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Women in Food and Agriculture event to celebrate local farmers, raise funds

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Local farmers will take centre stage next week as community members gather at GoodLot Farm in Caledon for an evening celebrating the women who help put food on local tables.

Women in Food and Agriculture, offered by the Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance, takes place Tuesday, Aug. 25, from 5 to 8:30 p.m.

Organizer Marci Lipman said that the event coincides with the International Year of the Woman Farmer and aims to recognize the often-overlooked contributions of women to agriculture, food production and rural communities.

?Women are celebrated in all fields? but we seldom hear of women in agriculture,? she said. ?Since this is my idea, I thought that it was important for us to recognize women farmers, to recognize the women who put food on our plates in our region.?

The evening will feature a panel of five women farmers from across the Headwaters region: Jeannette French of Lennox Farm in Melancthon; Amy Ouchterlony of Fiddle Foot Farm in Mulmur; Karen Hutchinson of Albion Hills Community Farm in Caledon; Val Steinman of Heartwood Farm in Erin; and Gail Winters of GoodLot Farm and GoodLot Farmstead Brewing Co. in Caledon.

Tralee Pearce, publisher of In The Hills magazine, will moderate the discussion, followed by an audience question-and-answer session.

Together, Lipman said that the panellists represent decades of farming experience and a broad range of agricultural operations. Their work includes vegetable production, community gardening, agricultural education, regenerative farming and more.

The goal is not only to celebrate women farmers, but to start a broader conversation about their role in an industry where the traditional image of a farmer is still often male. Women on farms can be food producers, educators, community builders, mothers and stewards of the land ? often holding several of those roles at once.

?We have five women farmers on a panel who will be discussing the questions that people have about why women farm and what it entails,? Lipman said. ?Today, there are a lot of women who are the primary farmers on the farm. They are growing the food, taking it to market, educating people about how they grow the food, and they are big community builders.?

The event will also highlight the importance of knowing where food comes from and supporting local producers. Organizers point to farmers' markets and direct farm purchases as ways residents can connect with the people growing their food, while many local farmers are also working to care for and regenerate the soil for future generations.

?These farmers are caring for our soil,? Lipman said. ?They are stewards of the land, and? many of them are not using pesticides. They're just doing regenerative agriculture, sustaining the land and making it healthy for the next generation.?

Women in Food and Agriculture will also function as a fundraiser for the Headwaters Food & Farming Alliance's Farm to School program. The program brings farmers into schools to teach children where their food comes from and connect them with farming through hands-on learning.

Importantly, the event is open to everyone ? not only women. Organizers say anyone interested in local food, farming and the people behind it is welcome to attend.

Tickets include light bites prepared by Crowded Table and Carney Country Catering, along with one complimentary drink.

For more information, go to: headwatersfoodandfarming.square.site/events