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The Spotlight Shines on Women Drivers at Western Fair Raceway

Eleven women harness race drivers are slated to drive in two races tomorrow night at Western Fair Raceway. The women are participants in the Mildred Willams International Driving Series and include:

Ann Karin Larsen - Norwood, Ontario (Norwegian)
Kris Hie, Fraserville, Ontario
Samara Johnson, Bailieboro, Ontario
Angie Matthews, Grand Valley, Ontario
Elisabeth Jansen, Quebec
Tracy Procop, Ailsa Craig, Ontario
Anita Valstad, Carlisle, Ontario (Norwegian)
Carole Dumont, Trois Rivieres, Quebec
Gro Formia, Delrae Beach, Florida (Norwegian)
Andrea Leon, Maidstone, Ontario
Ann Curran, Smiths Falls, Ontario

The series is named for Mildred Williams, one of the sport's first lady drivers in Canada. Until her death this past summer, she was tireless in her efforts to encourage more women to get into the sulky. One of those who took up the reins is Ann Curran, creator of the Mildred Williams series.

"The original mandate of the Series was to honour Mildred's memory as a pioneer female trainer and driver, and to raise awareness of the possibilities and contributions of women in harness racing," Curran explains.

The Series has evolved in the three years of its existence and is now partnered with fundraisers for breast cancer causes at tracks on both sides of the border, including the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (www.cbcbf.org) and the Susan G. Komen Foundation (www.komen.org) in the United States.

Local breast cancer survivor, Doreen Dustin of Strathroy, coined the phrase Harness the Hope which has been adopted as the theme of the fundraising portion of the program. "I never dreamed of this becoming adopted so widely across North America", says Dustin, wife of horseman Greg Dustin. "It's just been a very gratifying and humbling thing."

To date, more than \$14,000 has been raised at Western Fair Raceway through the Harness the Hope event, in support of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Earlier this year, the Foundation honoured Doreen Dustin, Kristy Dustin, Brandi Dustin and Ann Curran with exemplary volunteer awards for their creation of and ongoing dedication to the Harness the Hope and Mildred Williams International Driving Series events.

Tomorrow night's fundraising activities at Western Fair Raceway also include a 50/50 draw, penny table and silent auction. Tickets are still available for Top of the Fair by calling 519-438-7203, ext. 252.

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