

## **30 attend Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness event**

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Photo by KEVIN McSHEFFREY/THE STANDARD

**Shannon Bedard, a member of the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, speaks to a couple of women with pinwheels at the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day event last Thursday. The event was moved from the city park with the atom symbol to Jackleggers because of stormy weather.**

High winds, rain and hail last Thursday evening could have resulted in the cancellation of the Pregnancy And Infant Loss Awareness Day candlelight vigil that was to take place next to the city's atom symbol (across from the Esso station).

But while the winds were strong, they were not stronger than a mother's love for her child, and the vigil was moved indoors.

The Pregnancy And Infant Loss candlelight vigil was organized by Shannon Bedard, a member of the Pregnancy And Infant Loss (PAIL) Network board.

The goal of the event was to make people aware of the heart-rending issue of pregnancy and infant loss.

Bedard, a trained counsellor, has helped a lot of women who experienced such a loss, and speaks from her personal experiences. Bedard, the mother of two daughters, suffered the emotional and physical pain of 11 losses. She experienced the anguish of 10 miscarriages and giving birth to a stillborn child. Her miscarriages spanned from three weeks into the pregnancy to full-term stillborn.

An hour before the vigil was to take place next to the atom symbol, high winds, rain and hail destroyed the two canopies set up at the site.

As a result, Bedard says she contacted Kayla Breen, who owns Jackleggers Bar and Grill with her partner Brian Sloane, and asked if they could move the event there. Breen readily agreed.

Bedard also got help with the event from a few others.

About 30 people, including several children, attended the event. The candlelight vigil went ahead, with some modifications.

They were hoping to plant pinwheels with inscribed messages next to the atom. However, the pinwheels could not be placed outside because of high winds.

She also thanked all "for their strength and their bravery for staying here and helping to spread this message."

She told the close-knit group, "A sadness and tragedy brought us together, but really it's love. So, (one thing) to remember when everyone is hurting, your child knew nothing but love. And it was only you that could give them that."

Bedard read a few poems that touched the hearts of many in the room, including 'My Child Did Exist' and 'You Changed Me'.

She also told those in the group who suffered such a loss to "share your story. It will help you move on, and it would also help educate someone else, so they will be there to support someone else."

The Woodland Métis Group performed a couple of songs.

In addition, Mayor Dan Marchisella proclaimed Oct. 15 as Pregnancy And Infant Loss Awareness Day in Elliot Lake.

He added that until this week, he was not aware how many families were affected by pregnancy and infant loss.

Statistics show that as many as one-in-five pregnancies in Canada ends in miscarriage, and there are approximately six stillborn infants in 1,000 births.

