family, we especially ask you to invite family and community members to be with us.

Since space is limited, we encourage everyone to order tickets early, and certainly before November 1. Please include a cheque with your order as Horse Show tickets must be paid "up front."

We depend on your support through announcement at Area Conventions and active promotion in your communities.