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**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**August 27, 2018**

**WHAT: EarlyON PROGRAM IN DEEP RIVER AND LAURENTIAN HILLS TO BE RENEWED**

**WHERE: DEEP RIVER AND LAURENTIAN HILLS**

The closure of an EarlyON program for the children and parents in Deep River and Laurentian Hills is only temporary, according to the County of Renfrew. Previously called the Family Enrichment Network (FEN) Early Years Centre, the centre served the Deep River and Laurentian Hills community until this past spring.

The new EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free programs to parents/caregivers and their children from birth to six years of age. These centres welcome all families to participate in quality programs that help strengthen adult-child relationships, support parent education, and foster healthy child development. Throughout the County of Renfrew there are a number of EarlyON programs operating and are considered a popular destination by families and caregivers.

“In January 2018 the County of Renfrew, through provincial legislation, was mandated to provide EarlyON programs in the County of Renfrew,” explained the County’s Director of Social Services Paul Moreau. “Through a resolution of County Council in September 2017 all six existing Early Years programs were contracted to transition into providing the new EarlyON programs.”

Moreau acknowledged that the transition to new mandates and programs, as directed by the province, was challenging for a number of centres and their governing bodies. FEN worked hard to make the adjustments but in the spring the board chose to end its operation, leaving a void in the Deep River and Laurentian Hills area.

“We acknowledged the dedication of the FEN board and its employees,” Mr. Moreau said. “We are determined to continue FEN’s efforts by trying to find an alternative agency to operate the centre for the children and parents in the Deep River and Laurentian Hills area.”

The County, in concurrence with the Board of Directors for FEN, is working towards finding an alternate local agency to operate an EarlyON program to ensure that the new centre can provide a sustainable and high quality program. The objective is to provide programming that meets the capacity and space requirements of the community and build on the previous work of FEN by the end of 2018. A Request for Proposal will be made public in the next coming weeks to allow existing not for profit Boards the opportunity to apply to operate an EarlyON program within the Deep River and Laurentian Hills Community.

“Once an EarlyON program has been re-established, the County, in collaboration with the EarlyON program, will strive to ensure that the program hours and locations meet the needs of the community of Deep River and Laurentian Hills,” Mr. Moreau said.

The County is very interested in hearing from any community group or agency interested in taking a lead role in the reestablishment for this excellent program.

For more information, contact Paul Moreau, Director of Social Services at 613-735-7288 or [pmoreau@countyofrenfrew.on.ca](mailto:pmoreau@countyofrenfrew.on.ca)

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