

HEALTH



MICHAEL BELL/Leader-Post

Zachary Portelance makes an animal out of plasticine clay Saturday during a Growing with Diabetes conference at the Travelodge. Portelance and other diabetic children were participating in a 'worry zoo,' a way to express thoughts or concerns.

Families 'growing with diabetes' connect at event

ASHLEY MARTIN
LEADER-POST

On Friday night, Noah Steinley dressed up as police officer and went trick-or-treating with his friends.

The 12-year-old from Rush Lake didn't have a preference for candy — he likes "all kinds."

But he couldn't wolf down piece after piece with abandon like some children can.

Noah has lived half his life with Type 1 diabetes. He was diagnosed in 2008 at age six.

He and his mom Michelle attended Saturday's Growing With Diabetes event in Regina, which was co-hosted by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) and Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region (RQHR). It was the fourth year for the event, but the Steinleys' first time attending.

Because Noah's pancreas doesn't produce insulin to

process the sugar in his body, he has to count every carbohydrate he consumes and take an according amount of insulin.

It means being vigilant about planning meals to include treats like a slice of pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving or chocolate milk with lunch at school — or some Halloween candy.

"He would have to give himself insulin, whether it was a bag of Rockets or an apple," said Michelle.

"It's exhausting as a parent and ... as a person living with Type 1 diabetes," she added, "but it's such a part of our everyday life. Every time we look at a buffet table or every time we look at a McDonalds sandwich or a Tim Hortons doughnut, you're imagining what the carbohydrate count could be."

Six years ago, Michelle and Darren Steinley suspected Noah might have diabetes: He'd been wetting the bed, was excessively thirsty and had lost a lot of weight.

An instant diagnosis by their doctor through a blood-sugar test left the parents "scared and uncertain, but not necessarily surprised," said Michelle, and wondering how things would change for the family, including Noah's older brother Andrew.

"I think in some ways it's brought us together closer as a family," said Michelle, and it's presented Noah with some great opportunities.

Maybe his biggest honour was accepting a cheque on behalf of JDRF on the field during the 2013 Grey Cup game in Regina.

Noah plays football and is a huge fan of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, specifically defensive end John Chick, who has Type 1 diabetes and was scheduled to appear Saturday afternoon at the conference.

"It's just awesome to know that even someone famous like him, that has diabetes, still can do whatever he wants," said Noah.

Growing With Diabetes featured sessions geared to parents, teens and children — the latter group took part in lots of hands-on activities.

In the morning, RQHR child life specialist Tegan Webber led an art-therapy session for children, in which they made a "worry zoo" to help them cope with their daily stresses.

"Children process their thoughts through their own play and work," said Webber, who noted a big part of the activities were about "being with children who understand and get" what it's like to live with diabetes.

CDA's Brie Hnetka agreed that is the focus of the day.

"That child may be the only person in the school that has diabetes, or in their community, so it's a great opportunity for families to connect with each other," said Hnetka.

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THIS WEEK AT CITY HALL

Police budget, city debt, cultural plan

NATASCIA LYPNY
LEADER-POST

Snow fee

The city is contemplating charging a fee to private contractors who dump snow at the city-owned site to cut into the storage area's increasing costs. The site is expected to blow its budget by \$376,000 this year.

A recommendation is asking administration to develop a permit process and fee structure similar to those found in many Canadian municipalities. About 150 contractors use the site, according to a city report, accounting for 60 per cent of use. A report by city administration notes introducing a fee could propel contractors to dump their snow in unauthorized locations.

If approved by council today, the fee would likely come into effect in November 2015.

Wastewater study

The city wants to investigate the affordability of regional wastewater solutions for the communities east of Regina.

With council's approval, city administration will seek a memorandum of understanding with interested communities for a study that would determine how best to collaborate on wastewater solutions over a long-term period.

Possible solutions examined in the report include the creation of a regional wastewater treatment plant and a pipeline that would deliver sewage to Regina's new plant.

This followup stems from an exhaustive regional study on water and wastewater services for rural municipalities and towns close to Regina.

Regina Police Service budget

The cost of running the Regina Police Service is creeping up next year.

Council will examine the service's 2015 budget today, which includes a five per cent net operating budget increase over this year.

The budget is pegged at just over \$68 million.

Pension plan

A meeting Tuesday will

be one of three scheduled in November between those hoping to find a negotiated solution in the civic pension-plan dispute.

After sporadic meetings throughout the fall, the employee and employer sides have met twice over the last two weeks.

"(At Thursday's meeting) there was evidence that both parties have shown some flexibility and movement, so that we're not talking about sticking points, we're talking about solutions," said city manager Glen Davies.

Chair of the Pension and Benefits Committee Kirby Benning, who represents the employees, shares Davies' optimism.

"(We're) more on the same page than debating our positions. We're working toward addressing each other's concerns," he said.

The parties are under pressure to reach a negotiated solution as the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority, which regulates such matters, warned it might dissolve the deficit-ridden plan for being non-compliant with the Pension Benefits Act.

City debt

The city's debt is expected to skyrocket to \$275 million by the end of this year because of the wastewater treatment plant and stadium projects.

At the end of 2013, the city's debt was at \$79.1 million. By December 2015, it is expected to reach \$363 million, reads a report going before the Finance and Administration Committee Tuesday.

Despite these jumps, the city will remain under its debt limit of \$450 million. The debt has also not affected the city's credit rating, which remains high.

Cultural plan

The city has created its first cultural plan. It will guide Regina's approach to the arts, cultural heritage and cultural industries over the next 10 years.

A Cultural Heritage Management Strategy has also been included to address heritage buildings, areas and conservation. The Community and Protective Services Committee will address the plan Wednesday.

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MENTAL HEALTH

U of R program offers online therapy

ASHLEY MARTIN
LEADER-POST

People with anxiety or depression can get help from Saskatchewan therapists without even leaving their computer.

Whether they live in the heart of a city or in the most remote of rural areas, the University of Regina's Online Therapy Unit is designed to treat people province-wide dealing with mental illness.

"It's a big issue and it's one that we want to address, just like we want to address cancer and cardiovascular disease. ... There's a big problem with mental-health issues being undertreated," said Heather Hadjistavropoulos, the U of R psychology professor leading the project.

The OTU offers an eight-

week online course in well-being for people living with low to moderate levels of anxiety and depression.

In the past 10 months, about 200 people have been treated; 95 per cent of those who completed the course said it was worth it.

A potential client is screened online and over the phone to determine whether they are right for the course.

"Somebody who is suicidal, or if they're having problems that we're really not addressing, we recommend that they go for face-to-face services," said Hadjistavropoulos.

During the program, the client will have online or phone support from a therapist in the province, while devoting about three hours per week to the course.

Even though it's not face to face, "people say that they



DON HEALY/Leader-Post

Heather Hadjistavropoulos is the University of Regina professor who leads the Online Therapy Unit.

can actually form a therapeutic relationship online," said Hadjistavropoulos.

Online therapy has some advantages over traditional therapy, including access to clearly laid-out strategies that might result in better communication, she said.

Traditionally, people are

expected to work on things between sessions, said Hadjistavropoulos, "But people often have difficulties with that completion of homework, that then the benefits of face-to-face therapy are sometimes diminished because you can only get so much out of just talking."

This way, "you don't have to try and remember what your therapist said," as the patient can refer back to course materials, which cover education, changing the patient's way of thinking, strategies to cope with physical symptoms of the illness and relapse prevention.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, eight per cent of Canadians will experience major depression in their life and five per cent of people cope with anxiety disorders.

While online therapy is new in Canada, it's a well-established practice around the world, including in Sweden, the Netherlands and the United States, said Hadjistavropoulos.

The OTU was awarded \$700,000 in funding last year through 2017.

Hadjistavropoulos hopes people will see the program's

value and it will be funded long term.

"I think it's really about trying to address that problem that we have, that people have issues and they don't get treatment," she said.

When left untreated, mental illness has an economic impact, as people with mental-health issues have twice as many doctors' visits, take more sick days and have a lower quality of life, said Hadjistavropoulos.

The OTU runs in collaboration with health regions and could see up to 50 clients a month, with more than 125 people trained to offer treatment.

Hadjistavropoulos says this course can be a first step to therapy or can work in conjunction with in-person therapy.

Learn more at www.onlinetherapyuser.ca.
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THE CITY BEAT

Rankin concert

The Weyburn Concert Series will feature Jimmy Rankin Monday at 7:30 p.m. at the Cugnet Centre in Weyburn Comprehensive School.

Tickets are available at Superior Office Products or at the door.

Go to www.weyburnconcertseries.ca for more information.

Book sale

The Pasqua Hospital Auxiliary is holding a used book sale at the hospital on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The sale is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday and 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday.

There will be a wide variety of books available.

Funds raised will go toward purchasing equipment for the hospital.

Canadian Club

Jack Whyte, Canadian storyteller and author, whose topic is A Land They Call Canada, will speak at The Canadian Club of Regina on Tuesday.

The luncheon is at noon at the Executive Royal Hotel. The cost is \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members. Call 306-584-7941 to reserve seats.

Let Us Know

Have a newsworthy item for our City Beat section?

If it involves a not-for-profit event or endeavour in the Regina area, send it along for consideration.

Fax the information to 306-565-2588 or email it to citydesk@leaderpost.com.

For further information call our city desk at 306-781-5300.