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HALIBURTON COUNTY'S INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

# The Highlander

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**FREE**



Photo by Warren Riley

The HHSS Red Hawks celebrate after winning the Kawartha Field Hockey championship on Oct. 22. For full story see page 15.

## HHHS ready to face flu

By Matthew Desrosiers

It's flu season, and clinics across the county are busy administering the shot.

Haliburton hospital started vaccinating staff and volunteers on Oct. 15, and will continue offering the shot for the next week and a half to ensure everyone has a chance to get it.

"We're very concerned that the staff have the maximum opportunity to receive this vaccination as caregivers," said Foster Loucks, Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) interim CEO. "In a hospital and in a long-term care facility, our caregivers are directly involved with a vulnerable population. It's very important that our staff participate in our program."

Despite heavy encouragement, the flu shot is not mandatory for health care workers.

"Vaccinations are not mandatory," he said. "At the present time we can't make them mandatory so we have to encourage the staff to take part through education."

The issue of mandatory vaccinations is being discussed on several levels, he said.

"There's discussion here, in the province and in the country about whether or not there should be a way to require these vaccinations," said Loucks. "It becomes a matter of balancing an individual's rights versus the need to protect a vulnerable population."

Some staff have medical reasons or allergies that prevent them from receiving the flu shot. There is also discussion around who is considered direct care staff.

"It's been raised as an ethical concern as to whether or not direct care staff should be required to have the shot," he said. "It's a slippery slope. Certainly it includes nursing staff, but maybe it should also include the housekeeper who is on the floor at any given time."

Loucks said if the flu shot were to become mandatory, the questions would need to be asked if visitors should also be vaccinated, or dietary workers, cleaners, and so on.

Residents of the hospital's long-term care facilities will be vaccinated.

Michelle Douglas, infection control occupation health nurse at HHHS, said everyone should get the shot unless specified by their physician.

See "Staff" on page 20

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