

# Group needs to represent all

IS family violence a problem in Otorohanga and what does the community think would help keep vulnerable women and children safe?

More than 50 concerned people attended a public meeting last week to address these questions and share their ideas on the best way to reduce the problem (Waitomo News, May 19).

The meeting was organised by the Maniapoto Family Violence Intervention Network (MFVIN).

## CLEAR PROBLEM

MFVIN co-ordinator Caren Campbell says it was clear people feel family violence is a problem in the district, but even more importantly, few incidents are reported so neither the victims nor the perpetrators are getting the help they need to change their lives.

She says police and women's refuge estimate 80% of all family violence incidents are not reported which, based on the 120 cases reported in Otorohanga in 2014, means there were almost 500 unreported incidents.

Those at the meeting looked at how other small communities are working together to reduce family violence.

"They like the positive results being achieved by the Hauraki Intervention Network and would like to see that project adapted to suit Otorohanga," says Ms Campbell.

"Hauraki used local role models, or champions, to raise awareness of the effect of alcohol-fuelled family violence on the community and to motivate others to change their attitudes.

"And the 'It's Not OK in Paeroa' campaign is another good example of using community strengths to meet community needs."

Ms Campbell says everyone at

the meeting understood community action can change the culture of tolerance towards family violence.

"Reporting and asking for help is a big barrier but, if people learn more about the signs and how to help, they can intervene earlier," she says.

The MFVIN group is encouraged by the strong turnout of a cross-section of the community who worked well together in discussion groups brainstorming ideas.

"We would love to widen the group for our next meeting though because some sectors, such as sports groups and the business community, were not well represented," says Ms Campbell.

**"To be really effective, to make a difference, we need to represent the whole community. If we can widen the number of people receiving the messages we can make a difference to the 80% of people in violent relationships who are not getting help."**

**Caren Campbell**  
MFVIN co-ordinator

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"If we can widen the number of people receiving the messages we can make a difference to the 80% of people in violent relationships who are not getting help.

"It was great to have input from Otorohanga College students, staff and principal, a very good group from St John, the medical centre, Harvest Centre, social service volunteers, Otorohanga District Council, mayor Baxter and [Waitomo] mayor Hanna.

## SOBERING THOUGHT

Waitomo Waipa Women's Refuge manager Wendy Valler told the meeting women from all walks of life can be affected by family violence.

"Terrible damage is being done to babies, children and teenagers living in violent homes," she says.

"You might think family violence won't touch you, but can you guarantee your sister, daughter, cousin or friend are safe?"

"That's a sobering thought."

Commenting on people's reluctance to speak up when they think



**WORKING TOGETHER:** Otorohanga mayor Max Baxter (left) Parentline CEO Sue Hardley, Plunket group co-ordinator Adelle Martin and Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna share their ideas for reducing family violence at a meeting organised by the Maniapoto Family Violence Intervention Network in Otorohanga last week. PHOTO SUPPLIED

something is wrong, Mrs Valler says: "Showing concern for someone who is possibly in danger does not make you a busybody.

"If you suspect someone is suffering from physical or psychological abuse, don't be afraid to ask if things are okay.

"Talk to the people around you and make sure they are safe. If they are not safe, there are lots of people in our community who can help them."

Mrs Valler says there are many agencies based at the community house and people can always talk to their doctor or nurse.

"Teachers want to know, Plunket want to know – there are lots of people ready to help," she says.

## CHAMPIONS PROJECT

Otorohanga mayor Max Baxter says he can see great merit in the 'Champions' project which offers positive role models for the perpetrators of family violence, people who can help them break the cycle.

"There is no excuse for family violence," says Mr Baxter.

"It creates disenfranchised families, so we need to support them with love and encouragement, so they can grow and live the happy life they deserve.

"We are encouraging the community to reach out to the victims and to connect with the men who need help to change their behaviour."

Following the enthusiasm and unanimous support shown for an Otorohanga 'Champions' project and other ideas at last week's planning session,

a second public meeting is being held on Monday, June 8 from 5.30-7.30pm at the St John meeting room.

Ms Campbell is hoping representatives from Otorohanga sports clubs, the farming industry, businesses, professionals and early childhood education attend.

## IN BRIEF

### Former manager charged

A FORMER manager of a Te Kuiti school has been charged with theft after allegedly being involved in obtaining \$3193.19 on a fuel card.

**Sheree Maarhuis** (39) is facing one charge of theft and one of obtaining by deception while employed as school manager at Pukenui School. The alleged offending occurred between February and October, 2013.

Maarhuis, who now lives in Hawke's Bay, will appear in Hastings District Court today.

### Hangatiki roundabout

THE New Zealand Transport Agency has advised the 30km/h speed restriction and traffic management at the Hangatiki turnoff will continue until mid-June. Motorists can expect delays of up to five minutes.

## IN BRIEF

### Energy project

ENERGIZER'S nationwide project to find Kiwis harnessing the power of positive energy to make small changes with a big impact is underway. The 'Energizer Power of Positive Energy Project' will reward the inspiring work of 10 New Zealanders dedicated to bringing about change in their own backyard. Each winner will receive \$5000 to enable them to spread their positive energy further. Entries close on June 12. For more information visit [facebook.com/EnergizerNZ](http://facebook.com/EnergizerNZ)

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Te Kuiti Saleyards

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2pm

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