

The band is back together.

In 1995, a group of community members banded together to bring a dialysis unit to Alexandra Marine and General Hospital in Goderich.

The unit was opened successfully in 1999.

Twenty years later the group is back in action in hopes of having the unit expanded.

John Grace, who spearheaded the Dialysis '95 campaign, said they have been asked by patients to jump into action again.

Grace said there are currently about 10 patients in Goderich and area who have to travel to London for dialysis treatment; seven of whom he said qualify to receive treatment at satellite unit such as the one at AMGH.

Traveling to London can be a stressful and trying routine for the patients, Grace explained.

"These patients are very sick, with some being double amputees or having all sorts of other conditions," he said. "To do that trip is really hard on their physical well being."

A community meeting regarding the possibility of expanding AMGH's dialysis unit was held last week in Goderich.

Grace said it was an overwhelming success, with about 70 people in attendance, including patients, advocates, health care workers and representatives from local service clubs who

played an integral part in the success of Dialysis '95.

Speakers included Karen Davis, president and CEO of AMGH and Janice McCallum, director of renal services at London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) and regional director of the Southwest LHIN.

“This is not strictly a Goderich issue as LHSC administrates the dialysis units in this part of southwestern Ontario,” Grace said, calling the success of the meeting “six steps forward” in the right direction.

“This meeting was really the mountain we had to climb,” he said. “There was overwhelming support. I’m really pleased with how the community has rallied around this. It has been percolating for the last year or so. A lot people know we have an issue.”

The biggest issue facing expansion of the unit is financial constraints, Grace said.

The unit is funded by the Southwest Renal Network in conjunction with the South West LHIN.

“We have the space, we just need some funding from the Goderich hospital,” he said.

Coming out of the meeting, Grace is confident that AMGH is willing to be part of the solution.

“Karen Davis made a firm commitment to work towards making this happen,” he said.

The dialysis unit at AMGH currently serves 12 patients.

The hope is for the unit to be able to handle 18 to 24 patients.

It currently operates three days a week – Grace said they would like to see that increase to six days a week.

Whatever the future holds, Grace said everyone is ready to make it happen.

“There may be some fundraising towards capital investments, such as new equipment,” Grace said. “We are confident we can raise necessary funds.”

There was approximately \$200,000 raised during the Dialysis '95 campaign.

Anyone interested in getting involved can contact Grace or Brenda Teichert.

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