

Clinic adopts new concept

By KAREN WARD
Herald Staff Writer

A new concept of reaching persons with mental health problems in their own setting has been adapted by the North Halton Mental Health Clinic in Milton.

A staff of five professionals will work in Georgetown, Acton, and Milton, an area previously with no psychiatric input. Persons with mental health problems had to travel either to Guelph, Brampton, Burlington or Hamilton.

One of the psychiatric nurses, Zina Nichols, said dealing with persons in their own community is far more beneficial than removing them to an artificial setting, talking to them, and later returning the person back to his familiar environment. An environment unknown to the psychiatric nurse, doctor, or social worker.

Zina Nichols is excited to be part of the team and intends to move into Milton. She is ready to break away from the security offered at the hospital and wants to deal with persons on a ground both familiar and comfortable to them.

Co-ordinator of the clinic, Mae Vaivods, also a psychiatric nurse, said statistics show one in four persons requires psychiatric attention at some time in their life, which backs up the need for the mental health clinic.

The Ministry of Health has funded the pilot project for two years and hopefully she said will refund the program because of its value to the community.

Referrals will come from general practitioners, Children's Aid Society, public health nurses, schools, families, the list is endless. Ms. Vaivods said. The team also consists of Don Fisher, a social worker, and two part-time psychiatrists, Dr. Roy Butler and Dr. Philomena Newbery.

Dr. Butler said the main objective is to keep persons out of hospitals and in their homes. However if there is a need for hospitalization persons will be admitted to a hospital.

Dr. Butler has courtesy staff at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington, but intends to approach the local hospitals for admittance approvals.

Other members of the clinic will also be approaching hospital administrators.

The team is very excited about the project and thoroughly enjoyed talking to interested members of the public at an open house Wednesday at the regional health unit in Milton.

Ms. Vaivods said the team has been working quietly since April and has a small caseload of 30 persons. The cases are spread between Acton, Georgetown and Milton, and one person of the team will be in either Acton or Georgetown every day.

"There is a great deal of misunderstanding concerning psychiatry," she said, "but there is no shame involved when visiting a doctor for a fever, so why should there be any shame if the person visits a psychiatrist."

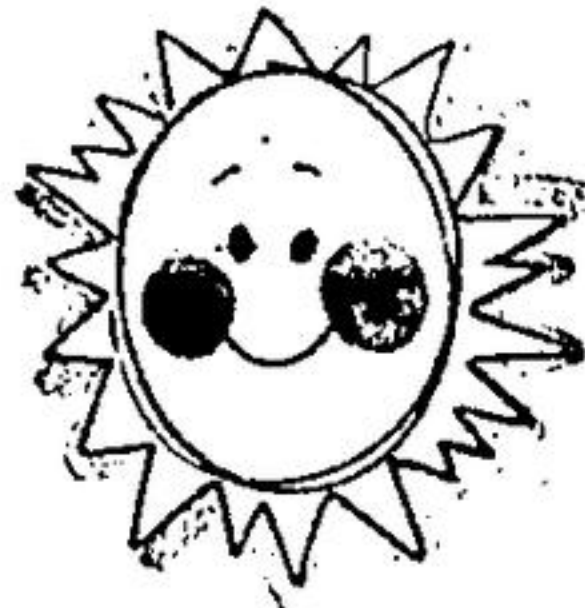
"If a person is not happy with his life and is suffering internally, he needs help," she said. "The same applies to a woman who feels she has failed in her role as a wife or mother."

If a person suffers a nervous breakdown and is angry with himself because other persons are coping in similar situations, they need to talk about it. And talking to a professional with psychiatric background can help. The staff of the clinic, she said, is open and adaptable, and wants to get involved.

Don Fisher, a social worker, said it will take some time before the three full-time members (himself, Ms. Vaivods, and Ms. Nichols) define the needs of the community. He expects to see many families because he believes families without support from relatives or close friends tend to break down within the family unit.

He feels he may want to hold group sessions in an attempt to reach a larger group of people and to bring a self-help group of people together.

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