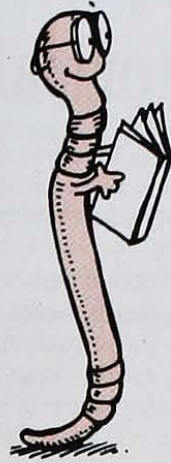




Chris McCrae (left), owner of By Design in Ferndale, holds one of the book bags for Norma Stewart (right), Schoolhouse Literacy volunteer.

Photo courtesy of the Warton Echo.



Kids' Book Program is 'In the Bag'

The Schoolhouse Literacy Skills Program based in Warton in Bruce County is a mostly volunteer agency working to boost literacy and promote greater interest in reading within the region.

Joan Allan, a former teacher in the area had an idea for a companion program. She thought: "Why not simply 'bag' a reading kit for residents in rural and semi-isolated parts of the Peninsula and appoint regional 'mobile librarians' for pick-up, drop-off and networking duties?" Allan calls it the 'book bag' method, whereby books and audio tapes of books are distributed directly to the homes of select families by Schoolhouse Literacy volunteers. The initial target group will be pre-school children.

Most of the materials, bags, books and tapes were donated. A marathon bag sewing bee was held at the By Design shop on Highway 6 at Ferndale, owned by Chris McCrae. Chris donated her premises and sewing machines to the cause, along with a bolt of durable cloth for the first batch of 80 bags.

Volunteer sewers and cutters from Stokes Bay WI and Ferndale-Swan Lake WI pitched in with their skills. The remaining eight Branches of the Bruce North District Women's Institute - Adamsville, Bluebell, Colpoys Bay, Mar, Oliphant, Park Head, Purple Valley and Zion Amabel - will also donate material and labour for the ongoing program.

This information was extracted from an article written by Lindsay Eaglesham, a staff reporter for the Warton Echo.

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In Europe:

- women from Estonia are free, at last, and were able to host the ACWW European Area Conference in Tallin last year; now they can meet openly and speak with a national voice;
- new ACWW Societies will probably have been formed in Hungary and Italy by the 1995 Conference in New Zealand;
- and, Czechoslovakian women will be meeting in Prague to learn "How to Build an Organization" - a skill with which they have no experience.

In East, West and Central Africa:

- political instability, poverty and discrimination is the harsh reality facing women, much of it beginning in the family itself;
- many women are taking care of the infants of AIDS mothers;
- and, one million sufferers of VVF, mostly girls, become beggars who are ostracized from the community due to a disease that no longer exists in Developed Countries.

In South East Asia:

- women need training that will generate income and they need education about nutrition and food preservation, food safety and proper sanitation;
- and, some means must be found to halt the prostitution that is forced upon young girls and children.

In South Africa:

- with its 9 countries and 22 languages, women must overcome what appear to be insurmountable barriers to communication;
- women have to deal with AIDS and malaria as health care issues;
- and, they must learn how to participate in the management of their natural resources.

Perhaps their greatest challenge is to learn how to educate and relay a sense of belonging to an entire "lost generation."

In India:

- women are victims from birth to death - many girl babies are strangled because their parents worry they will not be able to supply a sufficient dowry to attract a good husband;
- young women are forced to undergo female circumcision;
- and, old women are left to die because there is insufficient food.

From all our stories, whether from Developed or Developing Countries, we realized that changes must begin in and with and through the family, the smallest unit of our social structure. And ACWW can supply the tools to help women help themselves, but cannot impose its standards on the cultures or religions of others.

But it is in organizations such as ours, that women learning and working together, will

build better, safer and healthier communities. We need to reach out, again, as women did in the 1890s, to identify these new 1990s needs and then move to fill them.

Only when we come to grips with the challenges of this changing technological world, where success is so often measured only in dollars, will our organization survive as vital, viable and visible - and necessary.

We are only limited by our own vision; we have the background, the ability, the experience and the people. Our challenge is this: do we have the courage? From what I have seen in my country and around the world, the answer is YES. We do.

My best wishes as all of us clear our vision so we can proceed on a course set for us long ago by women of courage, wisdom and grace.

*"The future is not what is going to happen.
The future is what we are going to do."*

Mary Visser van Doorn, The Hague, 1992

Peggy Knapp is the ACWW Area President for Canada.