

THE AURORAN Week of April 10, 2012

Aurora Group Aims to Detect Eating Disorders Early

-By Brock Weir

Early intervention programs for eating disorders are on the way in York Region, thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation

Trillium recently awarded the Aurora based eating disorders of York Region \$226-000 over three years to create an early intervention centre program in Aurora, Newmarket, and elsewhere in the Region. The grant was welcome news to Janice Morgante, Executive Director of Eating Disorders of York Region (EDOYR), who said they have been undertaking a “massive” outreach campaign to family physicians in the area to provide lists of resources to treat eating disorders early.

“We can go that extra step now, with a family physicians referral, and provide an assessment for the early detection of an eating disorder,” she told the Auroran.

“Up until this point, a family physician would have very few options when meeting with someone who they may have concern about who has an eating disorder or if someone wants to discuss the potential that they may have an eating disorder. A visit to your family doctor is brief and an eating disorder is complex.”

If someone was deemed to be medically at risk they would be put on a wait list for an assessment, and then another wait list for a hospital bed, said Ms. Morgante, adding that there are just a “couple” of beds in Toronto and non in York Region.

“What we’re doing with this early intervention centre is right at the outset when someone has a concern we provide options. The family doctor now has a place to refer a patient. An individual on their own can approach us and seek support through free workshops. That’s a small step in the right direction.”

Early detection is very important in recovery, added Ms. Morgante. Once someone becomes medically unstable, it becomes even harder to get treatment because costs for treatment can increase.

“Early intervention is well before someone needs hospital treatment,” she said. “The emotional and mental distress is exacerbated over time. We want people to address it as soon as they have some glimmer that they may be struggling. Those with eating disorders often become full of anguish, secrecy, and fear of being found out. That is obviously not a health place to live, especially when it impacts your family members. Anything we can do to help someone at the earliest onset we’re more than happy to be there for them.”

When fully up and running, the early intervention program will encompass workshops that engage people in recovering their health and challenges that are likely to come up ahead in their recovery. It will also serve to provide training to social service workers in the area who want to learn more of eating disorder awareness and intervention. Daytime programs, including movement and sharing meals, are also on the slate for 2013.

Money from the Trillium Grant will go towards hiring a coordinator for the Centre, a part time administrative assistant, and address rent costs for one location. Everything else will be done through fundraising- including an online “friend raising” campaign- in Vaughan and for future locations in Newmarket and Markham.

For the future locations, Ms. Morgante said she hopes to make a connection with other community groups in sharing existing space and thus reducing some of the operating costs.

“Unfortunately we have to pass that on in the cost for the support group so if people would like to share with us we would love to hear from them” she said. It is not uncommon for other non-profits to share some space and then we would be available across the Region, which is vast.”

In the meantime, popular support groups are ongoing, including a session Intuitive Eating on Thursday, April 19, and a Family and Friends session on May 7. For more information on these and other programs, visit www.edoyr.com



Member of Provincial Parliament Aurora/Newmarket, Frank Klees, and Mervat Rashwan, a volunteer with the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Simcoe-York Grant Review Team, present Janice Morgante, Executive Director of EDOYR, with the Ontario Trillium Foundation plaque at the Aurora Cultural Centre.