

Word count: 375

Ontario paramedics and LHSC go PURPLE for November

On October 17, representatives of the Ontario Paramedic Association (OPA) travelled to London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) to make a substantial donation – over 200 purple caps knitted by its members. With over 1500 paramedics from across Ontario, OPA is committed to promoting injury prevention and raising awareness for Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Donated purple caps will be given to newborns in support of The Period of PURPLE Crying® program at LHSC throughout the month of November. Proudly supported by Children's Health Foundation, the program educates parents and caregivers about infant crying patterns and coping strategies.

"Paramedics are often the first responders in cases of trauma to newborns and infants," explains Glen Gillies, Executive Secretary, Ontario Paramedic Association. "We are delighted to partner with LHSC to raise awareness of the Period of PURPLE Crying and support Ontario communities, paramedics and emergency medical dispatchers."

Robin Gillies, who coordinated OPA's cap donation, works as an Emergency Medical Dispatcher answering emergency calls and dispatching paramedics. Having had experiences with shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma through her work, Robin wanted to help prevent these kinds of injuries from occurring.

She felt compelled to start knitting caps and donating to the campaign, led by LHSC's Trauma Program. Along with her mother, Robin donated 100 purple knitted caps in 2012. Then, partnering with the OPA, Robin arranged for the donation of over 200 caps to LHSC this year.

OPA's paramedics weren't the only ones to answer LHSC's call for knitters made in September. Knitters and crocheters from across the region and beyond donated an additional 2,400 purple caps. "We are overwhelmed by

the kindness and thoughtfulness of those who donated their time, skills and fabric,” says Jane Harrington, LHSC Injury Prevention Specialist. “Thank you for taking great care in making purple caps for babies and helping us spread an important message to new parents and caregivers.” In total, over 2,600 caps were donated in 2014.

New this year, LHSC will be holding a social media photo contest in support of The Period of PURPLE Crying program. Parents and caregivers of babies who receive a purple cap during the month of November 2014 can enter to win a newborn photo shoot with *Laura Rowe Photography*. Full details are available at www.lhsc.on.ca/purple.