

New doctor to open office in Acton

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

A good first impression helped Dr. Dhanya Jayalath-

ath choose Acton to locate her new family practice, and the doctor will open a full-time office at the Acton Medical Centre in September.

Last October, Dr. Jayalath toured Georgetown, Acton and Milton, the three Halton municipalities designated by the province as under-served areas for family physicians.

At that time she said this area appealed to her and her husband, who have three sons, because of its area, but also closeness to the city.

In an interview on Monday from her home in London, where she is completing her residency at the University of Western Ontario, Dr. Jayalath said

she liked Acton from that first visit.

"Everyone was so welcoming - the mayor, the doctors at the Acton Medical Centre and the recruitment co-ordinator - I felt that the need (for a doctor) was great in Acton, and I felt in my heart that I would like to work in Acton," Dr. Jayalath said, adding after several more visits and long discussions with her husband, who works at the airport, they decided Acton was their choice.

"Acton is like a small place, but it's not very remote and all those things made me feel that I would like to work there - I really want to work for a community that really needs a



CHECKING OUT ACTON: Dr. Dhanya Jayalath and her husband Jude checked out the town and area in October before deciding to locate here. The couple is flanked by left to right, Halton recruitment coordinator Angela Sugden-Praysner, committee member Heather Scotland and Mayor Rick Bonnette. - Francis Niblock photo

doctor," she said, adding she had a lot of choices, including Georgetown and Milton, but she was "attracted" to Acton.

Dr. Jayalath, who first learned of Halton and Acton during a physician recruitment fair and asked for a tour, said she likes family practice because she can treat the young and old, men and women and can deal with a wide variety of medical issues.

Dr. Jayalath, who worked as a physician in Sri Lanka for 15 years, completes her residency program in July, and then must write examinations. She will also apply

for hospital privileges at Georgetown hospital, a mandatory condition of her contract and join Dr McWilliam and Dr. Alshakarji at the Acton Medical Centre on Mill Street.

Dr. Jayalath said her family will move to this area, and they are "seriously considering" buying a house in Acton.

While Halton's physician recruitment team can boast some success, attracting 50 family practitioners to Halton in the past three years - 13 to Halton Hills - this is the first doctor for Acton, that faces the most acute need.

Halton's physician recruitment co-ordinator Angela Sugden-Praysner said Halton Hills is still short five physicians - Acton still requires two or three additional family practitioners - to meet the accepted Ministry of Health ratio of one doctor for 1,380 people.

Doctors locating in under-served areas are eligible for special incentives including grants and tuition coverage. As well, a new incentive program from Halton Healthcare Services, which has taken over Georgetown Hospital, will offer interest-free loans and relocation funds to the first three family doctors who locate in Acton.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said after so many "close calls" with doctors who toured Acton, but ultimately chose to locate elsewhere, this is "positive, great news." "Our work is not done, however," Bonnette said on Monday, adding the physician recruitment committee is still hard at work to try to attract more doctors to Acton.

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