

Midwives take on prenatal clinics

By Sarah Sobanski

The face of prenatal education is shifting in North Hastings.

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health hasn't scheduled any area in-person prenatal education sessions for 2018. There are 18 groups of sessions scheduled for Belleville over the course of the year, 10 scheduled in Quinte West and four scheduled for Prince Edward County, but none for North Hastings.

Program manager for public health Shelly Brown said public health's e-Learning program, The Gift of Motherhood, covers the same content as public health does in the in-person sessions. She suggested they're further complemented by public health's Food for You: Food for Two, a Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, which it hosts at Métis Nation of Ontario in Bancroft.

Brown said the in-person program sends speakers to CPNP in North Hastings, but if you think of the traditional, prenatal education classes, no, [public health hasn't] done that in a number of years.

What we do offer is prenatal education, not a class, but it's a presentation done at the Food for You: Food for Two program. We'll go up a couple time a year and provide prenatal education to participants of the FFYFF2. We opened it up for the public as well, she said.

Public health's In-Person Prenatal Education Session 2018 schedule was released in October. Sessions typically run two or three nights over three weeks in four areas across Hastings County. Sessions cover preparation for parenting, breastfeeding and birth basics confidence and comfort.

The last time public health hosted in-person sessions in the area was at North Hastings Children's Services Bancroft's Ontario Early Years Centre at the end of the 2016-'17 winter season.

Children's Services executive director Jessica Anderson said the sessions were well attended especially by young mothers and their families.

According to a teenage pregnancy report by public health, 30.5 young women ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 were pregnant in 2014 in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties. This is compared to 17.6 pregnancies per thousand in Ontario.

In October, Midwifery Services of Haliburton-Bancroft hosted prenatal education clinics over three nights at NHCS. While the midwives visit both North Hastings Family Health Team and Bancroft Family Health Team weekly, the October clinics were the first time the midwives had done something of that nature at NHCS.

Brown recognized that her presentations through CPNP are not the same as the types of sessions that the midwives of Haliburton are providing.

Registered midwife for the Haliburton-Bancroft midwives Stephanie Simon said public health has provided resources for her organization to offer clinics in North Hastings.

Anderson said NHCS has received requests for prenatal services in North Hastings. She said it's important that in-person classes continue in the area and is pleased that Haliburton-Bancroft midwives have filled this gap.

Four couples attended the clinics lead by Simon at NHCS. Simon said the hands-on workshops are a great opportunity for expecting parents to ask questions.

I usually bring lots of show and tell items, she said, noting an empathy belly for expecting dads to try on and breast pumps. The majority of our classes are focused on labour delivery and then what to expect afterward. I think the what to expect afterward is actually where we get the most questions.

We talk about safety at home crib safety, car safety, a lot on supporting moms and dads, emotional support, what to expect with some changes in hormones and what to expect from normal newborns, she said.

As an Ontario Early Years Centre, NHCS continues to work with parents and community partners to fill gaps and needs for all parents in the community. Parents and parents-to-be can drop in or call the centre from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays for resources or referrals.