

# Living for home & country

If you compare the earth to an apple, cut the apple in half, then into quarters, eighths and finally sixteenths, then peel the skin off, that represents the amount of the world's land used to grow food.

Winnie Trachsel used this illustration for an "Agriculture in the Classroom" workshop at Queen's University in Kingston more than 20 years ago. Although it may have been true then, the amount of arable land is diminishing all the time.

As a Women's Institute (W.I.) member since 1981, Winnie knows all too well the need for education beyond the classroom.

Since 1897, when the first W.I. branch was formed at Stoney Creek, Ontario, women have been meeting to improve their skills in homemaking and childcare, as well as to lobby governments on health and community wellness projects. They actively work together for family, home, community and country.

Winnie Trachsel says she's a good example of how W.I. has helped women over the past 120 years. "If it wasn't for W.I., I wouldn't be able to get up and speak in front of people," she said.

And it was through her dedication in serving in almost every capacity within the organization, sometimes more than once, that she has been honoured as a life member. In October of 2015, Winnie also received the Women of the Year award for Community Service from Optimism Place in Stratford.

Her involvement with W.I. began with the



BILL GLADDING / TAVISTOCK GAZETTE

Winnie Trachsel is a Life Member of the Women's Institute and an active member of the Hampstead branch. *Tav. Gaz. p. 1, Mar 15/17*

Athlone Branch in 1981 when Jane Danen invited Winnie to a meeting. She continued with the group until it disbanded in 2000. She remained an Institute associate member for one year, then in 2002, joined the Hampstead W.I. with friend Helen Anderson who is from the disbanded Elmhurst Branch.

"I missed the friendships and activities," Winnie admitted. Now, as the youngest of the current nine-member Branch, she regularly hosts meetings in her home. She also gets together once a month for lunch with members of the former Athlone W.I.

Over the years, Winnie has set up dozens of fall fair displays, quilt shows, promoted W.I. at the International Plowing

Match, and headed rural learning sessions. She was also instrumental in the 2010 W.I. Provincial Conference held at the University of Waterloo.

For three years, Winnie was the Guelph Area Representative on the board of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (FWIO). Her area

included more than 50 branches and some 300 members. She is currently working on a resolution for the Perth District advisory council to have February 19th recognized as W.I. Day.

Winnie was a 4-H leader for several years and was also a member of the Community Oriented Policing Committee in Shakespeare as chair, fundraising chair and secretary-treasurer.

Education is one thing that Winnie truly believes in, whether it's in the classroom or out. She wasn't as fortunate as many to have that opportunity. She left school at age 16 with the hopes of going back. Later, "I tried to do some correspondence courses," she said, "but I need someone to teach me face to face," she added.

Born in Stratford, Winnifred Reavely, she was the second oldest of five children. Older brother Dennis and his wife, Vickie, live in London; Sherron (Gerald Audet) in Belle River, and Robert (Vicki) in Windsor. Another sister, Laura Bourne, died at age 17.

When she was five years old, Winnie went to live with her great grandmother in Strathroy and stayed there until completing Grade 4. She then moved with her family to Drumbo where she finished public school and went on to Paris District High School. It

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- Winnie Trachsel

was during her Grade 10 year, while working in the tobacco fields, that a medical condition surfaced. She was rushed to Kitchener hospital and had a kidney removed.

The next summer she

*Tav. Gaz. p. 1, Mar. 15, 2017*