

Local woman returns to Bancroft as nurse practitioner



By Tony Pearson

She was Mandie Loney as she grew up in Bancroft. But after graduating from North Hastings High School, she decided to head north – namely to Thunder Bay, where she completed a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing at Lakehead University. She stayed in Thunder Bay to practise for nearly three years, then traveled to Ottawa, where she spent over eight years at Queensway-Carleton Hospital, most recently working the Emergency Department. Now she's back home.

Along the way, she acquired a family of her own; she's now Mandie Ackermann, with two small children. However, of greater interest to area residents, she acquired a Master's degree and qualified as a nurse-practitioner. The nurse-practitioner can handle almost everything a family-practice doctor can. She can diagnose patients and prescribe treatments, and even do certain surgical procedures.

After spending the last six years in emergency medicine, Ackermann was well aware that many clients were coming to the ER because they had no primary care providers. She therefore decided to start tackling health conditions at their source in the community. And since both her family and her husband's family are still in Bancroft, she joined the North Hastings Family Health Team.

Familiar with the town, and liking the rural life style, Ackermann is now getting to know her patients – not just their presenting health condition, but in the total context of their lives. And as in the ER, she enjoys working as part of an integrated medical team, alongside current team members Dr. Peter McEnery, nurse-practitioner Christine McDowell, and the other health professionals at North Hastings.

“There are differences between small-town and big-city practice,” she notes.

“Everything and everyone isn't necessarily a short ride away. But using the Tele-Health Ontario facility at North Hastings FHT gives us access to specialists who are otherwise a long distance away. And North Hastings' visiting specialist program means we have great doctors visiting on a regular basis. For example, today we have a cardiologist on site.”

Ackermann also points to an initiative to reduce wait times – the “Open Access clinic”, run three days a week, allows North Hastings clients to come in on short notice. Ackermann believes that this relieves the load on the hospital's ER.

She also likes the preventive programs which the Health Team operates. This includes ensuring all patients are up-to-date for major cancer screening. It also includes immunization programs – not just for children, but for adults as well, notably seniors. Ackermann reminds clients that certain shots are recommended for adults – not only the annual flu shot, but a tetanus shot every ten years, especially for those working around machinery or farmland. She also notes that people over 60 should consider shingles immunization, while anyone over 65 could consider taking a pneumonia vaccine.

“It's a great lifestyle here,” says Ackermann, “and a great chance to help the community.”