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**PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH**

**Conference aims to bring people with Parkinson's together, raise awareness**

**JACK MARCHEN**  
Special to the Examiner

Local persons with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers are part of a nation-wide effort to create greater knowledge and understanding of the disease this month, John Wood, president of the Peterborough Kawartha Lakes Chapter said recently.

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month. It's being recognized locally with a one-day conference, Morning of Discovery: Learn How To Ease The

Burden, Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon at Royal Gardens, 1160 Clonsilla Ave.

In addition, the chapter held its annual tulip sale fundraiser last weekend.

Wood said the focus this month is to create a greater public awareness of the disease and the hard work done by caregivers, who are usually family members. Also, to review existing community services for possible improvements and to determine what new service may be required.

Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease. Its numerous symptoms worsen over time, a cause for the disease hasn't been identified, and despite years of research a cure hasn't been found.

Ruth Stedall, a branch program director, has been a caregiver for her husband, Charlie, since he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1994.

"Many people associate trembling and shaking with Parkinson's," Stedall said. "They don't see, and few understand, rigidity,

the tightening of muscles, and all the problems that causes.

Other symptoms include stammering when talking, a raspy voice, depression, and overall slowness.

Bill Heinmiller, branch membership chairman, and his wife and caregiver, Vivian Heinmiller, stress that persons with Parkinson's should attend Parkinson's support groups, where they can feel at ease because they will meet others who know what they are going through.

The Peterborough Kawartha Lakes Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at the Auburn Bible Chapel. Meetings are not held during summer. For further information call 749-0660.

Speakers at the conference this Saturday will be Sherri McKeen of the Community Care Access Centre's outreach program, VON care and services manager Lisa Hughes and Nada Loughhead of the Parkinson's Society regional office.

For further information on the conference or to register call 741-4205.

