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Charities Team Up To Kick Goals For Youth Mental Health

Youth mental health charity zero2hero have partnered with The Purple Hands Foundation, the charitable arm of the Fremantle Football Club, to deliver mental health programs to young people across Western Australia.

The 8-week program uses sport to link physical activity with increased health and mental wellbeing and empowers students from years 8 and 9 with the knowledge and strategies to regulate their emotions and improve their mental health.

Fremantle Dockers players and Goals aHead ambassadors Alex Pearce, Travis Colyer, Aine Tighe and Emma O’Driscoll have all expressed the importance of providing the right tools for teenagers to assist with their mental health.

Fremantle captain Alex Pearce uses strategies in his daily life and is passionate that passing on his learnings can make a positive impact on the community.

“I never had access to these types of tools or strategies growing up,” Pearce said.

“I know how important being aware of how you are feeling is to your wellbeing.”

“I am looking forward to giving these young people the ability to take control of their own mental health and hopefully break down the stigma for asking for help in the process,” he said.

AFLW player O’Driscoll grew up in the country town of Northam and was desperate to be a part of the program because she never learnt about mental health as a teenager.

“I guess you heard a bit about depression in high school and that was about it,” O’Driscoll said.

“I didn't know that there was a whole spectrum of different conditions and different phases and elements to mental health.”

“I am so passionate about this because I wasn't educated on mental health, and I didn't grow up with the awareness around how important mental health is,” she said.

Fremantle forward Aine Tighe has been working closely with zero2hero facilitators to deliver the Goals aHead program in the classroom as part of her role as the Club’s Fans and Community program coordinator.

Tighe said the most rewarding part is not providing strategies for the students, it is the relationships she builds with each participant.

“The program is about building relationships and getting to know the young people a bit better and showing our vulnerability,” Tighe said.

“As the co-facilitator, I get to see the growth in the students from week one of the program, when they're all a bit shy and cagey and not really knowing what it's about or what they're going to learn from it.”

“To then see them in the final week and they come bouncing through the doors and they're telling you about what they did on the weekend.”

“Just to see that growth and confidence build in themselves and as a group, it really is rewarding and impactful in terms of what the program is all about,” she said.

Travis Colyer believes the Goals aHead program is exactly what young people need with the social issues they're facing in today's modern world.

“I really want to see this program grow because I know the impact that mental health, resilience and coping strategies have at reducing the stigma around seeking out help,” Colyer said.

“The Purple Hands Foundation, zero2hero and the Club really want to get ahead in this space with a lot of the social issues that are facing young people, and it's great to be involved,” he said.

Purple Hands Foundation General Manager Donna Rendell believes the player ambassador involvement in the program reiterates that even superheroes, such as football players and professional athletes, need a support system.

“We believe that it's essential to create safe and supportive environments for young people to thrive,” said Donna Rendell, General Manager of Purple Hands Foundation.

zero2hero CEO Ashlee Harrison is excited to see a program like Goals aHead attract the attention of role models in WA to assist in prioritising young people's mental health.

“We're thrilled to partner with Purple Hands Foundation, which shares our commitment to supporting young people and promoting positive mental health outcomes,” said Harrison.

Through this partnership, zero2hero and Purple Hands Foundation will continue to work together to deliver the Goals aHead program to hundreds of students across Western Australia each year, and promote positive mental health outcomes for young people.