



Ron Schuler MLA Springfield

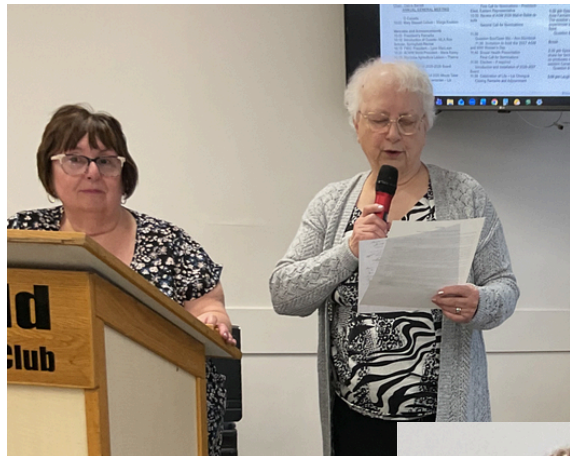
MWI AGM DUGALD May 8, 2026



**Debra Barrett,
MWI President**



Thelma Blahey, MB Agric Liaison

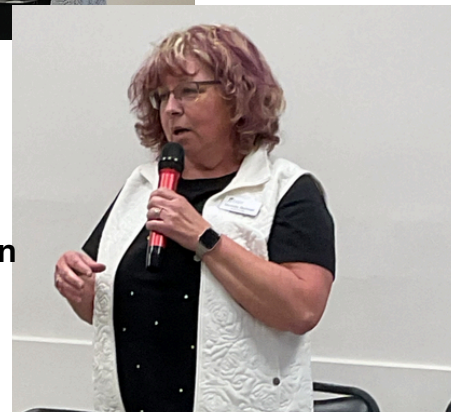


**Debra Barrett,
MWI President
Liz Chongva,
Regional Rep.**



**SAFARI SPEAKER
Dale Friesen**

**Michele Gurman
MWI Member**



Dugald School Youth Jazz Band



Let me please introduce myself to you with a brief bio... I'm the oldest of 5 children and resided in E. St. Paul, MB.

I graduated from River East Collegiate, and then from the UofM with a Bachelor of Interior Design in 1979.

The T. Eaton Co. hired me then to design and install display windows, set-up model rooms, promotions, as well as Santa's Village where many children came to watch the moving characters of various Nursery Rhymes.

Around this same time, I began attending a church in Winnipeg where I met my husband Darwin, and we were married in 1984.

We have 3 children, 2 daughters and a son. We lived in Winnipeg until 1997, but we desired to raise our family in the country, like we were raised. We bought a beautiful house in Grosse Isle. Our children who are now all grown and married have blessed us with 8 grandchildren which bring us much joy, and keep us quite busy!

When Eaton's went bankrupt in 1997, I was on long-term disability due to Rheumatoid Arthritis. When my R.A. was under control, I was employed by the Interlake School Division as an Educational Assistant working with Speech Therapy and also working with Special Needs students and retired in 2022.

Now to go back to my introduction to the WI...Shortly after moving to Grosse Isle from Winnipeg, a friendly woman from a nearby farm, named Lois Rutherford invited me to a WI meeting. I had never heard of Women's Institute before being from the city! Curious about this Women's group I decided to attend one afternoon. All these women were so friendly and talkative about various subjects. What impressed me the most about "Women's Institute" is what they do for the community, by donating their time and money to help other organizations in Manitoba, and because of this, I decided to join this remarkable group called Grosse Isle WI in 2002. If Lois was still alive today to witness one of the women she invited to Women's Institute, become president of MWI, she would be SO proud! However, I'm not the only person she invited to WI, there were several of us...like Gisela Nolting, Dorothy Braun, and others I'm sure!

Personal invitations to WI meetings is one of the most effective ways to introduce new women to your local WI group! This was personally witnessed at the Fisher Branch WI - "Invite a Guest" meeting. The "program speaker" was also a great way to educate women on what's happening in their community and at the schools...that night 6 new members were added to the Fisher Branch Women's Institute!

We can all learn from this wonderful example!

There are several wonderful women in our organization that have kept WI alive and vibrant and without each of you, WI wouldn't be what it is today! However, to keep Women's Institute active across all of Manitoba and the rest of Canada, each of us needs to help our local WI group ignite the interest of other women by talking to their friends, family and neighbours!



In 1946, the Grosse Isle WI was established, and after 80 years we are still a strong, lively group of beautiful women!

On May 8th, 2026, Springfield WI hosted our 116th AGM. If you missed it, it was great event with lots of socializing, education and laughter. The speakers from the "SAFARI" (Springfield Area Farmers Aiding Relief Internationally), and Michele Gurman (our MB Government Appointed Member), gave a wonderful presentation about her family's "Donkey, Horse and Mule Farm and Breeding Program". We learned so much from these two amazing presentations!

To end a great day, ladies from Domain WI entertained us all with a drama of intrigue and laughter. Thank you Springfield WI for hosting a wonderful AGM, and also last, but not least, to Debra Barrett for her many years of being our MWI President and a great leader and mentor for our organization!! Very well done!!

The new President role seemed to be initiated into action quickly! The following Monday, May 11th, I was invited to attend a "Spring Tea" hosted at the beautiful home of Ellen Swistun in Oakbank. There the Springfield WI ladies enjoyed delicious fancy sandwiches, assorted dainties, and cheesecake all served graciously, at a long fancy table set up complete with china tea cups! All the ladies enjoyed this pampering, and Ellen did a lot of work preparing and serving it all to us! Thank you so much Ellen!!

As Ellen and I talked we discovered we went to the same High School, and she was friends with my cousin who was her same age. Small world!

On Wednesday, May 13th, Domain WI had a meeting hosted at the beautiful home of Debora Durnin Richards. I had the privilege of presenting "years of service to W.I." certificates to several members. The longest being 61 years, and many others who had served many years!

Congratulations again to each of you! You all are, and continue to be, truly amazing women who make this world a much better place!

Thank you Debora for the delightful coffee/tea and refreshments, as well as, the iris bulbs to plant in our gardens!

In closing, I'm very grateful to Debra, Liz, Ann, Gisela, Mallory and now Maren (big welcome!) for being on the MWI Board alongside myself. This will be a huge learning experience for me, but I'm honoured to be in this new role. And lastly, thank you to Jacqueline C. for nominating me...as shocked as I was, and I was, this is a new chapter for me to add to my almost 25 years with MWI.

Best always, Marge



Roll Call

Who/how/when were you introduced to Women's Institute, and what inspired you to join?

Answer in 2-6 lines, please. If you are going to participate please email your response to Mallory with Roll Call in the subject line.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

I can't believe that we are already in June! It's been a chilly spring so far and I'm itching to get my garden planted, one at my home and my sons and I plant a big garden in the Boissevain Turtle Mountain area, right near at our campsite each year as well. Mother's Day weekend kicked off camping season for us, and it was a cold one!

It has been very busy in the MWI office! The final ballot count was completed the first week of May, just in time for the MWI AGM meeting. The process went smoothly and thank you to everyone who voted. Your voice matters and your vote is important. A special thank you to my two scrutineer helpers who spent the day helping me count all 81 ballots, Jayney Pulver and Kara Rost. I appreciate their volunteered time each year!



A reminder that we are always looking for content to post on our social media pages, please forward pictures of your get-togethers so we can show potential members why MWI is the best organization to be a part of!

Hoping you all have a wonderful and relaxing summer ahead!

Mallory Makinson,
Office Administrator



Sylvia Mitchell was a life member of the **Wheat City Women's Institute**. Born October 30, 1932 she passed away April 2, 2026 in Brandon. Sylvia and her husband Donn were inducted into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame in 1997.

Welcome to new members in the Fisher Branch Women's Institute

June C., Maureen C., Betty G., Linda K., Colleen P., Julie S.



**'HOW TO KEEP
ITEMS OUT OF
THE LANDFILL?'**





Paint night in **Grosse Isle** - members met to try their hand at painting and enjoy an evening out with friends.



Domain Women's Institute members receive Years of Service Certificates.



Linda Manson 40 years
 Carol Pasieczka 52 years
 Marge
 Pat Manness 61 years



Diane MacDonald 7 years
 Debora Durnin-Richards 6 years
 Marge
 Jane Manness 7 years
 Missing: Cathy Beavis 5 years

Fisher Branch WI Guest Night

At the WI May meeting a Guest Night was held for women in the community and surrounding area. An invitation to attend the event was issued through Facebook and by members reaching out to invite women they thought might like to attend.

The evening consisted of a guest speaker, Amanda Bouchard from the local collegiate. Ms. Bouchard focused on the innovative programming the school offers in partnership with local organizations. Namely, their partnerships with

- Madeline's Closet which provides new clothing for students and their families. Madeline's Closet collects new clothing from retail outlets that would previously have thrown out this clothing into a landfill and repurposes it to supply clothing to those experiencing financial need.

- Hygiene maintenance program which provides feminine and basic hygiene products, including shower access for students who require these items,

- the Fisher PCH Foundation which provides funding to the collegiates horticultural program with students planting flowers around the PCH to brighten the residents outdoor environments.

Students also have an option to donate their time to offer friendly visiting and hands on program delivery, such as playing cards, painting fingernails, chats and assistance with recreational programs,

- Bridging the Gap speaker Val Caldwell who speaks on the virtual world (social media) and the impact it has on the daily lives of our youth. Presentation is set for October 29, 2026 for students and in the evening for parents and interested community members from 6:30 to 8:30 pm in the Ukrainian Hall. All are welcome to attend.

The evening wound down with all in attendance winning a prize, and choosing a plant, bulb or seeds from the gardening swap. A door prize of a basket full of gardening items and supplies was won by lucky Karen S followed by a tasty lunch.

The attendance was beyond expectations with 26 guests joining the WI members in a relaxed and interesting evening. The women must have enjoyed their evening based on the hmmm of voices in the room. Membership forms were available for those who wanted to join WI. The evening ended with 6 women joining WI that night with two winning a free membership for 2026/2027.



AROUND THE PROVINCE

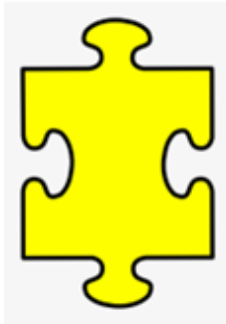


On May 11th a Luncheon hosted by Springfield WI President Ellen Swistun at her home honoured two founding members Kathy Wilkinson and Diane Holland on the 45th year of the local WI.



Bits and Pieces

On behalf of MP Raquel Dancho, thank you for taking the time to share the Manitoba Women's Institute's resolution on silver alerts. Ms. Dancho is thrilled to have the support of your organization in this meaningful initiative. To follow along with the legislative process, we encourage you to tune into House of Commons debate on May 6 at 4:30 central. To tune in, you can use this website: <https://parlvu.parl.gc.ca/Harmony/en/View/UpcomingEvents/20221212/-1> and select the "HoC sitting" stream. Once again, thank you for taking the time to share this with our office. MP Dancho looks forward to progressing this legislation and improving the safety mechanisms that protect our seniors.



Recently Liz Chongva sent a copy of our Silver Alert resolution to MP Raquel Dancho.



MWI member 'Canada Ann' Mandziuk with her Canada scarf in the photo on the left with the Scottish Ann(e)'s at the ACWW conference. In the photo above are more members of the Scottish delegation who were at the conference. Several of the members have been on the Scottish Craft and Chat Zoom group that I have participated in since 2020. Anne Kerr (r) in the photo on the left is the only member I had met in person until the conference in Ottawa.

Bits and Pieces



In the first picture (bottom L) it is Diane and Sandra from Iceland Women's Institute and Cheryl and I.

Diane and Sandra asked us to sit with them together and talk about how we do things in our W.I.

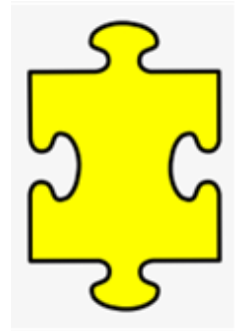
We invited them to our hotel room and had a nice talk with them, it was so very interesting.

In the second picture are also Ilse, Diane, Sandra, Cheryl and I. The Icelandic Women presented us with the book "The First Lady Next Door" from Eliza Reid which had just come out the day before. Eliza Reid was raised in Ottawa and was the First Lady of Iceland. What a very fitting book and so nice of the Icelandic women to give it to us. I am almost done reading/listening to it. It's a very interesting and inspiring book!

Maren Mueller



Congratulations to MWI member **Tracey Drabyk-Zirk** (2nd l) who recently retired from Manitoba Agriculture office in Beaucejour. Enjoy your retirement!



Manitobans Invited to Share Views on Seasonal Time Change

Manitobans are being invited to share their views on seasonal time changes and whether Manitoba should adopt permanent standard time or permanent daylight time, Municipal and Northern Relations Minister Glen Simard announced today. “Across Canada, a number of provinces and territories are ending the time change and Manitobans have made it clear they want us to look at doing the same,” said Simard. “From a lower risk of stroke to when the sun rises and sets, there are a number of things to consider, and we want to hear directly from Manitobans.”

A recent analysis by Manitoba Health concluded that eliminating the time change would be better for population health than maintaining the status quo. The full report is available at:

https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/20252026/time-policy-factsheet.pdf.

Consultations are now open. Manitobans can share their feedback at

<https://engagemb.ca/time-change>.

Growing Manitoba Ag
Inform. Influence. Inspire.

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/online-resources/signup-for-growing-manitoba-ag.html>

If you would like this newsletter, please go to the link to receive an email sent directly to your inbox.



Happy Birthday to members celebrating in June and July.



Don't forget to share the activities of your local/branch with the MWI office so we can let others in the province know what is happening across the province either in our newsletter or in our social media posts.

Do What You Can



This photo shows 2 hearts that I picked up at ACWW. My daughter likes purple so hers is on the right. A cute idea that could be made at a meeting and distributed in your community.



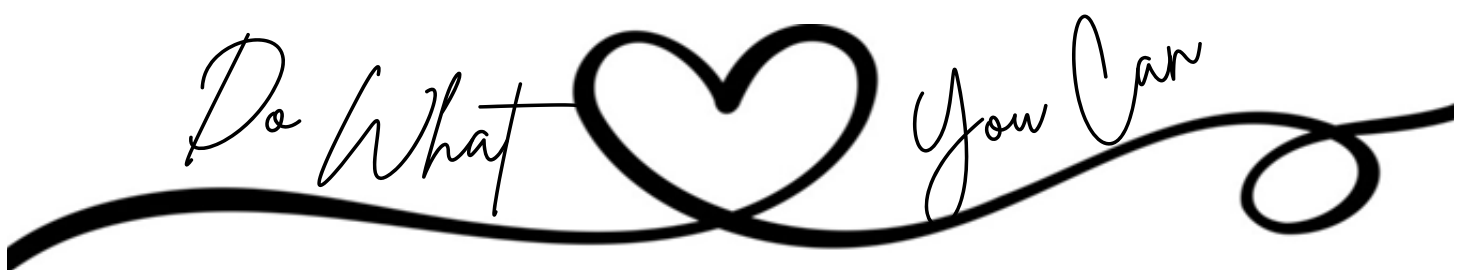
Text on poster in picture is shown below.

These hearts were lovingly made by the members of the Gippsland CWA Group (Regional Victoria). Please take one.

Part of the 1000 Hearts Kindness project funded by

Sarah De Jonge, Tasmania, Australia

Pass it on to bring comfort and hope. xx





Since February, students from the Grade 10, 11, and 12 Family Studies classes at Minnedosa Collegiate Institute (MCI) have been volunteering with the Technology for Seniors Program at the local 50+ Centre. Throughout the program, students have worked one-on-one with seniors to help build confidence and comfort with everyday technology.

The students have supported participants with a wide range of digital skills, including sharing photos, downloading and organizing apps, setting up texting and FaceTime, navigating smartphones and tablets, troubleshooting devices, and creating projects using programs such as Canva, Microsoft Publisher, and Word. Whether helping someone reconnect with family through video calls or assisting with simple day-to-day technology challenges, the students have provided patient, personalized support in a welcoming and supportive environment.

This partnership has been especially meaningful because it connects directly to the Family Studies curriculum, where students explore human development and relationships across the lifespan – from early childhood education through adulthood and aging. The experience has allowed students to apply classroom learning in a real-world setting while building empathy, communication skills, leadership, and community connections.

The program has also created valuable opportunities for intergenerational learning. Students and seniors alike have benefited from the conversations, stories, and relationships that have developed over the past several months. It has been wonderful to see students grow in confidence as mentors while seniors become more comfortable and independent using technology in their everyday lives.

MCI is incredibly grateful to the coordinator and members of the 50+ Centre for welcoming students into the program. The experience has been positive and rewarding for everyone involved, and the school looks forward to continuing this partnership with additional collaborative projects in the coming school year.

Mrs. Whitney Stone-Matthews
Technology & Careers, Foods/Nutrition, Family Studies

I have been attending the Tech Connect sessions and the students are helping me with the Canva program so I can continue work on the newsletter. I definitely appreciate their help in working with Canva to produce this newsletter.

The views contained in the book reviews provided to our newsletter are the thoughts/opinions of the writer and not Manitoba Women's Institute.

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Greetings to the Manitoba Women's Institutes
Hybrid AGM- May 8, 2026



Good morning, President Debra, MLA Schuler, ACWW World President Marie Kenny, and fellow WI members: It is my honour to bring warmest greetings on behalf of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada— WI Canada—and WI members from across the country. I extend my sincere appreciation for your ongoing dedication to advancing the work and spirit of the Women's Institutes. Your commitment to community-building, education, and advocacy continues to enrich lives and foster positive change. Your work speaking with one voice has been complementary. This includes the implementation of a silver alert program across Manitoba, the reopening of the Mature Woman's clinic, and funding new mental health services with a focus on additions to name just a few. Your newest resolutions on funding a school-based awareness program on human trafficking and the expansion of the social service in minimally served communities will continue to improve the lives of women and families in Manitoba. For those of you who may not be familiar with FWIC - our Vision Statement is "Fostering a future where every woman thrives and makes a meaningful impact," and our purpose is to serve as a united national voice advocating for women, while promoting family, community, and personal development through education and friendship. We live out our vision and purpose statements through three objectives: to provide a medium of intercommunication among the provincial WIs, to provide a united national voice, and to initiate national program/projects and provide resource material. We accomplish the objective of being a national voice by putting forth resolutions that have an impact on the country. In 2024, resolutions were passed on the doctor shortage In Canada and FWIC received responses from eight of the provincial health departments including one from Manitoba thanking us for our support and interest. We are continuing to work on forensic nursing, and the president of the Canadian Forensic Nursing association will share their work at our AGM on July 7. For the national convention in PEI, we expect to have resolutions on gambling, forensic nursing, and build on your work on the silver alert system. Our national project for 2024-2027 is sustainable style through mindful consumption. This is the practice of being aware and intentional about what we buy and wear. It involves considering the impact of our choices on the environment, society, and our well-being. Instead of mindlessly buying, mindful consumption encourages us to be thoughtful, reflective, and conscious about our consumption habits. To provide guidance for the project, a manual was created that offers suggestions for branch programming, sharing circles, and a variety of activities. Discussion topics include sustainable wardrobes, the impact of microplastics, fast fashion, vintage clothing, clothing swaps, and more. There is something for everyone. The second edition of the manual is on the FWIC website under resources. Did you know we had a YouTube Channel? It is FWIC WI Canada and has several recorded events including WI Day Celebrations and the latest video from Earth Day is Sustainable Style and the Circular Economy.

FWIC is gathering testimonials from members about how WI has impacted their lives. If you wish to contribute your experience, please forward your story to Angela Scott by September 1, 2026. The 2026 WI Celebration featured stories from members from across the country, including Liz. So, if you are wondering what to write, listen to what others have shared. I am sure you also have a story to tell. As you may be aware our national office is located at the Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Homestead in St. George, ON. WI member Marian Austin, and a supporter of the Homestead has issued a challenge to branches to donate a toonie per member. These donations will help us to continue to tell Addie's story and the significant contribution she has made in women's lives. Thank you to President Debra for your contributions both to Manitoba and to the national board. Your efforts are much appreciated. Your program today with the school Youth Jazz band, the presentation by SAFARI- and Michele Gurman will be educational and interesting. Enjoy the time of fellowship, renewing old acquaintances and making new ones. Thank you once again for the opportunity to join you virtually, and I look forward to the conversations and wish you well in your deliberations.

Sincerely, Lynn Maclean
FWIC President

Highlights from the FWIC/WI Canada Board Meeting – May 25, 2026

FWIC AGM JULY 7th, 2026 at 7pm ET:

- a. This will be a virtual event and those interested are requested to register at registrations@fwic.ca.
- b. There is no charge to attend the AGM. However, donations of \$25 more will be issued a charitable tax receipt. This can be done by e-transfer (provide mailing address) to info@fwic.ca or a cheque mailed to the National Office at PO Box 209, 359 Blue Lake Road, St. George, ON NOE 1N0. Please indicate in the memo line the purpose of the donation.
- c. Provincial Presidents/designate are requested to complete the credentials form identifying your voting delegates and return to info@fwic.ca by June 29. The form is included in this email.
- d. Provincial Reports and Committee Reports are due by June 16. Please send as a Word document.
- e. Guest speakers will be Liz Loudon, President of the Canadian Forensic Nurses Association and Sharon Robertson Barnes, sustainability educator.

FWIC Convention Pin Competition: The competition to design a pin for the 24th National Convention is now open. Details are available in the WI Connections.

Nominating Committee for 2027: The nominating committee has been established to receive names of provincial representatives for 2027-2030 and for the position of president-elect. For those interested in the president-elect position individuals must have served as a FWIC board member in the preceding last two triennium (2018-2021 and 2021-2024). The information was sent out and is also included with the board highlights.

Tweedsmuir and Senator Cairine Wilson Competitions Preliminary details are in the June issue of WI Connections. These will be judged at the national convention in 2027.

New staff: FWIC is pleased to welcome Nicolas Landers, summer student, and Janet Barnard, bookkeeper, to the National Office and Homestead.

Next meeting of the Board of Directors: Monday, June 22, 2026, at 6 pm ET.



Manitoba Women's Institute attendees back row (l-r) Maren Mueller, Giesla Nolting, Cheryl Janzen, Dianne Kowalchuk (Rivers Society member of ACWW), front row (l-r) Ann Mandziuk, Debra Barrett, Liz Chongva.

What a wonderful experience it has been to attend the ACWW convention in Ottawa.

It was my very first time attending and since it was in Canada it was a little easier commitment.

To have my friend Cheryl Janzen from Woodmore WI coming with me made it extra special.

The whole experience was not just motivating and inspiring but also heartwarming. The global sisterhood, as Marie Kenny, our new ACWW president, called it made you feel connected with everyone.

I have met and talked to so many women from so many different countries, that was so interesting! It will take a while to follow up on all the new contacts and read through all the material that I brought home.

The resolutions made me think on topics that I have not thought of before.

The Manitoba provincial board was very welcoming and the bonding amongst everyone from Manitoba was especially nice.

So, while being at the convention I decided to join the Manitoba provincial board as the Eastern Regional Representative.

I really hope to be able to attend again in 2029, the centennial ACWW convention in Ireland.

Maren Mueller
Woodmore W.I.

Below are comments from those who attended the conference.

rural
women
in action
Associated Country
Women of the World

The ACWW Triennial was an interesting experience. The presenters, discussions, and the opportunities to meet women from around the world was inspiring. It was also fascinating to learn how women's issues are relatively similar in all countries. I returned home committed to the continued work of WI in empowering women, their families and the communities we call home.

Debra Barrett

Rivers is a Category IV Society of ACWW, and I am an Individual Member. At the ACWW Conference in Ottawa, I was delighted to reconnect with old friends and to make new friends from around the world. I was especially excited to see Marie Kenny installed as World President.

Dianne Kowalchuk

This was my 2nd World Conference and I totally enjoyed it. We were treated royally in Ottawa. Our hotel, meals and tours were great. The atmosphere of the conference was welcoming and informative. It was wonderful to see women from around the world and to sit at tables at meal time with attendees from many countries.

Manitoba is known as *Iceland West* as I learned from the 9 delegates from Iceland! Fortunately I had Manitoba tourism pins to share with them!

Ann Mandziuk, PHEC

Associated Country Women of the World 31st Triennial World Conference in Ottawa April 26 – May 1, 2026

350 people attended from 31 countries. There were 102 members from Canada. From the Manitoba Women's Institute 6 members attended, and 1 from Rivers W.I. The conference started with the opening ceremony and the parade of flags from all the member countries. Welcome from Magde de Kock, the ACWW World President and other dignitaries. We sang "The Song of Peace". During the conference sessions we discussed and voted on the following resolutions: Establishment of a "Funding Program for Youth led Organizations", "Childcare Deserts in the US", "Collection of Data on flood- prone River Systems" (for early flood warning), "Iodine deficiency disorders in rural women", "Equitable access to vaccines", "Funding of sexual and reproductive health and rights", "Sustainable funding models to address violence against women and girls", "Reducing digital harm via social media", "Disclosure requirements for commercial use of digital editing and AI productions". There were some other resolutions regarding policy and by law changes to bring wording and definitions up to date. To delve further into the resolution and financial statements please go to the ACWW website.

There was one tour day. Tours offered were: A: Ottawa city tour, B: Lanark Country Maple and Textiles (Maple shop and Textile Museum), C: Canadian Agriculture and Food Museum and the RCMP Musical Ride Stables, D: A wine and blueberry farm, E: Just Food Farm Forest to Table Experience.

Our first guest speaker was Sunshine Tenasco an entrepreneur, social champion, author and community leader from Kitingan Zibi Anishinaabe in Quebec. Another speaker was Sarah D'Angelo, partnerships officer at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. ACWW member Julia Kamau gave a presentation on Food Sovereignty and rural sustainability and climate smart agriculture.

The Gala Dinner took place at the Canadian Museum of History in the hall dedicated to native history with native art work all around us. Towering totem poles from the Haida people watched over us. The Mayor of Ottawa spoke as well as a native professor from the university. Everyone enjoyed the dinner and the drumming as we watched dancer perform the Scarf dance, Jingle dance, Grass dance and Hoop dance.

Submitted by Gisela Nolting



AGM 2026 & MWI Women's Day – Debra Barrett

The AGM was attended by 41 members with Springfield volunteers coordinating the morning refreshments and registration. During the meeting there was a video presentation by Jennifer Borgfjord on Breast Health. The purpose was to introduce the program to women and women's groups across Manitoba. Fisher Branch WI members in attendance spoke briefly about their Bosom Buddy program that has been part of their annual programming for a couple decades.

Members in attendance appeared to enjoy having a raffle with desserts as the main prizes. The ticket sales were robust and helped to cover the AGM expenses.

The hybrid meeting format had issues due to the varying hardware equipment used in differing systems on the premises. The suggestion for future hybrid meetings such as AGM 2027 is to have a practice run through the day before the AGM and to have a tech person available for the start of the meeting to ensure there are no technical glitches.

Due to this year's technical issues the FWIC President Lynn MacLean was unable to bring greetings and participate in the AGM and Women's Day.

The Open Mic/Questions portion of the meeting was well received by the membership. Questions were posed to the membership who then responded with their ideas on coloured post-it notes attached to the corresponding sheet of paper for each question.

One unsubmitted idea found at the end of the day was, "the membership need to colour and up keep their hair styles so that the WI does not look like just a gathering of old women."

The Board received a nomination for the vacant Eastern Rep position. Maren Mueller was elected to the position for the 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 years. Another member has expressed interest in the vacant President-elect position and will provide MWI with her decision shortly.

The membership then adjourned for a tasty lunch which was enjoyed by all and entertainment provided by the Dugald School Musical Ensemble, grades 6 to 8. The students' musical talent was outstanding.

Following lunch the MWI Women's Day portion of the day began.

The first speaker of the afternoon was Dale Friesen who presented on the Canadian Food Grains Bank and SAFARI (Springfield Area Farmers Aiding Relief Internationally). Friesen explained his mission to Kenya with the Food Grain Bank, the issues related to poverty in Kenya, and the mission's strategies to enhance financial security among residents.

The 5 strategies were: 1- Moving cattle to areas where there was adequate moisture to prevent animal starvation and over use of drier land areas,

2- Initiation of poultry farming, residents were provided with 3 chickens and training on poultry farming. The focus was to create diversity in farming, food sustainability, farming using minimal land acreage.

3- Village saving and loans program, residents could deposit into the "saving box" to create savings. Residents could then obtain loans and share interest after a year's participation in the program.

4- Beekeeping program, to provide honey for personal use, for sale to the general public, and for medicinal purposes. Benefit is honey does not spoil or require cold storage and is therefore a viable source of family and financial gain.

5- Kitchen garden initiatives, introduced residents to gardening vegetables in bags to reduce the land required for farming and therefore reduce the moisture requirement to produce fresh produce.

The results from the 5 strategies were:

- 1- new businesses were formed
- 2- women were empowered; women began to be allowed to speak and discuss plans on traditionally male dominated issues
- 3- less gender violence
- 4- more family consulting
- 5- access to credit
- 6- better nutrition
- 7- more education which created fluency in English and brought new ideas to the community.

The second speaker Michele Gurman spoke on the process her family uses to raise donkeys and horses for distribution across mostly western Canada.

Michele explained the rationale behind using donkeys for herd protection from coyotes, wolves and other predators.

The other main use for donkeys and mules is as pack animals for rough terrain and high elevation transport of goods due to their sure footedness.

Michele provided numerous pictures of their horse and donkey breeding program and the continued viability of the program.

The Associated Country Women of the World have designated 2026 as the year of the Woman Farmer and MWI is proud to have our own Michele Gurman as a true example of a flourishing Manitoba woman farmer.

The Domain WI ended our day with a skit on 'Dudley Do-Right' which had the women heading home in high spirits from the many big belly laughs they enjoyed while providing many sound effects for the skit. Well done Domain and THANK YOU!



L - one of Michele's critters, Right and below the cast of Dudley-Do-Right





The United Nations declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF 2026). The Year spotlights the essential roles women play across agrifood systems, from production to trade, while often going unrecognized. Women farmers are central to food security, nutrition and economic resilience. IYWF 2026 raises awareness and promote actions to close the gender gaps and improve women's livelihoods worldwide.

At the end of COVID MWI asked for submissions from members and non-members to record how as individuals, families, groups we coped with the rules and regulations that surrounded us during the COVID timeframe. We published a virtual copy of the stories submitted to us. It was an excellent read - heartfelt stories from individuals in our communities. If you would like to see a copy of the COVID booklet please let Mallory at the office know.

At a recent board meeting the suggestion came up that we record how, as a rural women's organization in Manitoba, we supported women farmers in our community. So we are asking for short stories about you, or your friend, or family member. Look around your community to see who you think might to write a short story, who you might interview and record their story, or tell your own story. The stories don't need to be long - 2 type written pages would be great . If you write poetry, draw or express your ideas in other ways we will try and publish your story.

Our deadline is short as we are part way through the year. We would like to suggest that we gather the stories by October 1 to be published by early November. We hope you will consider making a submission for this special project.



Don't miss your opportunity to be part of MWI History - tell us about your role in being involved in agriculture in our province.

Friday, 10 April 2026 10:00

Election for US seats on Peace Garden Board, two new Canadian board members

There will be some new faces on the International Peace Garden Board of Directors, including some we will not know until later in the month.

The Peace Garden is in the middle of voting for board members. As CEO Tim Chapman explained, they have eight seats up for election this year. Terms are three years in length and staggered, with five from Canada, three from the US due in 2026.

“In the last few years, the board expanded its membership from 16 to 18 members,” Chapman explained. “It is just in the bylaws that they can go up to 20 members. It was a board decision, and there was a lot of interest.” This year, there are five possibilities for the three US seats, with Chapman commenting there is not always a contested election. Carmen Simone, Nancy Olson, Marlys Carlson, Murray Sagsveen and Clay Jenkinson, all with varied board experience, are running for the seats south of the 49th

In Canada, there are only four candidates for the five seats. This means that the declared candidates will be filling spots on the board. Sotirios Kotoulas, an honorary consul for Greece with the province of Manitoba, and former protocol chief for Manitoba Dwight MacAuley will be returning for another term. MacAuley is well known in the area as he is originally from Killarney and spent many years working with CJRB Radio in Boissevain.

Two locals will be joining them. Connie Blixhavn of Killarney is a former Killarney-Turtle Mountain councillor and deputy mayor. She said in her questionnaire the Peace Garden has been a part of her life since she moved to the area 50 years ago, and has been interested in serving on the board since they hosted the Communities in Bloom conference.

Don Engbrecht of Boissevain will also be coming on board. A native of the community, he said he had been visiting the Peace Garden since the 1950’s with family, and has donated metal art to the attraction. He was one of the board members who started Cherry Creek Place, and spent many years as the executive director of the organization now known as Prairie Partners, which aids in the lives of individuals with additional support needs. This experience, Chapman said, fits in well with the Peace Garden.

“It’s exciting to have someone with his background, running a non-profit. That background will help all of us.” This leaves one seat open. Chapman said the board could appoint someone after the election is completed. If it does not happen at the AGM on April 25, he expects it to occur by the summer. He added there has been some interest shown.

Peace Garden members can vote in the board elections, including for those on the other side of the border. Even when there are only enough people to fill the seats, they like to publicize the elections, and post bios and answers to questionnaires, Chapman said.

“Even when they are not contested, it is good for people to know who is running and what they are about,” he stated. “People can see who is there, what skills they have, and then see if they are interested. Or someone else might see it and think of someone who is a good asset. They can step up and show interest.”

The vote is open until April 18. Paper ballots are available on request, but there is more of a focus on the online voting, as it is more cost effective. Chapman said they do not have a huge percentage of members vote, but it seems higher this year, possibly because of the online balloting.

He said he looks forward to working with the new board, including new members.

“It is not so much about new blood, just folks engaged with new ideas, unique careers and backgrounds.”

To find about the candidates visit: peacegarden.com.

by PAUL RAYNER, Recorder staff





Back row L-R Liz Chongva, Maren Mueller, Cheryl Janzen, Gisela Nolting
Front row L-R Ann Mandziuk, Debra Barrett, Magdie de Kock Past World President,
ACWW, Marie Kenny President ACWW, Prince Edward Island, Anne Innes Area
Canada President, Ontario.



2026-2027 MWI Board
L-R Ann Mandziuk, Marge Knutson, Michele Gurman, Giesle Nolting,
Liz Chongva, Thelma Blahey, Debra Barrett