

Oxford Women's Institute 100th annual

By Anya Donaldson

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL ARGUS

The Oxford District Women's Institute held their 100th District Annual meeting in the village of Springford, Ontario where it was held 100 years ago. The original building has been moved to Lucknow and was replaced by a new hall in 1988. Just recently, this community received funding from the Trillium Foundation to renovate and update the building.

We certainly enjoyed modern day conveniences that I know the ladies didn't have at their very first District Annual meeting!

All plans are in place for the 100th Anniversary celebration which will be held at the Elmhurst Inn in Ingersoll June 9, 2003. Memorabilia of Oxford

District W.I. will be on display for viewing at 5:30 p.m.; registration also starts at this time and dinner will follow at 6:30 p.m. Special entertainment has been arranged for the evening. We are looking forward to celebrating with our guests, members and past members. Our special anniversary cookbook is now ready for sale at \$10 each; they will be available at the dinner or from Institute members.

A summer bus trip is planned for August 14 to see the Women's Institute play near Peterborough. The cost of \$57 per person included the busfare, play and boat cruise. For further information contact Sheila Greason at (519) 349-2768.

The business portion of the meeting consisted of

reports from the various conveners. The printed reports were also distributed to each Oxford District at Board meetings of the Children's Hospital of Southwestern Ontario in London. W.I. supports Children's Hospital with quilts, hand puppets, new toys and books. If interested in this position, please contact Janet Uren, president of Oxford District W.I. A motion was passed to support the Oxford 4H Youth Exchange to Alberta with a donation.

Our guest speaker for the afternoon was Tayiba Nassr from "Londoners for Afghanistan's Women." Tayiba was born in Afghanistan and lived there to see 24,000 people in her city bombed by Russian soldiers. She and some of her relative's escaped to Iran during the

night on horses and donkeys. She lived in Iran for three years before immigrating to Canada. She visited with her mother in Iran six years ago because Tayiba was unable to enter Afghanistan. She was able to return to her homeland after her 18-year absence just recently.

Tayiba described the severity of conditions during the Russian occupation and the ruling Taliban. She told some heartwrenching stories of children in their makeshift schools, lack of health care in general and maternal mortality, poor nutrition, high mortality and morbidity rates, lack of access to education for girls and the poor. She said life in general is somewhat better now with the new government,

but it will take a good many years to rebuild her country that has been destroyed by 23 years of war.

She wanted to stay in Afghanistan to help the women with their "rights" and rebuilding of careers. Her group, through "Care Canada," had provided a village with two embroidery machines to retrain women so as they can support their families.

The Oxford District Women's Institute slate of officers for 2003-2004 is the following: Sheila

Greason - past-president; Janet Uren - president; Ilene Chesterman - 1st vice-president; Carol Innes - 2nd vice-president; Evelyn Arthur - secretary-treasurer; Sharryn Sharples - assistant secretary; Margaret Lee and Anne Innes - Tweedsmuir History; Anya Donaldson and Evelyn Douglas - public relations; Louise Baird - advocacy convener; Linda Hammond and Ruth Gates - education coordinators; Mary Nicklas and Dorothy Reibling - financial examiners.



The 2003-2004 Oxford District Women's Institute officers are, from left, Education Coordinator Linda Hammond, President Janet Uren, 2nd Vice-President Carol Innes, Past-President Sheila Greason, Secretary-Treasurer Evelyn Arthur, Assistant Secretary Sharryn Sharples, PRO Anya Donaldson, Education Coordinator Ruth Gates, and Tweedsmuir Historian Margaret Lee.