

?Sign Exact English? is invaluable tool to be offered locally



From left, NHCS co-op students Samantha Rallison and Kirsten Leslie, and registered early childhood educator Amanda Lyman mimic services program facilitator Melissa St. Pierre as she teaches Sign Exact English at Hastings Highlands Public Library. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

North Hastings Children's Services is offering residents the chance to learn sign language.

Services program facilitator Melissa St. Pierre is hoping to drum up interest for free all-ages Sign Exact English sessions.

?It's a fun learning opportunity [and] it sticks with you,? she said noting she learned some of the language as early as Grade 1 and still remembers it.

St. Pierre previously worked with Deaf Blind Ontario and learned Sign Exact English. When she moved to the area she began teaching it here.

Unfortunately, her twice-weekly classes didn't have much of a turnout. People weren't coming regularly.

?It's as often as people want. I'd like to do it once a week,? said St. Pierre explaining she's giving the classes another shot.

St. Pierre visited Hastings Highlands Public Library during Ontario Public Library Week. She wants to share the language, which is different from American Sign Language as it has a sign for each word in English.

?[Sign Exact English] is more based on grammar, so when you're translating, pieces aren't missing,? she said.

She added, ?I think it's good for babies, learning sign language before speaking, to communicate what they want and need,? but noted she's also interested in doing adult classes.

Those interested in classes with St. Pierre can reach her at North Hastings Children's Services or email her at mstpierre@nhcs.ca.