

Tree of Hope

Relay supports post-partum adjustment support group, awareness and education

By **Maryanne Kocis MacLeod**
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

"I now have a baby. I see that she's beautiful, innocent and healthy. ... I can't hold the tears back. I can't eat or sleep. Does anyone understand?"

— **Tree of Hope Foundation and Beaumont Parenting Program Groups**

In Michigan, only two hospitals offer new moms support group opportunities for post-partum adjustment: Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids and William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

"Research shows that participation in a support group significantly reduces the duration and severity of post-partum depression," said social worker Kelly Ryan, post-partum adjustment coordinator for Beaumont and support group facilitator.

Through the Herculean efforts and financial support of the Tree of Hope Foundation, free support group interventions are available four days a week at locations throughout the tri-county area, including St. Clair Shores.

"If a mom is having a problem, and the monthly support group was yesterday, that's not going to cut it," Ryan said. "The goal is to offer intervention opportunities as frequently and conveniently as possible."

To continue funding and build on these efforts, Tree of Hope is hosting Step Up for Hope, a 5K Run, Walk & Stroll charity event June 21 at Metro Beach Metro Park in Harrison Township. More than 675 participants are expected.

This timed, but non-competitive event, invites people of all ages and fitness levels to get active and support Tree of Hope projects.

Advance registration is \$15 and available online at www.treeofhopefoundation.org. On-site registration is available for \$20, begin-



Whether they run, walk or stroll, participants in Tree of Hope's 5K event have one goal: to help support moms experiencing post-partum depression.

ning at 8:15 a.m. the day of the event. Rain or shine, walkers will hit the starting line at 9 a.m., with runners following at 9:30. Advance registrants will receive a T-shirt and all participants will receive refreshments throughout the event.

Since Ryan took the role of post-partum coordinator in December, she often receives tearful phone messages from new moms in search of support.

"They might say something like: 'I thought you were crazy when

you talked to me about this at the hospital, but I could really use a little help,'" Ryan said.

A new screening program, piloted for the first time this year at Beaumont Royal Oak, provides new moms with the opportunity to connect.

After Ryan reviews the results of the assessment screening, she contacts higher-risk patients with information and education tools.

"I tell them: 'It's just like heart disease. Just because you have a



higher risk doesn't mean you're going to get it. It just means you will benefit greatly from education on what post-partum adjustment is, what to look for and what resources are available," Ryan said. "I've been surprised at how welcoming the women have been."

If warranted, Ryan also makes follow-up phone calls to answer questions or address concerns.

Over the next couple of months, the self-assessment screening tool will become available at Beau-

mont's Troy and Grosse Pointe campuses as well.

Post-partum adjustment can occur any time within the first year of the baby's life.

"If you know something isn't right, call our parenting program or your doctor," Ryan said. "The sooner you seek treatment, the sooner you will recover. The most important thing is to understand you are not alone."

In addition to symptoms of depression, post-partum issues can

Post-partum Adjustment Support Groups

Monday

Oakland Macomb Obstetrics and Gynecology, P.C. Wellpointe Building, 1701 South Boulevard East, Suite 200, Rochester Hills, near M-59 and Dequindre, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Tuesday

Bridget Lynch Counseling, 1388 Anderson, one block south of Maple, east of Crooks, Clawson, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Beaumont Medical Building, 6900 Orchard Lake Road, north of 14 Mile Road, Room 311, West Bloomfield, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Thursday

St. Joan of Arc Parish Center, 22412 Overlake Drive, St. Clair Shores, north of Eight Mile Road and east of Greater Mack, 7 to 8 p.m.

Tree of Hope Group

For more information, call (586) 777-3670.

Tree of Hope and Beaumont Parenting Program Groups

For more information call (248) 551-1455.

also surface as anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder and bipolar depression.

"I have a 3-year-old and an 8-month-old baby," Ryan said. "I was fortunate not to experience post-partum adjustment issues, but I do know how hard it is to be a new mom, to go back to work, all of that. I tell the women: 'I may look like I have it all together, but right now, my house is a mess.'"

For more information about post-partum adjustment, visit www.postpartum.net.

To register for the walk or for more information about Tree of Hope services, visit www.treeofhopefoundation.org or call (877) HOPE 311 or (877) 467-3311.