

Halton Region receives federal funding for prenatal nutrition

By ANN KORNUA

Pregnant women just got a friendly federal hand. Health Canada recently extended funding in its Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program. Halton will receive \$90,194 a year from April 1st to March 31st 2007. This funding will support local organisations that work with expectant mothers at risk of developing low birth weight children. In addition, the funding will provide additional staff to recruit and counsel at-risk women in Halton. Low birth weight infants may face serious health problems as newborns, and are at increased risk of long-term disabilities.

Cyndie MacNeil is the coordinator for the Halton prenatal program, and hopes that it will promote healthier children in Halton and reduce the problems and defects associated with low infant birth weights. "This (program) is just one way we can help build a healthy community through pro-active education and resources. It is a strategic plan to meet the needs of families in Halton," Cyndie commented.

The Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program focuses on at-risk pregnant women. The goals include improving the health of pregnant women, increasing the prevalence of healthy birth outcomes, increasing the rate, and duration of breast-

feeding, and promoting optimal infant development. This highly intensive Halton program will provide women with the opportunity to participate in workshops geared to teach healthy nutrition. Meetings will be held at locations throughout the four municipalities of Halton and bus vouchers will be provided so that participants can meet with other pregnant mothers from other parts of Halton.

This prenatal nutrition program provides one-on-one counselling by registered dietitians to develop skills related to food and nutrition. Included in the program is interactive meal preparation along with access to recipes and cookbooks.

Advances in prenatal care have greatly reduced the number of infant deaths linked with low birth weight, as well as the number

of disabled survivors of low birth weight occurrences. Still, a small percentage of survivors suffer with problems such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and impairments in lung function, sight, and hearing. Low birth weight is a weight of less than 5

pounds, 8 ounces (2,500 grams) at birth. Very low birth weight is a weight of less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces (1,500 grams). To contact the Region of Halton for further information on the prenatal program call toll free 1-866-442-5866.

Happy Easter Sunday March, 27

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