



PRESIDENTS SEEK PARTNERSHIP ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

(Photo Caption - Three presidents - Zonta's Judith Ross-Smith, Quota's Val France and Rotary's Sherryl Gregory - discuss the new community venture)

Current thinking is that preventing domestic violence lies in partnerships and communication between women and men, say three Blackall Range service club presidents.

Presidents Val France (Quota), Judith Ross-Smith (Zonta) and Sherryl Gregory (Rotary) met recently to seek ways of partnering with other service clubs and men's groups across the range to try to make a difference to the escalating problem of domestic violence.

Spokesperson Judith Ross-Smith said that just because this was a beautiful part of the world to live in did not mean we are immune to DV.

"In considering some ideas on how we could proceed immediately we decided to invite all the clubs, churches and men's and women's organisations to send a representative to a focus meeting to be held in the RSL hall on March 25 to gauge the interest in driving the idea forward, and what we might do that would be effective," Judith said.

"We do not want to go it alone with initiatives that we create but to tap into ideas and support we can gather from official government and other specialist organisations that are already working in this field, and bring them to the attention of our community.

"It's time we started talking with men to find solutions, so we hope our local men's clubs and men from other service clubs will support our initiative," Judith said.

Sherryl Gregory said Rotary International had a group called [#SayNO2family](#) violence.

"The idea of that group within Rotary International is to give support, advice, facilitation and an early intervention program, so we could get some help from the sorts of activities that group does and the advice they give. It is important we don't re-invent the wheel," Sherryl said.

"May is domestic violence prevention month so it would be a significant contribution to that if we could have something to announce then," she said.

Val France, a lawyer who works in the DV field, has been able to source organisations and groups that support education and outreach.

"Suncoast Cooloola Outreach Prevention and Education (SCOPE) is a local organisation and we could tap into the experience of the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre," Val said.

"I have discovered a wonderful not-for-profit men's group called Manhood Australia that is doing extraordinary work here in Maleny in a house donated by a benefactor. Michael Wearing, the founder of the organisation, and his wife have also established a women's house that is a refuge for women in flight from DV.

"Michael is passionate and knowledgeable. Approved by Aboriginal elders he gives seminars and conducts retreats, and he has agreed to speak to us at our focus group meeting," Val said.

Judith said she was delighted at the amazing progress this group of three had made in a few days, including that Glasshouse Country & Maleny News was happy to partner with them by inserting small ads for free into every paper highlighting the help available to women and men.

"Another idea I would like to implement came from the Zonta District 22 (South East Queensland) initiative of toilet signage in women's toilets as part of a Zonta Says No program," Judith said.

"The Zonta Club of Blackall Range rolled out 100 of these signs throughout the range during the 16 days of activism late last year.

"All the businesses we approached were very happy to have us stick them on their women's toilet doors and many asked why there isn't one for men?

"So this probably will be the first of the programs we initiate," Judith said.

While they expect to be able to obtain some grant funds, one idea from the initial meeting was to hold a dinner to present the project to the public and solicit donations to continue what needs to be done.

The word on the street now seems to cover the situation "Violence against women and children is not a women's problem; it is a community's problem", Judith said.

Zonta Club of the Blackall Range Sunshine Coast Hinterland [Quota International Of Maleny Rotary Club of Maleny](#)

