

Halton wants to help pregnant teens

By ALLISON MacKENZIE
Herald Special

Pregnant teenage girls from Halton Hills are not using the Young Parent Support Services and administrators are trying to find out why not.

Susan Stuart, the co-ordinator of the Young Parents Support Services, says while the program provided pre-natal classes, support, information and encouragement to 56 pregnant girls between the ages of 15 and 22 last year from Halton Region, the majority were from Oakville and Burlington. Ms. Stuart says in each pre-natal class of 12 girls, there are only one or two from Georgetown, and there hasn't been one participant from Acton.

"We are very concerned because we know there are more girls in the north who could be using this program. We just don't know why they aren't. Maybe it's the geographical separation; perhaps they are going to Guelph or Brampton. I just haven't been able to figure out why they aren't calling."

Young Parent Support Services is co-operatively sponsored by the Children's Aid Society of Halton, Halton Regional Department of Health and Halton Adolescent Support Services. The program offers pregnant teens counselling, pre-natal classes, in addition to social, emotional, and physical support from the beginning of pregnancy until three months after birth.

One aspect of the program, "Call Joyce," provides counselling from social worker Joyce Page on an anonymous telephone line, or the teen may choose to discuss her problems in person with Ms. Page.

Young Parent Support Services specially trains volunteers to provide moral support for pregnant teens who need a friend. A

volunteer can also help the teen attend to practical needs like housing and social assistance. If requested a volunteer will act as coach through labor and delivery.

Ms. Page, who has been counselling pregnant teens since 1980, says she has been a labor and delivery coach for nine different girls.

Pre-natal classes taught by Sandra Murphy of the Halton Board of Health, encourage the teens to become aware of their options, life-style issues, exercise and nutrition, as well as the physical and emotional changes they are going through.

The public health nurse coaches the teens in techniques for getting through labor and delivery, what to expect with a newborn baby, breastfeeding and strategies for coping.

Ms. Stuart said the goal is to coordinate the services for teenage pregnant girls within the social services network. The administrators of Young Parent Support Services want other social service organizations to refer pregnant teenagers to their organization. Three months after the birth, the Young Parent Support Services refers the girls on to other agencies

within the community.

Dorothy (not her real name), a teenage mother who was a client of the Young Parent Support Services in 1988, says, "The program is excellent. I got great support there. They encouraged me to make decisions, to take care of myself and to prepare for the baby. They really helped me sort my feelings out."

Dorothy got pregnant at age 17, just after her boyfriend got out of jail. The boyfriend was not interested in the responsibility of a baby, so Dorothy returned to her parents' Oakville home.

The young mother says her life has changed completely since she got pregnant. "I don't have a social life anymore. Where I go, the baby goes. I don't see my old friends at all. I don't know why, but they just backed away."

She came to Young Parent Support Services for pre-natal classes when she was six months pregnant. Her boyfriend was gone, her parents were having trouble coping and she needed support. With the help of a counsellor she sorted out her problems.

Currently Dorothy is caring for her baby daughter, living with her parents and looking forward to the future. "I'd like to get into school and get an education because I know I can't bring up my baby on \$5 per hour."

Tuesday mornings Dorothy and the baby go to a program Young Parent Support Services referred them to, called "Teen Lunch" at the Oakville Parent Child Centre.



The Young Parents Support Services program is set up to help pregnant teens. Here, Sandra Murphy, Halton's public health nurse, Joyce Page, a social worker and Susan Stuart, the co-ordinator of the program, say only a few people from Halton Hills use the service. (Herald photo)

It provides support and encouragement to teenage mothers.

Dorothy recommends the program to other girls in the same situation. "I think if you are a pregnant teen the program is really valuable. They helped me get it together, they can help everybody else."

Services of the Young Parent Support Services are free. There is no charge for counselling or pre-natal classes. Transportation is available free of charge from anywhere in Halton Region including Georgetown and Acton.

For more information call 844-5502, or 878-2375.



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Holy Cross Church wants to build seniors apartments

By BEN DUMMETT
the Herald

A proposed seniors building at Maple Avenue and Main Street in Georgetown will help meet the current housing shortage faced by Georgetown seniors, says Father Dave Cote of Holy Cross Church.

The town's planning staff is currently reviewing a submission for 80 apartments made by Father Cote and the other board of directors of the Halton Non-Profit Housing Corporation. The other directors include Reverend Peter Barrow of Knox Presbyterian Church and retired business people.

Area seniors groups support the need for increased housing, results of a survey conducted by the corporation show, Father Cote said.

The corporation received responses from half of the 200 people contacted and all were supportive, the Father said.

The corporation has also been receiving requests on a weekly basis asking if there is a waiting list, he added.

The Maple Avenue and Main Street site was chosen because it would give seniors easy access to necessary amenities like doctors,

downtown shopping and the library, Father Cote said. Existing seniors residences in Georgetown are not within walking distance to these amenities and because the town has no public transportation system they have to rely on taxis or some other form of transportation, he said.

The apartments would be geared to a person's income, said Father Cote. Apartments would be set aside for low-income, middle-income and high-income people, he explained.

Father Cote also pointed to statements made by the Halton Housing Authority last May as proof of the need for more seniors housing. Halton Hills seniors can wait anywhere from six months to

two years to get into a retirement home, a housing authority spokesman said at the time.

The comments came in the wake of a report published by the Region stating that the seniors population in Halton increased by 75 per cent from 1976 to 1986. The report also stated the number of seniors in Halton Hills will almost double by 2001. There are currently 2,800 seniors in Halton Hills out of a total population of 36,000. Eleven per cent of the Region's seniors live in Halton Hills.

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