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Shelburne council declares Congenital Heart Defects Awareness Day

Written By Joshua Drakes

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTERShelburne council has proclaimed Feb. 14 as Congenital Heart Defects (CHD) Awareness Day, shining a light on a serious but often overlooked health issue affecting newborns and their families across Ontario.

The proclamation was read by Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills, who emphasized both the significance of congenital heart defects and the importance of continued awareness and support at the community level during the Feb. 9 council meeting.

?One in 70 newborns in Ontario are born with a type of congenital heart defect (CHD), making it the number one birth defect and cause of death from a birth defect,? Mills said. ?There are 35 known types of congenital heart defects. Many babies will undergo unimaginable interventions in the first few hours of their lives due to CHD.?

?Now Therefore, I, Mayor Wade Mills, on behalf of the council, do hereby proclaim Feb. 14, 2026, as ?Congenital Heart Defects Awareness Day' and encourage everyone to learn more about CHD and what you can do to help.?

Congenital heart defects are structural problems with the heart that are present at birth and occur when the heart or major blood vessels do not develop normally. They are the most common type of birth defect worldwide and can range from mild conditions requiring little to no treatment to severe abnormalities that demand immediate surgery and long-term medical care. Symptoms may include difficulty breathing, poor feeding, fatigue and low oxygen levels.

While advancements in pediatric cardiology have significantly improved outcomes ? with many children now surviving well into adulthood ? many individuals born with CHD continue to require lifelong specialized healthcare and monitoring.

Mills said the issue holds personal meaning for him, recalling past council meetings in which children born with congenital heart defects were present for the annual proclamation.

?For a number of years, we had three kids who had come out, who had been born with congenital heart defects,? he said. ?It was always actually one of my favorite meetings to sort of see these kids growing up.?

Each year, communities and health organizations observe Congenital Heart Defects Awareness Week from Feb. 7 to 14, culminating in CHD Awareness Day. The week focuses on public education, early detection, and support for families affected by CHD, while also encouraging continued research and improved access to specialized care.

By recognizing CHD Awareness Day, Shelburne is joining communities across Ontario in helping to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and support families navigating the challenges associated with congenital heart defects.

For those looking to learn more about CHD and how to help, online resources are available from groups like the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance on their website: cchaforlife.org