



Senior Members' Conference

Alberta 4-H Centre, Westeros – Alberta 4-H's Senior Members' Conference, a conference designed by members for members, marked the weekend of January 31 to February 1, 2009. Despite the occasionally slick roads and the hectic time of year, 95 delegates traversed their way to the Alberta 4-H Centre for a weekend of learning, reconnecting and growing.

"Senior Members' Conference is an excellent time for networking, skill development and increasing our member's awareness about issues that they are going to be facing in the near future," explains Cameron Horner, Communications and Marketing Specialist with Alberta 4-H and SMC Coordinator. *"Ambassadors really make sure to touch on a wide range of topics and themes, as to ensure that senior members leave with plenty of food for thought, as well as a re-stocked collection of 4-H memories."*

Senior Members' Conference (SMC) is a hailed weekend in the day timers of senior members not only because it offers a venue for 4-H friends from across the province to meet up and swap stories that were too long to be a Facebook message, but also because of the conference's exceptional programming. Starting in May of the previous year, Ambassadors, who are in charge of planning, unrolling and facilitating the conference, are already assigning tasks, brainstorming topics and discussing activities and keynote speakers.

What came together for this year's conference proved to be exceptional with Saturday morning starting off with a session on farm safety, which moved into a presentation on the Agricultural Finances Services Corporation (AFSC) to create awareness about the organization, which transitioned into a session on resume writing and job interview etiquette. Understandably, the delegates were more than ready for a lunch break at that point!

The afternoon kicked off with the adventures of tobogganing, with delegates deciding against riding down the hill as individuals and instead, opting for an entourage approach that saw 50-plus 4-H members aligning and cruising down the hill together. The Rotate-a-Session presentations offered up information on finances and budgeting, nutrition and healthy eating and the Green Certificate program.

"I arrived just as they were making the world's longest crazy-carpet toboggan, so I knew it was going to be a fun group," commented Nicole Hornett, Green Certificate Program Coordinator. *"The delegates were energetic and engaged, which made our discussions and brainstorming sessions creative and interactive. It was one of*



those really great days, where the members left the session feeling like they had accomplished something, and I left feeling like I had learnt a lot as well.”



The Rotate-a-Sessions also saw SMC delegates participating in a community enhancement project in support of Edmonton’s Youth Emergency Shelter Society (YESS). At the completion of the project, SMC participants had sewn 16 pillows and designed 10 bulletin boards, which were donated to the shelter the following day.

Saturday night’s Keynote Speaker, Dan Ohler, talked to delegates about why common sense is so uncommon and versed them in areas of “trust” accounts, communication, appreciation and recognition.

“I thoroughly enjoyed meeting, and working with this fine group of youth,” reflected Dan Ohler. *“As is typical with 4-H groups, the delegates were respectful, honest, eager, energetic and very open to participate in learning activities. If I were in the market for future employees, I’d be scouting this group - they are the “cream of the crop”.”*



Directly following the Dan’s talk, delegates dispersed to their rooms to change out of their banquet clothes and into their “simple life” threads, which created a sea of denim overalls, rubber boots and plaid shirts.

Sunday morning had the delegates being informed on the number scholarships that are available to them, and offered up another opportunity for outdoor activities. Before long, busses were pulling up, bags were being packed up and dreaded goodbyes were being exchanged.

“It was amazing how quickly the weekend flew by, especially after reflecting on how much work and thought was put into the conference’s content and details,” marveled Rita Leask, Ambassador for the Calgary region and part of the SMC organizing committee. *“Everything went off without a hitch, and the delegates left this conference happy, re-energized and better equipped for their future, which deems Senior Members’ Conference a success.”*

Senior Members’ Conference was title sponsored by EnCana, co-sponsored by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, ATB Financial, Livestock Identification Services (LIS) and Olds College and was supported by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Landman and Federated Co-operatives Limited.

