

Sydenham  
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2007

# Sydenham Women's Institute see rejuvenation through new membership

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EMC News - For nearly a century, the Sydenham Women's Institute has been an integral part of the village's community.

The group of 15 women meets monthly at South Frontenac Township Hall to listen to guest speakers, visit with one another and determine whom the recipients will be of monies raised at their twice-yearly craft sales and other fundraising endeavours.

From supporting local charities like Rural Visions, the Food Bank and Grandmothers to Grandmothers to undertaking heritage projects like the mayoral portraits hanging from the walls in council chambers, the Sydenham Women's Institute keeps busy all year long - and they're looking for some new, young members to help carry the torch, and keep the institute's work going into well into the future.

"If you're interested in community, it's one of the [true community-oriented] organizations that's still existing," notes Carol Faires.

A member for 25 years now, Faires is the institute's



Photo/Hollie Pratt-Campbell

(Back Left to Right) Carol Faires, Anne Barlow, Babs Wiskin, Meta Gamble, Helen Calver, Cathy McCullough, Mary Shook (Front Left to Right) Cynthia Hand, Sharon Menard and Mary McGinnis.

to Sydenham.

"I looked around at different things I wanted to get involved in and nothing [else] much appealed to me," she says. "I wanted to meet some of the older members of the community and get to know what was going on, so I decided to join the Women's Institute and it's been a

generous ladies," adds Ann Barlow, recalling a time when the institute women all pooled their money to help her through some financial struggles.

"They were very helpful to me. They have my undying loyalty now. It really was a wonderful thing for them to do - each person donated personally to it."

because it's just a wonderful, friendly group and I know I've made a lot of friends here," agrees Meta Gamble.

In addition, the Sydenham Women's Institute hosts guest speakers once a month. Recently, they heard from a local OPP officer.

"He spoke to us about power of attorney and some things that we need to be aware of," says Faires. "He was very informative."

Similar women's institutes are found in many rural communities throughout the country, including Harrow-smith and Inverary.

The women at the Sydenham branch emphasize that their doors are always open to new members, and note that it would be wonderful to see some fresh faces at their next meeting. For information about the timing future meetings, please contact Babs Wiskin at babsmnw@hotmail.com.

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CAROL FAIRES

official historical record keeper, and documenter of all the changes the village of Sydenham undergoes.

"My mom was also a member," she says. "At one time the Women's Institute was very instrumental in rural communities. Women got together...because cook-books were not available and they got recipes from one another [and attended workshops put on by organizations like the Ministry of Agriculture and Food]."

Sharon Menard is a relatively new member, having joined in 2007 after moving

really rewarding experience for me."

The women all have their own reasons for being a part of the institute, however it all comes back to two fundamental things: the desire to give back to the community, and to gain a supportive network of female friends.

"When your family [has all moved away] it's nice to have something worthwhile that you're doing again," says long-time member Mary Shook. "It does a lot of good - a lot more than some people realize."

"They're very kind and