

Neighbouring county shares education series

By Jake Storey

Haliburton Highlands Community Education Series brought "Navigating the Health Care System: Working Better Together" at the Cardiff Community Centre, with the aim of educating citizens on the resources available to them.

The Haliburton County Service Providers Network has been hosting sessions through the education series such as these six times a year for the past two and a half years, though this is the first such event in Cardiff.

There were five presenters at the event, representing different services and organizations. Sheri McKeen, the community education and outreach representative at Central East Community Care Access Centre, David Jarvis, the manager of Haliburton Highlands Mental Health Services, Darlene Armstrong, the program lead of the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team, Beth Archibald, a registered nurse and patient navigator for the Palliative Care Community Team and Jane Rosenberg, the administrator and director of care for Extendicare Haliburton.

Part of the reason for this session was to address how the Patients First Act is going to affect the area. The legislation was introduced in 2016 and has necessitated changes across the province. They will be coming into effect in July.

"This is the beginning of a multi-phase approach to how health care will change. If they do what they've set out to do, they will be integrating our services much more closely than they have in the past," said McKeen.

Presentations covered a variety of topics. McKeen primarily covered what the role of the Central East CCAC was and how it would be affected by the Patients First Act. It's one of 14 CCACs in Ontario. Its role is to help people find their way through the confusing and complicated aspects of the health-care system and access services they may not have been previously aware of.

Jarvis spoke about the mental health counselling and assistance offered by HHMS and how poor mental health can affect overall health.

"Our vision is that people are healthier when they have hope," said Jarvis.

Archibald covered the services offered by Haliburton Community Support Services. Many of their programs are intended to ease the life of seniors in rural communities. There are housekeeping, meal delivery, adult day programs, assisted living, transportation services and social recreation programs, as well as a foot care specialist and 22 support workers. CSS has three hubs, one in Minden, another in Haliburton and a third in Wilberforce.

Armstrong explained the role of the Family Health Team. Ontario introduced the concept in 2005 as a group that would work to optimize the health-care system everyone. Armstrong said that the team puts a focus on offering programs and services that aren't already available within the community. Such programs include primary care, chronic disease assistance, elder care, social workers and dietitians.

Rosenberg spoke on the changes that will be coming to nursing homes in the area. It is required that all the homes in the province have to be upgraded to fit new standards and become what's called an A facility by 2025, but Rosenberg doubts it'll happen that quickly.

During the nearly three hour session, the presenters took questions from the small audience to learn how they can better serve their area.

McKeen continued, "As a health-care system, we're constantly changing to become better and meet different needs. The province has decided that we (CCAC) are going to merge with the Local Health Integration Network, but the key thing to know is that our services are still going to exist. Really, from one day to the next, as a patient, you should not notice any change. We've done this before and I'm very hopeful."

The hope is that word of these sessions and services carries and more people can make use of them.

They're scheduled to hold another session titled, "Thoughtful Planning for Health Care Decisions," sometime in June. For more information, call 705-457-2941.