Graduating doctors to take tour of Milton Thurs.

Tour by final year family medicine residents part of recruiting initiative by Milton committee

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

A group of graduating physicians will be shown Milton's best Thursday night and, with any luck, will decide to make it their home.

The Town of Milton Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee has arranged for eight final year family medicine residents from McMaster University in Hamilton to be chauffeured around town to get a feel for it.

"With Milton's growth, recruiting family physicians is a priority," said Cindy McDonell, chief operating officer of Milton District Hospital.

The evening will begin with a reception at the hospital and continues with a tour, and conclude with dinner at San Antonio Southern Bistro in Campbellville.

The event is being labeled an alumni dinner, as current Milton physicians who graduated from McMaster will host the event.

"We're bringing them with a viewing of seeing which of them are interested in coming and setting up practice," Ms McDonell said, adding McMaster was chosen because many of Milton's new recruits are from there.

The event is being sponsored by the Halton Region Physician Recruitment Initiative and Mattamy Homes.

To properly accommodate Milton's population, a total of 30

family physicians are needed. This is according to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, whose guidelines state that for every 1,380 residents there should be one family physician. Once Milton's population exceeds 40,000, the number of required family physicians will increase.

Currently, there are 24 family physicians practicing in Milton, with five accepting new patients.

"This is the first time in quite a while that we've had physicians accepting new patients," she said.

Milton was recently re-designated as an under-serviced area by the Ontario health ministry, which provides a number of supports including a free tuition program.

Lorraine Rohm, Halton Healthcare's manager of health promotion, said Milton was fortunate to be re-designated as under-serviced particularly because of the free tuition, which means physicians can receive up to \$40,000 in exchange for four years of service.

"It's a win-win situation," Ms Rohm said.

Committee members committed

Milton's recruitment and retention committee is made up of devoted Milton residents in various fields, Ms McDonell said. The team includes members from the hospital, Town of Milton, Chamber of Commerce and local businesses. That's because the doctor shortage issue is one that affects everyone — especially if potential residents shy away from Milton because of the doctor shortage and choose to settle elsewhere.

The committee's commitment to bringing in doctors has been unwavering, Ms McDonell said, and that has led to success. In the past three years, 16 new doctors have been added to Milton's roster — nine family physicians and seven specialists.

That's nothing to sneeze at, Ms McDonell said.

"Not everyone has been as successful as our physician recruitment committee," she said. "It's due to the fact that this is a community effort."

Thursday's tour will give doctors considering practicing here a chance to see Milton's homes, schools, recreation opportunities, transportation and more, Ms McDonell said.

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