

Parents? Night Out(ish) event

By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Prenatal: Community Resource Centre of Renfrew County, of which South Algonquin Township is a part, in partnership with the EarlyON Toy Bus is offering an exciting and informative event for parents called Parents' Night Out(ish) on May 29 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. by Zoom. It will cover a wide variety of topics of interest to parents and is open to everyone. While the event is free, space is limited so San Eleser, the coordinator of Prenatal: CRC advises interested parties to sign up for it as soon as possible.

The CRC offers innovative holistic programs to support people of all ages and families to learn new skills, build on their strengths, access supports and services in South Algonquin Township and all through Renfrew County and helps its communities grow in a positive direction. It was founded in 1987 by the non-profit Women Initiating Responsible Change and was funded by a small community and neighbourhood support services program grant from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It was incorporated as a non-profit in 1991 and continues to provide a wide array of projects and services to local families and to their communities in general.

The Prenatal: CRC program provides weekly opportunities for pregnant women to meet, make and share food, learn from each other and take part in educational events. It is offered in Barry's Bay, Chalk River, Killaloe, Pembroke and Petawawa.

Eleser says the Parents' Night Out(ish) event started out just as a good idea last winter, just from speaking with two other facilitators on how to engage parents.

?It's hard to get people online and it's understandable why it's hard to get people online. And we're still trying to reach our participants. Our hope was that by holding Parents' Night Out(ish) on a Saturday evening, the event would be accessible to more people, ideally caregivers in the family's circle, in addition to the parents, could take part to help support the new family,? she says.

Eleser says they came up with the idea of offering a variety of sessions so people can choose what they want to be in. The sessions are broken up into two sections and parents can choose which one they want to take.

Topics include taxes and tax credits, RESPs, tummy time, pelvic floor health, reflexology for children, what to expect during the postpartum period, infant sleep, hormones during the postpartum period, the why and how of self care and an introduction to infant massage. Experts participating include CRA volunteer and outreach officer Pia Hoxell, happiness coach Kim Shalla, naturopathic doctor Cheryl Allen, RECE and infant massage instructor Bobbie Kuehl, reflexology expert Anna Siwakoti and registered physiotherapist Jaime Smith.

?They don't have to stay for the full two hours; they can just come for an hour if they want to. So, it was just good brainstorming,? she says.

As for which topics to choose for the event, Eleser says that some of them came from the weekly Zoom sessions they offer in programs with their registered participants, like the ever-popular reflexology. She said they also reached out to other professionals that weren't able to attend and just kept thinking of more people and topics that they thought potential participants would enjoy and learn from.

?Pelvic floor health for women has really become a hot topic the last few years and was so underrealized, the importance of it. So just trying to think of what people would be interested in and what they may not have access to,? she says.

With regard to some of the prizes being offered to participants who attend the event, Eleser says they've gotten donations from

Grandma's Pantry in Killaloe, No Frills in Pembroke, a local Arbonne representative, the Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre and prenatal: CRC.

While the response to the event has not been as big as Eleser had hoped thus far, it is coming along, with 16 spots filled and the potential for another 64 maximum. This is due to the limitations of holding a viable Zoom call with over a certain number of participants.

?One thing we've noticed about our participants is they're pregnant, giving birth and/or have young people at home and planning ahead is not always possible. So, I assume as it gets closer it will continue to pick up,? she says.

Eleser wanted to point out that this event is open to everyone, because people generally have to register to take part in any of their programs.

?So, I think that may be part of the lack of registration because it's an open event but it looks like its connected to a closed program. But we do have grandparents. We have one grandparent that's registered right now. She helps out with the mother who is having children. So, it really is anybody who is interested,? she says.

?We've been very appreciative of the support we've received from the presenters,? she says. ?And of course, the gift givers and the EarlyON Toy Bus that is a partner and the support from our community!?