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Warriors against violence

Well-known personalities from Matamata and Piako are taking a stand against family violence.

New billboards featuring local faces and a strong "family violence is not OK" message are on display in Matamata, Morrinsville and Te Aroha.

The three billboards are beside State Highways 26 and 27.

The billboards were produced by the Matamata Piako Family Safety Network, with support from the national It's not OK campaign.

The network asked local people to become champions for the campaign across the district.

The champion's role is to front the campaign, to help get the message out that family violence harms everyone involved, and that help is available to change.

Local champions for Matamata include Jo McNaughton of Starfish Social Services, Matamata-Piako District Mayor Jan Barnes and former Chiefs player Alex Bradley.

Ms McNaughton said the champions were committed to standing together in supporting people in the community affected by family violence.

"I know that women, young people, children and men in our community consistently resist family violence by taking steps against the damaging power others may have in daily life," she said.

"This is done in many different ways and says, 'it's not OK,' but sometimes those voices aren't heard."

The network hopes to continue to recruit more local faces to support the campaign.



The Matamata Piako Family Safety Network was formed in 2009 to address family safety in Matamata-Piako.

The team meets on weekly to discuss every incident of domestic violence in the district.

The summer holidays is when Kiwis enjoy being with family and friends, relax, and take stock of the year that has ended and the new one beginning.

Sadly for many in New Zealand this will not during December

and January. Calls to police increase as family situations get out of control. Only 20 per cent of people experiencing violence at home contact police or social services - most reach out to friends and family first.

► YOU CAN HELP

Small acts of kindness can make a big difference - offering food, taking children on an outing, spending time listening. If you know or suspect violence is happening, don't ignore it. If you are worried about someone it's important to reach out - safely. Never put the victim's or your own safety at risk. People need support to make decisions in their own time - go at their pace. If children are being hurt, they need adults to step in and take charge of their safety. If someone is in danger or you think someone could be harmed call police on 111. If you're not sure, you can call the It's not OK information line on 0800 456 450. It operates every day of the year from 9am to 11pm.

Faces of change: It's not OK campaigners Craig Gordon, Jo McNaughton, Te Ao Marama Maaka, Mayor Jan Barnes, Anaru Thompson and Alex Bradley.
Photo: BRIARLEY HICKS

It is OK to help when you are worried about someone you know and wonder whether they are being hurt or are hurting someone else.

See areyouok.org.nz for details.

Transport agency says crash bridge sound

By MATT BOWEN

A notoriously narrow bridge just outside Matamata where two trucks slammed into each other head-on last week will not be widened despite the pleas of truckies.

The NZ Transport Agency said the Mangawhero Stream Bridge on State Highway 27 is adequate

for the amount of traffic it handles.

At 6.10am last Tuesday a southbound truck apparently swerved to avoid colliding with the rear of a B-train that was braking in front for the bridge.

As the truck swerved to the right it veered into the path of another oncoming B-train, which was near stationary, and they

collided head-on. The truck driver avoided injury, but the B-train driver, a 46-year-old Palmerston North man, was trapped and seriously injured. He was stable in a Waikato Hospital ward with lower-back injuries.

One of the first people at the scene was Tauranga truck driver Daryl Adams.

Drivers who regularly crossed

the bridge knew it was a dangerous spot, he said.

"Basically you have to start slowing down way back up [on the approaching hill] to around 60kmh.

"The driver furthest away will give way to the truck closest. You can't cross at the same time - there'd be plenty of wing mirrors down there." Indeed, the remains

of two wing mirrors were spotted during a cursory glance over the side of the bridge.

Truckies communicate via their CB radios to avoid crossing at the same time.

"The bridge needs to be widened or for us heavy permit vehicles an alternative way to go. It would

CONTINUED Page 3

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