

Response to Discussion Questions - Workshop February 17, 2011

1. What ideas motivated you from last year's workshop?

Videos of WI activities; a member of Parliament on Status of Women visited us and was so pleased to see us; how to recruit; contact new people in your community; hold a meet your neighbour night; ways to get new members; ways to present an interesting meeting; community yard sale; offer drives, babysitting; help for specific events; do more community based activities - have a community yard sale and maybe even an Islander Day potluck, put newsletter in mailboxes, have 2 groups contribute to the community newsletter, have crokinole parties in the winter months, the idea of 'associate members'; value the members you have in your groups and keep them actively involved; new activities that were fun and educational - field trips to Belfast woolen mills, recycle Christmas cards.

2. What great ideas worked to gain new members in your branch?

We had an outing to Avonlea Village; invite a possible new member to a meeting and offer to pick them up and take them there; speak to people face to face; personal contact; word of mouth. Bring back fun at your meetings; invite people to come to a meeting to see what it is all about with no pressure to join; new members do not pay memberships, cook for any functions or take office for first year; plan events where WI pays a portion of the cost (i.e. pottery class or play); are kits available for new members?; educate new members in what WI is all about; reading Notes and News; do not just ask but invite, pick up and take to meeting (resulted in 3 members); take information sheet door to door to meet neighbours along with a little gift; it is nice to have minutes of meetings in local newspaper as it helps to familiarize people; have meetings in different locations; 2 new members - one individual has time now (retirement age) to help in WI, one new in community responded to WI invitation but finds it hard to attend meetings.

3. What methods of recruitment do you plan to try?

Have a meet your neighbour night at church hall and invite family; advertise potluck in church bulletin; attend a meeting as a guest with no pressure to join; invite local people in your neighbourhood as guest speakers; perhaps ask ladies to help with functions and then they will get to see what WI is about; have treats for new members and seniors/shut ins and a visit (comradeship and fellowship); visit new residents (welcome package and cook book); while charity canvassing mention WI; word of mouth, attend meeting as a guest, no pressure; Saturday morning meeting especially in winter months; look closer at older age group (over 40) and younger age group (bring kids); meeting new members and younger women; pot luck (advertise in church bulletin if they attend and have WI member as contact; meet your neighbour and invite family; visit people in the community and give information on WI and possibly dish cloth item; recognize people in hospital/bereaved; plan events such as theatre and invite community members; having meet your neighbour night in church hall.; drop off information package to new people in community; health related topics; pot lucks; community building, not necessarily new members.

4. What are some pitfalls to avoid?

Do not ask a new member to be an executive right away; do not give new members any responsibilities right away; try to avoid being set in your ways as change is good and avoid saying “we already tried that”; have a short break at the meeting and stand up and stretch; ask members for their opinion as it is important to have open communication; do not ask new members to bake or donate unless they offer; no pressure on new members; have short break - exercise/stretch; keep members involved, participate in activities; ask members for their opinion, have open communication, don't be set in your ways; don't let people think that being a member is always preparing food; ways to reduce lunch to one person at a time; well prepared agenda - a start and a stop time; make meetings more interesting and not all business; lost sense of community; long drawn out meetings; keeping the same executive every year; don't get too set in your ways at your meeting, make change; asking too much from people; asking too much from the same people; look for ways to reduce requests ie limit lunch to one item (not 3 people).

5. As leaders what do you think keeps your branch motivated?

Communication, fellowship, and dedication of members; attend district conventions and keep up to date with Notes & News about what others are doing; going out for breakfast, having fun and nonsense at every meeting; have interesting speakers with videos and pictures; celebrating 80 & 90th birthdays and anniversaries, and have sleigh rides; present programs that interesting to everyone and in an interesting way; play games and have fun auctions, etc.; do enjoyable things as a group; use convener kits and present them well; older community families have so much to offer so involve them; take in a nice horse and sleigh ride and invite everyone; auctions - bring in a good program; encourage people to send information for Notes & News; the dedication and enthusiasm of a small membership; group project e.g. quilt; responsibility of owning hall; recognize people for their contributions and respect all opinions; have business meetings that are well prepared, not too lengthy, and start on time; plan special nights (speakers) and invite community; recognize special birthdays; open communication ; respect all opinions; target new retirees (age 55 and older); have workshops to develop leadership skills; suggest having meetings on Saturdays; amalgamate smaller WI's which are close and suggest to twin with someone outside your convention area; shorten up meetings; chicken pin cushions; encourage people to send in information in to Notes and News.

Change is challenging but you must change to grow. You can only move forward if you are open to change.