

# GIVING VICTIMS A VOICE

Winnipeg R&B singer helps organize anti-bullying event Hateless

**SAMANTHA DUERKSEN** VOLUNTEER

NOVEMBER 7, 2013



Sangeetha Nair and Flo take their Hateless message to the kids.

“We are going to attempt to have the biggest event ever around bullying prevention,” states Sangeetha Nair, co-founder of Hateless, an anti-bullying event set to take place at 12:30 pm on Saturday, November 16 at the Park Theatre.

The volunteer-run event is being emceed by Virgin 103’s Ace Burpee, and will feature speakers including bullying experts and two students from the Winnipeg Youth Chorus who have been bully victims. Flo, a local R&B singer and co-founder of the event, will also be performing a set highlighted by her anti-bullying anthem “Hateless”.

Sangeetha and Flo are hoping to inspire kids and let them know they are not alone.

“Whether it be one life or whether it be more than one life, [it’s about] making that difference, giving that light and igniting that fire in some of the kids,” says Flo.

To keep the fire going well after the event takes place, one of the goals of the organizers is to keep kids in ongoing contact with community resources.

“We don’t want to just go perform, have the event, and then forget about it. We want to be solution based,” Sangeetha says.

In order to do this, resources will be shared at the event. The Red Cross is supplying resources, advice and training to the performers, but there is currently discussion about a more formal partnership. The hope is that the Red Cross can expand training on how to deal with tough cases, particularly kids who may be suicidal, to teachers and counsellors in schools.

“At the event if kids feel like they need to talk to someone, there will be help available as well,” Sangeetha says. “The other thing that our campaign aims to do is to basically empower kids to reach their potential. It might be through music or any way that they express themselves, so if I’m feeling suicidal, I have a channel to get that out.”

Two of the teenage speakers at the event, Shelby and Duncan, are members of the Winnipeg Youth Chorus, who also contributed vocals to Flo’s “Hateless”.

Sharing their experiences with Flo and connecting through music led to the formation of the event in the first place. Flo’s single was released around the time last year that cyber-bullying victim Amanda Todd committed suicide in British Columbia, and the incident sparked her and Sangeetha to take action.

“My response is that I believe that we need to love everybody and accept people for who they are,” Flo says. “Everybody has a choice to their lifestyle and nobody should be bullied for who they are, what they believe in.”

Published in Volume 68, Number 10 of *The Uniter* (November 6, 2013)