

Zonta Club members putting together birthing kits May 4

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The Zonta club of Brampton-Caledon will be doing their part for women's health issues by spending this Saturday (May 4) putting together hundreds of childbirth kits to help mothers in developing countries deliver children safely.

The Toronto and GTA branches of the international women's advancement organization are expected to be able to put together and package 1,000 kits in four hours, with help from volunteers from local schools and families.

The event will be at the Emil Kolb Centre on Derry Road East in Mississauga, starting at 9 a.m.

The local Zonta clubs have constructed more than 35,000 birthing kits over the last two years, which are distributed free of charge by the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada to countries such as India, Haiti, and various nations in Africa.

The Birthing Kit Foundation in Australia reports that more than 300,000 women die every year from infection, hemorrhaging and other complications brought on by childbirth. Often, it's a result of the isolation of their communities that prevents them from receiving supplies or assistance.

Despite global efforts that have cut the mortality rates by a third, there is still a high chance of death throughout the world, with one in 52 women likely to succumb to complications in the least developed countries, according to UNICEF statistics. For many of these problems, simple sanitation can make the difference between life and death.

To this end, the Zonta packaged birthing kits come with several items that can help bring about a clean birth, including disposable gloves, a plastic sheet to keep the mother off unclean surfaces, and a clean razor blade to safely cut the umbilical cord. These items, along with gauze and soap, are sealed in a small plastic bag.

The kits are designed to be cheap, easily transported, and simple for local midwives to use. Each kit costs only \$3 to put together and package and with the help of the Mennonite Central Committee they can be delivered to the places where they are most needed.

Each birthing kit made can help save a life, and the Zonta Clubs are expected to put out thousands with the help of Caledon and Brampton residents who volunteer their time to help advance women's health throughout the world.