

PRESENTER KATE:

The time is 2:45pm and this is Southern FM 88.3 You're listening to the Community Block, brought to you by Highbury & Hampton Community Centres. We have our third guest who has just joined us, Zoe. Zoe is from WHISE, also known as Women's Health in the Southeast. So welcome, Zoe.

ZOE FRANCIS:

Thank you, thank you for having me.

PRESENTER KATE:

Zoe was kind enough, we had a disastrous COVID case last night so I quickly contacted WHISE this morning to say 'would you like to come in and talk' so we are very lucky, very privileged to have them join us. We are going to be talking about 16 Days of Activism this afternoon and for those of you who don't know WHISE... WHISE provide services based on a strong body of evidence of primary prevention and gender equality. They work collaboratively with organisations and communities to improve the health and well-being of all women in our region.

So, Zoe, you might like to expand on that a little bit further and explain what you do in the community.

ZOE FRANCIS:

Thank you so much, Kate. So I have the joy of working with a powerhouse team of women, incredible women, to co-design work in the community, and super engaging work, to improve health outcomes for women. So we work to prevent gender based violence. We promote gender equality. We do some great work in sexual and reproductive health and improving mental health outcomes for women as well. So yeah, all from a primary prevention approach so aiming to prevent poor health outcomes before they even occur.

PRESENTER KATE:

Yeah, amazing, fantastic. So very topical at the moment is 16 days of activism. Maybe you could explain a little bit more about 16 days of activism against gender based violence please.

ZOE FRANCIS:

OK, so this is a global annual campaign that begins on the 25th of November every single year, which is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It runs through for 16 days until the 10th of December, which is International Human Rights day. It continues to be an

awareness raising campaign, which is essentially the first step in addressing gender based violence against women and girls.

PRESENTER KATE:

A big topic, isn't it? Why does your organisation support this campaign?

ZOE FRANCIS:

We support it because the statistics are absolutely devastating when it comes to the issue. Globally, one in three women experience gender based violence in their lifetime and this is the same in Australia. One in two women have experienced sexual harassment and one in five have experienced sexual violence and one in three physical violence. Devastating statistics, one woman a week in Australia is murdered by her current or former intimate partner. The issue has been heightened, of course, by COVID-19 and the pandemic, and the prevalence is rising globally. And so, yeah, we need to take action. And so our organization has always done this. How do we do it? We work with organisations in the region, at the state level and the federal level, to advocate change in policies to end all forms of oppression and discrimination.

PRESENTER KATE:

Yeah, amazing. I would just like to take a short break there and say if any of these issues are raising any problems for anybody, I'd just like to remind you of the 1800 RESPECT number that is 1800 737 732. I'll repeat some more numbers at the end as well for you. What advice do you have for the people wanting to support efforts to promote gender equality and end gendered violence?

ZOE FRANCIS:

OK. So firstly I'll talk about what you can do broadly and then I might talk about some of the stuff that WHISE is doing that you might be able to join forces with us in. So the first thing is recognising if you or someone you know is experiencing gender based violence and encouraging either yourself or those around you to get help and obviously we will get those numbers again at the end of the session. So that's the fundamental and most important thing that I would give as advice. The second thing that you can do is when you do notice disrespect or poor behaviours, opening up conversations with people around you that may say or do something that you recognise as fundamentally reinforcing and problematic gender norms or attitudes that really do. Yeah, maybe they just don't respect women or actually not respectful in any way - call in a conversation. Ask that person 'Oh, I've just noticed something you said there, and I'm just wondering if I could ask you why you said that or why you've expressed that opinion' and just take the opportunity to have a conversation because it's only through taking on this role as a collective that we will ever be able to challenge the rigid gender norms that we've all basically been socialised into. And you know, everybody is subject to biases, because we've all grown up with those biases and those social norms. And so it's really about recognising

them, having to think about it yourself and taking opportunities where you can to have conversations.

PRESENTER KATE:

Yeah, absolutely. Good advice, very good advice. So maybe it's time for another number to give which is Orange Door. Orange Door Frankston is 1800 319 353, if you're needing some support at the moment. There's also Safe Steps on 1800 015 188 as another option. So I'd like to hear some good things. Tell me about some of the highlights of working to support 16 days over the years.

ZOE FRANCIS:

So at Women's Health in the Southeast, we work with some fantastic organisations in the region. Local councils are massively getting behind 16 days and have for a long time now. So we work with the local councils in the region who have painted the town orange, 16 days of activism, the color for the campaign itself is orange. So the town halls have been lit up in orange. We have footpaths with signage on them. And I've heard conversations that parents have had with their little ones who say, 'hey, you know, Mum or Dad, what's that sticker on the footpath and what does it mean?' So again, opportunities for conversations. We did have the pleasure a couple of years ago in working to challenge gender stereotypes again with young people. And we worked with a number of schools in the region to engage kids, to draw pictures that challenge gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and those hyper notions of those two things. And yeah, it was a really great chance to talk with young kids about why it is so very important to break free of these gender stereotypes and be who you are, and not what society tells you to be.

So yeah, it was really great to see the kids drawing the pictures of dads nurturing their kids, of mums being firefighters, girls playing footy. Yeah, so it was such a successful campaign and we featured the kids' drawings on postcards, pictures, brochures and 100,000 coffee cups in the region, which was fabulous. We didn't do it for the last couple of years because we've noticed that, you know, we all need to reuse and recycle, and we're all hopefully using our keep cups. But yeah, that was a bit of a highlight working with the young children.

PRESENTER KATE:

That would have been great. Oh, thank you so much for taking the time to come in. We really do appreciate it. It's always great to hear about what you're doing. It's an amazing gift that you guys give back. So thank you again. So I'm just gonna repeat those numbers again if anything has triggered. So 1800 RESPECT is 1800 737 732, Orange Door Frankston is 1800 319 353 and Safe Steps is 1800 015 188.

So thank you again. We're just going to take a short break now to listen to our last music track before coming back. And oh, we're listening to Independent Women by Destiny's Child, which is one of Zoe's favorite songs and we'll be back to hear about what's happening at the Centres just before Christmas. Thank you.

ZOE FRANCIS:

Thank you.