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Shaena Dearman eats and breathes safety.

The occupational health and safety consultant for Quinte Health Care is also the new chairperson of the Greater Belleville Safe Community (GBSC) that is dedicated "to making Belleville and area the safest place to live, work and play."

The 35-year-old Bridge Street resident takes her responsibility seriously.

"Safety has to be a person's way of life, not just programs that management implement. Everyone has to walk the talk," she said.

Dearman took over as GBSC chairman in July, succeeding Deanna Dulmage who served the past two years.

"I am very honoured to be running such a multi-faceted organization that dedicates their services to making our community that I live in safer."

She is proud of what her organization offers the community — Risk Watch and Elmer the Safety Elephant in schools, Senior's Falls fairs, Safety Days and safety groups for local businesses through the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

"Safety is in everyone's best interest," she said.

Dearman is a firm believer not only that every individual has to be responsible for their own safety, but also sometimes they need outside help to prevent injuries either at home or in the workplace.

Take back injuries, for example.

Dearman said 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer debilitating back pain at least once in their lifetime from falls, sports injuries, accidents or performing regular workplace functions. It's also the most common injury sustained by adults either while on the job or at home.

With a background in ergonomics, she demonstrates proper lifting techniques and provides back care tips to hospital staff and others.

Dearman initially began studying the human body after graduating from Prince Edward Collegiate Institute in Picton in 1988. She studied kinesiology at the University of Waterloo and had every intention of becoming a sports trainer. But a co-op placement with a physiotherapy clinic convinced her to adjust her studies to injury rehabilitation and ergonomics.

"I found working with injured people rewarding and challenging," she said.

When Dearman graduated in 1992, she

returned to Belleville and opened her own rehab and ergonomics consulting company — which she still continues to operate.

A year later, she married Shawn and together they have three children.

"I go to companies and perform physical demands analysis on each job in order to assist injured workers return to work," she said.

Dearman has helped several companies here and across Ontario to identify safety risks and implement appropriate changes.

"Using my ergonomics training, I can assist employees at workstations to prevent injuries," she said. "For example, by simply adjusting the height of a monitor,