



Three Huron County teens volunteered for reenactments in *We Lend a Hand*, which tells the true story of Ontario's Farmerettes during and after the Second World War. From left are Sam Chuter, Nicole Whyte and Kirsten McIntosh. The documentary will be shown in Exeter on Wednesday, Feb. 11.

## Award-winning documentary on Ontario Farmerettes to screen in Exeter

EXETER A largely forgotten chapter of Canadian history will be brought to light in Exeter with the upcoming screening of the documentary film, *We Lend a Hand: The Forgotten Story of Ontario Farmerettes*.

The screening of the film in Exeter, which will take place at the South Huron Recreation Centre on Feb. 11, is only fitting since Exeter writer and researcher Bonnie Sitter worked as historical producer for the film and co-authored a 2019 book on the subject, *Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz: Memories of Ontario Farmerettes*.

Created by director-producer Colin Field and Sitter, the docu-

mentary tells the story of 40,000 teenage girls who volunteered on Canadian farms during and after the Second World War and helped sustain the nation's food supply when young men left to fight overseas.

Sitter was searching through old family photographs when she found a captivating image of a group of young women taken on her late husband's family farm near Thedford with a caption that read, "Farmerettes 1946."

After researching the Farmerette story, Sitter published an article asking for women who served as Farmerettes to contact her. Shir-

leyan English, a retired London Free Press journalist, read the article and wrote a letter to the editor explaining her own experience as a Farmerette. She and Sitter went on to co-author *Onion Skins and Peach Fuzz: Memories of Ontario Farmerettes*.

"We wanted to capture the story of how the Farmerettes helped win the Second World War by volunteering to aid farmers with food production," Sitter said in a press release. "Most of these girls had never seen a farm. They came from all over Ontario as volunteers. They weren't conscripted. They chose to roll up their sleeves and do their

part for Canada, and their efforts have largely been forgotten."

Field first met Sitter in 2019, and was inspired by her research and desire to bring this forgotten Canadian story to life. He proposed a documentary film, and Sitter agreed to fundraise to bring the project alive.

Field interviewed 20 Farmerettes -- now in their 90s -- for the project and, after two years of work, and with the help of sponsors and donors, the film project was finished.

"It has been a privilege to travel throughout the province and hear the stories of these surviving Farmerettes," Field said. "If it wasn't for these girls, the soldiers wouldn't have had food to eat and the economy would have ground to a halt."

Sitter was recently honoured by South Huron council for her work on the project. At a Dec. 1

council meeting, she was declared a "Hometown Hero" and was given a symbolic key to the municipality.

The film will be shown at the South Huron Recreation Centre at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Feb. 11. Doors will open 30 minutes before each show, and there will be a question and answer period with the filmmakers after the screenings.

Tickets are available through Eventbrite. For the 1:30 p.m. show, visit [bit.ly/45zJjmH](https://bit.ly/45zJjmH), and for the 7 p.m. show, visit [bit.ly/4t0nDk](https://bit.ly/4t0nDk).

For more information about the film, visit [welendahand.ca](https://welendahand.ca).

The Exeter screenings are sponsored by West Coast Active Living, which is also hosting a wing night at the rec centre on Feb. 11 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. for \$20 (advance tickets only). Contact 519-440-8838 or [wcal@hay.net](mailto:wcal@hay.net) for more information.

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