

Home found for low-income dental clinic

Jenn Watt
Editor

Haliburton's new community dental clinic will be joining Canoe FM on Maple Avenue as it moves into the back portion of the building owned by Dysart.

For a low monthly rate, the Haliburton County Volunteer Dental Outreach Clinic will be a tenant of the municipality, allowing volunteer dentists and hygienists to offer their services to low-income adult residents of the county.

The location was announced during a meeting of organizers Friday, Dec. 17, where other major issues were tackled, including governance structure and legal matters.

It was also announced that dentist Dr. John

Purc would be volunteering with Dr. William Kerr and hygienist Lisa Stoughton at the clinic.

"Dentists or hygienists will sign in and be available to have patients booked with them. Dr. Purc is going to be one of the dentists and I'll be one of the dentists," said Kerr, who along with Stoughton was the originator of the clinic.

All the supplies will be donated either by the dental professionals in the community, product manufacturers or purchased through donations from the public.

After the meeting Friday, which included many prominent local residents, a management board was created including Bill and Lisa Kerr, Janis Parker, Maarten Steinkamp, Lisa Stoughton, Hugh Nichol and Gena Robertson.

"This meeting this morning was excellent. I

was very impressed. I think this idea has legs," said Steinkamp.

Steinkamp will be approaching the board of The Blue Line, the wing of his restaurant that collects and disperses funds to worthy causes, about sponsoring the dental clinic on an ongoing basis.

"I'm going to present this to the board of The Blue Line to see if we can become a structural partner, because I'm not worried about the start-up costs, I'm worried about the operational costs," he said.

Barb Bolin, who was chairperson at the meeting as part of the Haliburton County Development Corporation's contribution to the project, said the mood of the meeting was uplifting.

"I haven't seen an initiative in Haliburton

County that has had just immediate excitement around it in a long time. It was really encouraging," she said.

Kerr estimated that the clinic would be opening in May, since the group has to wait for the Ontario Senior Winter Games to vacate the space first.

The clinic will be open to adults since there is already a government program for children from low-income households to receive dental care. However, there are discussions about including some kids who "fall through the cracks."

Donations to the program can be made by contacting Kerr or SIRCH Community Services bill_kerr@sympatico.ca or info@sirch.on.ca. You can also donate online at www.sirch.on.ca.

Location available for low income dental clinic

Municipality offers space for Haliburton County Volunteer Dental Outreach

By Mark Arike

Haliburton County's first free dental clinic for low income residents, scheduled to open sometime next spring, is looking like it will be located in the building that is currently home to the 2011 Winterfest Games office.

That information was revealed at a meeting with some of the project's key players on Friday, Dec. 17 at the Haliburton County Development Corporation's (HCDC) board office.

"There won't be a problem with getting a five-year lease on the space," said Janis Parker, a member of the organizing committee for what will be known as the Haliburton County Volunteer Dental Outreach.

Parker, who has been in communication with the municipality of Dysart et al, said that the municipality has agreed to offer the clinic the space for a nominal monthly fee, with hydro and heat included.

"The Wintergames staff have to stay in there until the end of February, but we can get in and do all of the measurements ahead of time," said Parker.

Organizers on the project's "management committee" (formed on Friday) – including dentists, non-profit workers, prominent locals and others – are scheduled to work out the details on the property at a meeting on Jan. 7.

Before tackling a number of other issues – such as the project's legal structure, governance, partnerships, an operating model and finances, Dr. William Kerr, a dentist who spearheaded the entire project with local dental hygienist Lisa Stoughton, provided an overview of the how the clinic would work.

"My vision is to have a clinic where dentists, hygienists and

others would book into to volunteer," explained Kerr of the set up.

Kerr said that he would volunteer for three Thursdays per month.

To that end, Dr. John Purc, former owner of a practice in Minden, said that he knew of a dental assistant interested in volunteering at the clinic. He said that he would also be willing to provide his services.

"If I come up, she'll probably come up," said Purc.

Kerr explained that a screening process would need to be in place to determine a patient's need for dental work and how soon they should be seen.

"Initially, we'd probably be providing more emergency type dentistry – things like root canals, extractions and deep fillings."

Kerr would like to see a clinic with two operatories, a sterilization room, and a waiting and reception area.

Dental supplies and equipment have already been donated by local dentists and donations continue to flow in. Monetary donations – like \$5,000 that recently came from the Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge District Health Unit's (HKPR) discretionary fund – are being collected by SIRCH Community Services, a local not-for-profit, charitable organization, on behalf of the project.

SIRCH's executive director Gena Robertson was at the meeting and explained why her organization became involved with the project from the get-go.

"Many of our programs deal with families at risk, so this is a nice match for us," said Robertson.

Founded in 1989, SIRCH provides more than 20 programs to Haliburton County, including those that deal with poverty, hospice and healthy eating.

The dental clinic will cater to working adults, most likely those over the age of 17. It was pointed out that government run programs like CINOT (Children in Need of Treatment) and Healthy



Some of the members of the community involved in the launch of Haliburton County's first free low-income dental clinic listen to Dr. William Kerr explain the project.

Photo by Mark Arike

Smiles Ontario are for kids from low income families in need of services. There aren't, however, programs like those for adults.

"We want to make sure that there aren't people falling through the cracks," said Kerr.

Barb Bolin, chairperson of the meeting and chair of HCDC, said that the project has already received an overwhelming amount of support.

"It's so nice to see a project in the county where you don't have to draw people in," said Bolin. "It's really taken a life of its own."

Organizers of the project have applied for \$2,500 in funds from HCDC for the purpose of creating a business plan.

Members of the recently formed management committee include Bill and Lisa Kerr, Janis Parker, Maarten Steinkamp, Lisa Stoughton, Hugh Nichol and Gena Robertson.

To donate to the project, visit www.sirch.on.ca or email Dr. Kerr at bill_kerr@sympatico.ca. □