

Nov. 17 conference aims to empower local teen girls

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A conference this month aims to give local teen girls the tools to avoid abuse, sexual violence and date rape.

The fifth annual White Tiger's Girl Conference aims to empower teenage girls between the ages of 15 to 19, said program director Paul Henry Danylewich.

"Everything is usually for boys — hockey, football teams," he said. "This is a really inspiring event for girls. We really want to make a difference in their lives."

The conference features speakers such as safety experts, frontline professionals including rape crisis workers, police officers, self-defence instructors doing demonstrations and survivors of abusive relationships and sexual assault, he said.

"All the frontline people will be local to your community," he said. "The featured speakers and the abuse survivors tour with us."

Some of the speakers include Danylewich, Karen Basciano-Stewart of the Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre, Montreal singer Katie Sevigny and singer Shaharah.

"They sing to the girls, and their music has positive messages," he said. "It's just an incredible experience. It's powerful stuff."

Danylewich said the conference was developed in honour of the Dec. 6, 1989 massacre at L'Ecole Polytechnique, where 14 women were killed in Montreal.

The conference will visit about 10 locations throughout Ontario this month, including Montreal, Ottawa, Oshawa, Toronto, Brantford, North Bay, Sudbury, London, Kingston, Guelph, Bowmanville and Belleville, he said.

Danylewich hopes to see about 100 people, mostly girls, attend the conference.

"It's oriented for girls," he said. "We want it to be a comfortable and safe environment. We want them to open up and ask questions."

NOTE: Paul Henry Danylewich said he hopes to see local schools bring groups of teen girls to the conference on field trips.