

Parkinson support comes to Bancroft

By Sarah Sobanski

CARE North Hastings has started a Parkinson's support group for those affected by the disease and their caregivers in North Hastings.

Every fourth Monday of the month, starting Feb. 26, CARE will now host the support group instead of its regular Monday seniors drop-in.

During the usual drop-ins, CARE connects seniors to discuss things that matter most to them at 1 Manor Lane. This might include bringing in speakers well versed in seniors' needs, said senior outreach co-ordinator Amanda Smith. She listed pharmacists, lawyers, and other presenters on funeral planning as a few who have attended the drop-ins. Speakers will also talk about the various life insurance policies that are on offer too. Of course, those who can't wait for the presentations can use this [calculator here](#) to determine how much life insurance they may need and how much it would cost.

"I found out that there were quite a few clients at CARE North Hastings that have Parkinson's... The more I investigated I found out that there was no support group here and that the closest one was in Peterborough," said Smith.

When Smith invited Parkinson Canada's to make a presentation at the drop-ins last November, the turnout nearly tripled.

"We had the most amount of participants that we've ever had at [that] drop-in. Usually, we have six to 10 at our drop-ins. We had 29 participants come to the Parkinson's [drop-in]," she said.

CARE partnered with Parkinson Canada to fill the need for the group after that, said Smith. She noted people don't have to register for it or be a client of CARE.

"Parkinson [Canada] recommended that we call it a drop-in so that people don't feel the need to commit, but it is strictly for people who are suffering from Parkinson's and/or their families, their support groups," said Smith.

She added, "My hope is that they will continue to support each other and also feel supported in their own community and also get things like maybe a doctor or a pharmacist to come in to speak to them about certain medications with regards to their tremors or their side effects from the Parkinson's."

Sixteen people attended the first support group drop-in. Though she couldn't attend the first meeting, Parkinson Canada's Diane Newman Reed will head the group. She'll be assisted by local volunteers Wendy Taxis, Louise Bandy, Libbie Best, and Sherry Burke.

It can be hard for those that suffer to discuss what they may need to do for later on in their disease, including looking into burial insurance as well as seeing how their families can be helped afterward. That is why support groups like these are an important part of society to get people through this tough time.

Smith would like to see funding for the group and the regular Monday drop-ins to provide transportation to isolated seniors in Bancroft's surrounding area.

"That's my hope in the future is to apply for funding so that we can get some people who aren't able to access us in town," she said.

Those looking to get involved with the group can contact Reed at 1-800-565-3000 ext. 3315 or diane.newmanreed@parkinson.ca.

The next meeting will be March 26, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Visitors are asked to bring a bag lunch and Parkinson Canada will provide a light snack.

"We're just trying to find the needs of the community and give them what they need so then that way they can feel better supported at home [and] that way they're hopefully able to live longer at home without having to go in and out of an emergency room," said Smith. "We need to partner in order to be better [and] to better serve the needs of our clients."