

JULY 9, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sexual Assault Network Announces: Project Sound Check *Music Festivals & Sexual Violence Prevention*

Ottawa, ON – Music festival season in Ottawa is in full swing and the Sexual Assault Network (SAN) along with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) is officially launching their sexual assault prevention project named *Project SoundCheck*. This initiative is engaging local music festivals such as RBC Bluesfest and Escapade Music Festival in sexual violence prevention.

Project SoundCheck has transformed research released in 2014 by Dr. Kari Sampsel, director of the Sexual Assault and Partner Abuse Care Program at The Ottawa Hospital, into a community based program. Her research highlighted an increase in sexual assault reports after larger gatherings and the assaults were by strangers, and drug facilitated.

Funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa, the project seeks to empower staff and volunteers to create a safer space. Kira- Lynn Ferderber, the project lead, says they “hope to help people find the courage to act when they see anyone being harassed, and use nonviolent methods such as asking a woman if she needs help and letting perpetrators know that you are watching them”.

Ottawa is leading the way in this innovative approach to addressing the increased risk for sexual assaults at large group events, including music festivals – underscored by the strong partnership between city anti-violence organizations and the largest festivals in the country. “We are seeing a shift in people’s openness to discuss sexual violence prevention. Our partner festivals are sending a powerful message that festivals need to be safe and enjoyable for all,” states Stefanie Lomatski, coordinator of the Sexual Assault Network.

Escapade Music Festival was one of the first festivals to sign on to this collaboration. Ali Shafae, a producer of the festival, stated that “the SAN coordinators did a great job in training our festival staff and volunteers by teaching them what to look out for and address in their surroundings while on site at the event”.

So far festivals have shown enthusiasm towards this project. “The work that the Sexual Assault Network is doing is very important to help ensure that festival patrons feel comfortable coming to our event. We are looking forward to our partnership with them, and taking part in the training that they are providing for our leadership team,” says Mark Monahan, the executive director of the RBC Bluesfest in Ottawa.

Media Contact

Stefanie Lomatski, Sexual Assault Network Coordinator

Tel: 613-725-3601 ext 104 Email: sanottawa@familyservicesottawa.org