

Leavitt, Abby

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BARRY
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Tucked away in the administration area at Belleville hospital is a small office, brightened by a southeast window and the sunny smile of Abby Leavitt, its lone inhabitant.

Leavitt's is not a household name, but she holds a job that has the potential to touch the estimated 150,000 residents in Hastings and Prince Edward counties.

The Oshawa native is one of the spark-plugs in the drive to recruit badly-needed doctors for the Quinte area.

"I work closely with (chief of staff) Dr. (Barry) Guppy," Leavitt said of the physician search program.

But she said all residents are important because they can pass along tips about doctors — those still in school or those graduating or looking to relocate from another city — that can lead to successful recruitment.

"We like to see recruitment as a community effort. It needs to be everyone's job."

Outside of the office in personal life, Leavitt has the answer to the old advertising slogan, "Where's the beef?"

She and her husband, Belleville native Jeffery Leavitt, have a 100-acre hobby farm just outside of the city and they have beef cattle. Add in cutting hay and renovations and the couple, who held their marriage ceremony on the property July 5, 2003, keep pretty busy, she said.

"We both work full-time. He is an esti-

mator at Deloro Stellite."

Leavitt was familiar with the area through trips to Sandbanks Provincial Park near West Lake, also frequented by her future husband. The two were introduced by a mutual friend.

Since they would be living in Belleville, the Wilfred Laurier University graduate (bachelor of administration) applied for positions in the Belleville area and was

hired to fill in for someone on maternity leave.

"That's how I got my foot in the door."

Leavitt, 25, said her age is an advantage, since many of the doctors she is attempting to recruit are also young and on the same wavelength.

But recruitment is not her only function. Retention of physicians already here is a priority, too, and she listens to

comments from doctors. And, the job doesn't end there, either.

"I also do the residency program," she said.

That's where graduating doctors come to spend hospital time immersed in whatever their branch of medicine, such as family physicians, she said. They spend anywhere from three weeks to two months at the hospital, and there is always the chance that budding doctors will like the area and want to set up a practice here. There are 17 doing residency at the hospital.

"We have quite a few of them coming right now."

Despite her schedule, Leavitt said she will get more involved in the community before too long.

"I've looked into volunteering," she said. "I am still just trying to settle in."

When she doesn't have a hammer in her hand or is busy helping birth a calf in her off-work time, Leavitt said she likes to be in or near water.

"I love the waterfront," she said. That includes rollerblading and walking with her spouse along the waterfront trail, and trips to Jeffery's relatives in the County.

"(We) spend a lot of time over in the County visiting with family as well as going to the Sandbanks."

She also enjoys gardening and then there is the quality time with Bailey and Jasper — a pair of black Labrador-collie crosses.

"They are sisters," Leavitt said.

She also reads and takes in the occasional movie.

In fact, she was at a double-bill recently, viewing the remake of The Longest Yard and the animated film, Madagascar.

Double-bill?

Yes. They still have them — at the Mustang Drive-in the County.

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