

## Over 100 women gather for Bruce District WI

By Martha Martell

On May 25, over 100 women gathered at Elmwood for the Bruce County District Women's Institute annual meeting. Highlights for almost 30 branches included anniversary teas, quilt making and draws, bus trips, fashion shows, Big Bike ride for heart and stroke, special monthly meetings for other branches to join them and monthly meetings where the public was invited to hear a guest speaker usually on health or safety living.

The Roots of Bruce, a grade six agricultural event held in Walkerton, will once again be supported by WI especially helping with lunches for the workers. For this year there will be two scholarships for first year or second year post secondary students. The usual one for those in 4-H still stands. The new one will be for anyone who is from Bruce County and affiliated with any community involvement club.

Bruce County WI will also try to have a display in the 2008 plowing match where the top agricultural school event from the fall fairs will be judged, with prize money going towards the school.

The guest speakers of the day were from Habitat for Humanity. Two students, Spencer and Aaron, from Owen Sound, went on the "Wave of Hope" trip to Sri Lanka to build houses after the tsunami. After a year of planning and fundraising they headed out to Sri Lanka

for three weeks. They worked on several houses starting at the foundation. With very crude or simple equipment such as a shovel and a cement mixer, the work began. Everything was brick, block, cement and sand.

There was a team of 12 people who consisted of students, teachers to a retired 70-year-old. They were not the only outsiders there to help rebuild. New friends were made as a group of firefighters from Richmond, B.C., and a group from Ireland also participated. The hot humid weather, rain every day at 3 p.m. (entering the monsoon season), and the calm, easy going nature of the families they were helping, made it slow progress. These people were happy just to be alive and be with the remaining family members. Work was hard but many breaks were taken to share with the family and communities. Some sightseeing helped to really understand this country's people and the devastation that occurred.

It was a great trip as real Canadians interacted with the real people of Sri Lanka. There was a lot of work with a lot of play. It is a country of beauty but also one of diesel pollution and garbage. All drinking water has to be boiled and temperatures are up to 38 degrees in the shade. There is no fancy clothing and basic food consists of rice, fish curry, beans, carrots, eggplant, cashew and lot of fruit.



**Excellence award winner** WI Women of Excellence in Agriculture award winner Judy Shelley (centre, a sheep farmer from Hanover, receives her award at this year's Royal. Making the presentation is Rosemary Moran (left), president of the FWI of Ontario and Linda Booker from the Haldimand chapter.