

Oakville Beaver Health

More and more young people with Parkinson's

By Nathan Howes
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

On Sept. 12, a group of exercise enthusiasts from Oakville will be participating in the 10th anniversary of the Parkinson Superwalk in Burlington, while celebrating the 20th anniversary of the walk across Canada.

For 25 years, a group of individuals with Parkinson's disease meet weekly to participate in an exercise program to lend support to one another.

Since 1994, the members have used St. Jude's Anglican Church as their meeting location.

Phyllis Egbert had led the

group for the last 14 years.

"She started it because her sister suffers from Parkinson's disease and as a result, at the time, there was no real exercise group dealing with Parkinson's in particular," said Maureen Thun, group member.

"She got together with a few people from the community and started meeting on a regular basis and the group grew over the years to what it is today."

As many as 18 and as few as six members attend classes each Tuesday beginning in September that runs until June.

Each member pays a monthly fee to cover the costs of the rental of the

church.

In addition, the group has the YMCA of Oakville that offers classes three times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

"It became a bit more of a social thing for people too because what we're finding is people that have Parkinson's when they do get together for meetings and or exercise is there is a social aspect of it as well that maybe some people can't get out. They like to have a little milk and cookies afterwards and talk with each other."

Thun was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease four ago. She says doctors classify her as having "young onset"

because of her age. She will be 46 next month.

"I was one of those people that kind of falls into that under-60 (group) as they call it, the young onset group. We're experiencing more and more young people being diagnosed with Parkinson's," said Thun.

"I think the reason the percentages are up is because the doctors are being better educated with symptoms of Parkinson's."

According to the Parkinson website, Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease. Movement is normally controlled by dopamine, a chemical that carries signals between the nerves in the brain. When cells that normally produce dopamine die, the symptoms of Parkinson's appear.

Most common symptoms are: tremor (shaking); slowness in movements, muscle stiffness and problems with balance.

Other symptoms may also occur such as fatigue, difficulties with speech/writing, sleep disorders and changes in thinking ability. It is estimated that up to

100,000 Canadians suffer from the disease.

"There are other issues that are younger, for instance in my case, it's more cognitive, it's the sleeplessness, the disorders, things like that occurred first. Physical limitations came after."

The group has started to see an increase in the number of people coming out to its weekly meetings. It has seen upwards of 50-60 people attend every month.

The group also brings out guest speakers.

It is about to start an exercise class in Burlington that is not just aimed towards people with Parkinson's.

"Basically the message is to get active. We're calling it, Lengthening and Strengthening for Active Living. That way we are getting everyone out," said Thun.

"What we're really trying to promote is to keep moving because if you don't, your body will stop. It will freeze. Those classes will vary depending whose there and what ability they are."

As of Sept. 8, online donations to the national walk have reached \$954,228.

The exercise group hopes to achieve a personal goal of \$80,000 this year, while nationally, it is hoped that the walk will raise \$3 million.

"We're aiming to reach our goal of \$80,000 like we did last year and the goal overall as a region is to raise \$3 million as a national run across Canada. Burlington is a big part of it. It's an awesome day," said Thun.

Burlington will be hosting the Parkinson Superwalk at the Burlington Senior Centre, 2285 New Street, Central Park.

Registration begins at 1 p.m. Everyone is welcome. All the money raised will go towards research, education and advocacy.

For more information about the walk and to make donations go to www.parkinsonsuperwalk.com.

For more information about the exercise class and other support groups go to www.parkinson.ca.



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Doctor speaks on prostate cancer

Members of the public are invited to attend a free seminar entitled Prostate Cancer Prevention and What to Do If You Have It at Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) on Sept. 21.

This event has been organized by Halton Healthcare Services (HHS) in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society and Wellspring.

Dr. Richard Casey, a urologist with HHS, will speak about prevention, early detection, treatment

options, side effects and what is new in research.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society in Ontario an estimated 24,600 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and 4,300 will die of it this year.

One in seven men will develop prostate cancer during his lifetime, mostly after age 70.

One in 27 will die of it. Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in Canadian men.

The event will begin with displays and refresh-

ments from 6:30 p.m. and the seminar commencing at 7 p.m. OTMH is located at 327 Reynolds St.

To reserve a seat for this free event, please contact 905-878-2383 (Ext. 4379) or healthpromotion@haltonhealthcare.on.ca.

If you are unable to attend the event and would like more information on this topic, speak to your physician and contact the Cancer Information Service at 1-888-939-3333/ www.cancer.ca or Wellspring at 1-877-499-9904/ www.wellspring.ca.