

After her child died from drinking unpasteurized milk, Adelaide Hoodless, the founder of the international Women's Institute organization, became a tireless advocate for domestic reforms and devoted herself to educating new mothers.

"Since then, that's the ideal the Women's Institute has aspired to," said Anne Ennes, president of the Oxford District Women's Institute.

Ennes said their vision is an Ontario "where women work together for safe, healthy communities, and pursue an enriched and balanced lifestyle."

Supporting local projects such as Team Shan, the Oxford District Women's Institute has also organized health fairs, donated to Ingamo Homes, Domestic Abuse Services Oxford and area hospitals.

The local chapter has also advocated for many causes, including safe food, grandmothers raising their grandchildren, and safety concerns on local roads and school buses.

The Oxford District Women's Institute, comprising nine branches and 105 members, was the recipient of 2015 AppreSHEation Award by the International Women's Day committee during celebrations Friday at the Oxford Auditorium.

"In the spirit of taking action, this award was created," said Phyl McCrum of the International Women's Day committee.

The award recognizes the unpaid work of an Oxford County woman or women's group or organization that has contributed to improving the lives of women in the county.

Others nominated for the award included Marion Baker, Mary Gladwin, Kelly Spencer, Kathy Stephenson, Danielle Valedis and the Women and Wellness Committee.

The annual International Women's Day Woodstock event included free meals for 300 people, hairstyling by Fanshawe College students, yoga, Zumba, and displays by vendors and local agencies. The event began six years ago when a group of women who mostly worked in domestic violence prevention and counselling came up with the idea.

"We dreamed a dream of wanting an event with no barriers to attendance," McCrum said, "where women can be appreciated and feel wonderful about who they are."

McCrum said the event that started with 70 women and has grown to 300 is full of "good vibrations."

"The women in this room are truly happy," she said. "You can really feel the positive energy in this room — the love, the appreciation, enthusiasm."

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