

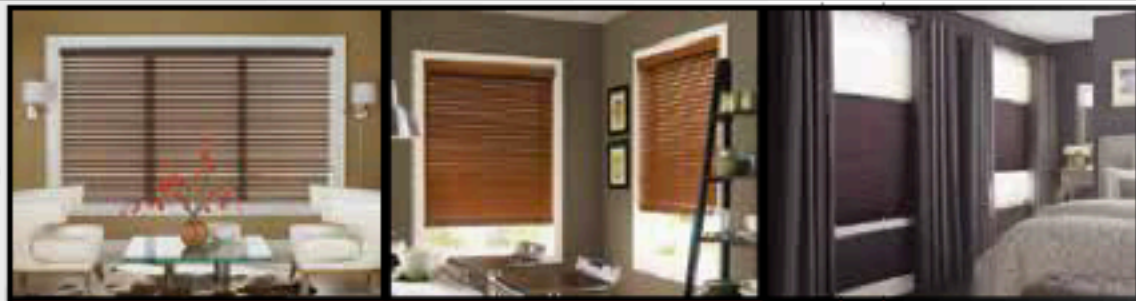
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## Spreading the word

### Football Sask. tackling off-field violence

Joanne Paulson  
Saskatoon Express

End the violence. Stop the cycle. Don't stand by. And educate the young.

Those are the premises behind a groundbreaking program developed by the Ending Violence Association (EVA) of B.C., and embraced by the B.C. Lions football club.

Be More Than A Bystander, BMTB for short, is the name of the program that has seen considerable success in B.C. But in Saskatchewan, BMTB will score another first.

This week, Football Saskatchewan will become the first junior sport organization in Canada to educate a dozen of its member players about BMTB, and equip them to spread the word.

"It's exciting. This is a first; we are leading Canada in terms of (this kind of training) in any junior sport," said Dianna Graves, executive director of Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan (SASS).

"They (EVA) have been working with the pro football teams," added Graves, noting that the Winnipeg Blue Bombers have also taken the training, and there have been discussions with the Ottawa Redblacks.

"It's only within the last four years that they started this, and they've done an excellent job in B.C. They take the Bystander training into the schools, and present that,

and train the trainer inside the schools."

On April 29, two B.C. Lions — Jamie Taras, director of community relations, and retired player J.R. LaRose — along with the EVA B.C. executive director Tracy Porteous will be in Saskatoon to provide the training.

"(Football Saskatchewan players) are being trained as trainers, so when they go to their sporting events . . . they will lead sessions on what it means to be a bystander — how does it feel, how do you act, and more importantly, what can you do to make sure you're not in danger but avert a potentially crisis situation for someone else," explained Graves.

Tammy Robert, marketing director for Football Saskatchewan, heard about the program and started the ball rolling, said Graves. Robert approached EVA B.C., which then connected with SASS.

"SASS became involved, and we provide the interpersonal violence perspective on training. At the training, there will be counsellors available to assist any of the kids, in case anyone is triggered by anything, so we can provide support to them."

Be More Than A Bystander trains people to "see" crisis or difficult situations that might end in violence, and how to deal safely with the problem.

"What we're hoping is that we can break the silence of violence against women and girls, in giving tools to be used



Jeff Yausie, executive director of Football Saskatchewan, said his organization is well set-up to reach young people in sports (Photo Supplied)

in a non-violent and non-confrontational way — to give them some skills to avert situations that could turn dangerous," said Graves. "And not only women and girls; boys too.

"It's like a bullying stance. If you see someone in an awkward situation, it's up to you to do something if you're seeing it."

Graves paraphrases anti-violence activist Jackson Katz from the United States as saying, "The situation that you walk by and ignore, is actually the situation that you accept."

"If we walk by a situation in which

somebody is being hurt, and we don't do anything, then we are silently accepting it. Violence is accepted in the way our culture is right now. We're looking to change that."

The Saskatchewan Roughriders have not yet taken the training, but are participating in an anti-bullying campaign with the Red Cross, and they have been part of the conversation with Football Saskatchewan.

"They have pretty limited resources of time.

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# Elite players expected to lead by example

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Their players have an awful lot of stuff they have to do. I know they support the initiative for sure, and the message absolutely," said Graves.

Be More than a Bystander is not, per se, connected to stories emanating mainly from the United States about football players abusing their spouses and girlfriends, said Graves. It's a wider program that has been underway for some time.

"You nip it in the bud when kids are pre-adolescent and adolescent, so it doesn't carry on. We know that men and women who abuse have more than likely been abused themselves. It's breaking that cycle of violence from the get-go."

Jeff Yausie, executive director of Football Saskatchewan, said spreading the Bystander message is important — and his organization is well set-up to reach young people in sports.

"We've recruited 10 or 12 of our elite players . . . and those are the players who are going to receive the training (from Jamie Taras and J.R. LaRose)," said Yausie in an interview.

"I saw the ads on Facebook, and I knew it was a good message, and I know we have some of the highest violence against women rates (in Saskatchewan) in the country.

"We're pretty good at running football and officials development camps and player development. We have access to kids who are leaders. We're excited about helping educate and lead the general public, and young men playing high school football."

Football Saskatchewan is the provincial sport governing body for amateur football, providing programming and resources "for everything below

the Roughriders" in the province. That includes Tykes on Spikes for little ones, flag football from Grades 1 to 8, minor tackle football starting around Grade 6, high school football and the elite programs.

Those include the University of Saskatchewan Huskies, Saskatoon Hilltops, Regina Rams, Regina Thunder, and the Saskatoon Valkyries and Regina Riot in the women's football arena. In addition, there are coaches and officials, all adding up to 19,000 members.

Football Saskatchewan runs a number of spring programs for high school age players, including the TeamSask program for under 18, Senior Bowl for Grade 12 graduating players, and Top 100 camps.

"We're going to make this part of it, and have the (trained) leaders come out and do a presentation to the kids," said Yausie. "It is a touchy subject. I think we're tackling it head on."

Yausie noted that football players are often leaders in the schools. Football attracts a lot of the athletic, strong kids who are potential leaders in the school, he said.

"If we can get the message out to them — and especially the ones who come out to our camps in the spring, they are the ones who are most driven — hopefully they'll go back and be good role models."

Yausie credited David Dube and Heather Ryan's foundation for making it all happen on the cost side, which could otherwise have been a stumbling block.

"We knew we could provide and programming and the athletes," said Yausie. "The Heather Ryan and L. David Dube Foundation stepped forward and committed to \$25,000 per year for three years to help pay for the program."

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**April 30, 2016**

9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. **Market Mall**

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. **Centre Mall**

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. **The Mall at Lawson Heights**

3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. **Confederation Mall**

**May 7, 2016**

8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. **Saskatoon Farmers' Market**

10:30 a.m. to Noon **Midtown Plaza**

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