MEDIA RELEASE
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The conversation that could be a life saver

BreastScreen Queensland Toowoomba Service has teamed up with local hairdressers to encourage women to talk about their health.

Health promotion officer Shenaed Bliss said taking a few minutes for a chat and a cuppa was a great way to get the conversation started.

“We have left some special BreastScreen coffee cups and brochures at a number of selected Toowoomba salons who are helping us spread the message that it’s vital for women to make their health a priority,” Ms Bliss said.

“We want to prompt local women to have a tea or coffee in the relaxed setting of their favourite salon and chat with others about the importance of taking care of themselves, and not neglecting vital health checks.”

Debbie Schwenderling, proprietor of Applebom Beauty, Hair and Wellbeing, has shared her own experience with breast cancer to support the campaign. Like many successful businesswomen, Ms Schwenderling had been occupied taking care of business, and had put off having a breast screen. When a self-examination revealed a lump she sought treatment immediately.

“I had been putting off having a mammogram, I’d say ‘I’ll do it next year’ and I never did, but I was fortunate that the lump I found was quite close to the surface,” Ms Schwenderling said.

“Then I had the mammogram, the ultrasound and the MRI, and I was operated on within three weeks so it all happened very quickly.

“I also went through radiation therapy and had a very good outcome, so I was very fortunate.”

That experience was the catalyst for Debbie and her team to start talking closely to their clients and encouraging them to make their health a priority.

“Some clients I’ve had for more than 15 years and my absence from the salon was noticed because it was Christmas time and very busy, so we just spoke to clients about what was happening in terms of my situation, in a very matter-of-fact way,” she said.

“I think it was a real shock to them, but as a result of talking about it a lot of my clients went in for mammograms immediately.

“For me it was like a form of therapy because as you speak to people you know you’re not alone.

“Most people know someone who’s going through some form of cancer and a lot of the people I’ve spoken to have had very positive stories to tell, so talking about it was a great benefit to me as well.”
Ms Schwenderling said she hoped more women would take the time to talk about their health and move towards making it their number one priority.

“I think the fear of finding something is what puts us off going to have vital health checks, but if you can look at it in a more positive way and think that if they do find something early, you have such a good chance of a positive outcome,” she said.

“I was very lucky and came through with a very good outcome, but needless to say I have a mammogram annually now and I will continue to promote awareness and the importance of making your health a priority.”

Miss Bliss said there was an extra incentive for local women to take up the challenge and be part of the conversation.

“There is a wonderful gift pack, containing a range of natural and organic hair and beauty products, valued at more than $140, to be won,” she said.

“All you need to do is take a selfie in one of our participating salons, with one of our BreastScreen coffee cups or brochures, post it on Facebook and tag the photo ‘I believe in Pink’.

“Our thanks go to Applebom Beauty, Hair and Wellbeing, and the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation for making this prize available. The winner will be drawn on Friday 6 May, just in time for Mother’s Day, so there’s plenty of time to enter.

“I’d also like to say a special thank you to the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation for supplying the coffee cups which are such an integral part of this campaign.”

Participating salons include: Applebom Beauty, Hair and Wellbeing; Helen Teys Hair fashions; Intershape Hairstylists; Katrina’s Hair & Beauty Salon; LJ’s Hair & Beauty; Niko & Okin Hairstylists; Pure Hair.

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