



02.08.14

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PREVENTING RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Zonta International forms partnership with The Sophie Elliott Foundation

Zonta International District 16 New Zealand (Zonta) has announced a two-year partnership with the Sophie Elliott Foundation (SEF) based on the common goal of violence prevention by empowering women through education awareness. Zonta is an organisation committed to improving the lives of women and girls and SEF's aim is to prevent violence against women by raising awareness of the signs of abuse in dating relationships.

Violence against women is a huge social issue that affects all sectors of New Zealand society. Police statistics show that a domestic violence call is received every seven minutes yet it is estimated only 18-20% of incidents are reported. One woman dies every 26 days at the hands of her partner. Since Sophie Elliott died on 9 January 2008, at the hands of a former boyfriend, around 80 women have similarly lost their lives.

Zonta will provide funding to SEF to assist with the printing of a book containing practical advice to help young people remain safe in relationships particularly in a dating sense. The book will be offered free of charge to students who participate in the Loves-Me-Not workshops for Year 12 students (girls and boys), facilitated by three trained facilitators, one each from Police, a local NGO and teacher. This is an interactive day-long workshop focussed towards teens learning about healthy and unhealthy behaviours in a relationship, how to recognise abusive behaviours, effective bystander strategies and where to go for help. Zonta and SEF believe that this partnership will benefit society in general but more specifically young women between 17-30 years who are at most risk from relationship abuse and violence.

Zonta District 16 Governor Dr Janette Irvine says "the Zonta Clubs in New Zealand are very enthusiastic about working with the Sophie Elliott Foundation on this important project. It aligns very well with Zonta's advocacy goals. The members are already planning fundraising events and public meetings with Lesley Elliott, Sophie's mother, as guest speaker."

Lesley Elliott, chair of the Foundation, says “I am delighted to have Zonta as a partner with SEF for the next two years.” Following Sophie’s tragic death and the very public judicial process that followed, Lesley was determined to establish an educational awareness programme for senior students. A partnership with New Zealand Police and the It’s Not OK campaign has allowed this to happen and she adds “having Zonta’s backing to provide the book to students is very gratifying.”

Zonta International is a global organisation of executives and professionals working together to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy. For more information, please visit www.zonta.org.nz or www.zonta.org. Find us on Facebook: Zonta District 16.

The Sophie Elliott Foundation www.sophieelliottfoundation.co.nz

ENDS

Contact Details:

Janette Irvine

Governor 2014-2016

Zonta International

District 16 New Zealand

governord16@zonta.org.nz

Ph: 07 347 8177 M: 027 2942 870

District 16 Project Co-ordinator

Lyn Farry

lynfarry@hotmail.com

Ph: 03 455 8623 M: 021 760 928



Images:

1. IMG_2944 – left – Dr Janette Irvine, Governor Zonta International New Zealand, right - Sylvia Powell, Rotorua Police Youth Development, co-ordinator of “Loves-Me-Not” programme in Rotorua schools, with ‘Zonta Says No’ banner in background (Photo: Desirae Kirby)
2. IMG_2954- same with no banner (photo: Desirae Kirby)
3. 01_SEF –from left Lesley Elliott, Chair of The Sophie Elliott Foundation, Bill O’Brien, Trustee and manager of the development and implementation of the educational awareness programme for SEF and Lyn Farry, Zonta District 16 Project Coordinator and liaison with SEF. (Photo: Kerry Crossland, Kelk Photography, Dunedin)