



## Stroke conference about learning to cope

By Johanna Weidner, Record staff

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KITCHENER — People are caught off-guard when a partner suffers a stroke.

"It's definitely a shock to have a stroke happen in your life," said Laura Klaponski, education and health promoter for the March of Dimes.

The situation is overwhelming and often the new caregiver absorbs little of the information given at the hospital.

Later, they realize the effects of stroke are long-lasting and they need to learn how to handle the changes.

"They have to live day to day managing these things for the rest of their lives," Klaponski said.

Klaponski will be speaking next week at a stroke conference in Kitchener.

Intended for stroke survivors, caregivers, health-care professionals and community service providers, the conference is being held on Wednesday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Community Christian Reformed Church on Bleams Road.

The event is sponsored by Linking Survivors with Survivors and stroke recovery chapters in Waterloo and Wellington areas, all programs of March of Dimes Canada.

Along with Klaponski, a doctor and local stroke program director will talk about stroke care and there will be a stroke survivors' forum, followed by networking and refreshments.

Klaponski is part of a study looking at the benefits of a special program developed for caregivers, with four meetings giving them information and the chance to connect with other caregivers.

Four more sessions are planned, including two in the Kitchener-Waterloo area and Guelph. More information about signing up will be available at the conference. People can also contact Klaponski at 1-800-263-3463, ext. 7212 or [lklaponski@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:lklaponski@marchofdimes.ca).

Learning from other caregivers, and supporting them through the journey, is a big help for people. Caregivers have a lot to cope with and it's crucial to learn how to look after themselves as well, Klaponski said.

Along with the physical challenges stroke survivors face, there can also be changes in behaviour, emotions and cognition.

"It's hard to deal with these emotions and different situations that come up," Klaponski said.

The sessions help caregivers understand the results of stroke and how to deal with them, as well as community support available and how to advocate to get what they need from service providers.

Klaponski said participants said they not only found out more about stroke, but also "they learned about

hope.”

Stroke is just the start of the journey, she said.

“It’s what happens after the aftershocks of the event because there’s still a whole life to live.”

Admission to the conference is free. Register by contacting Teresa Pyke at [tpyke@marchofdimes.ca](mailto:tpyke@marchofdimes.ca) or call 1-866-380-0758 ext. 230.

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