

## Post-partum phone support open to new mums



PACIFIC POST PARTUM  
SUPPORT SOCIETY



Post-partum phone support open to new mums in Poco Instead of rejoicing in the arrival of a new baby, one out of every six women will feel anxious and/or depressed, changing a joyous occasion into a tremendously stressful time for the family. Support can be hard to find but thanks to a \$3,750 grant from the Port Coquitlam Community Foundation, new mothers in Poco are able to telephone for support and talk to women who have experienced postpartum depression and/or anxiety themselves and are trained to offer support and information. The Postpartum Depression/Anxiety Telephone Support program offered this past year by the Pacific Post-Partum Support Society (PPSS) received 213 calls from new and expectant mothers living in Port Coquitlam and Coquitlam in the first nine months of the year. Many of the callers also attend a weekly support group held in Port Coquitlam. Sheila Duffy, PPSS director of programs, says postpartum depression and anxiety can manifest itself in many different ways such as: feeling overwhelmed, despondency, emotional instability, anger, guilt, tearfulness, worrying, anxious thoughts or images, feelings of inadequacy and the inability to cope. Symptoms can begin in pregnancy, may occur shortly after the arrival of a new baby or many months later. The birth or adoption of a new baby is a time of profound life change, Duffy says, adding that postpartum depression or anxiety is highly treatable. However, if left untreated, it can lead to ongoing parenting difficulties, marital breakdown, chronic depression, and even suicide. Our message to new mothers is that they are not alone, and there is support and help available, Duffy says, adding that support is also available in other languages and can be accessed by fathers, grandparents and health professionals. Thanks to the Poco Foundation grant, new mothers in Port Coquitlam don't have to wait for help if they feel anxious or depressed, says Duffy, who adds that new mothers who receive support and develop self-help strategies resolve depression or anxiety more quickly than when postpartum depression and anxiety are untreated.

One new mother says that speaking with the society was the first step in my recovery. I consider it the turning point; "while another says she was blown away with their empathy and understanding, never hustling me off the phone no matter how trivial my issue felt."

Regular on-going follow up is part of the support offered by PPSS. This is helpful considering the often long waitlists for a support group or to see a reproductive psychiatrist. These well-established relationships make sure that women have support while on waitlists Duffy says.