

Villa Walsh athlete raises awareness for One Love Foundation



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Isabella Cantave, a junior athlete at Villa Walsh Academy, is an inquisitive person who cares deeply about others.

This year, she's combined all three of those qualities into something to benefit her school community and beyond.

Isabella, a member of the volleyball and golf teams at the Morris Township school, was listening to a podcast last year that told the story of Yeardeley Love, a member of the women's lacrosse team at the University of Virginia, was murdered on May 3, 2010, three weeks before her graduation. The crime was committed by a men's lacrosse player at Virginia who she had earlier dated during her four years at the school.

It was a crime that drew national attention, and given the backgrounds of the people involved, was something that young high school and college athletes could feel a connection to.

Isabella, upon learning the story, certainly could relate, and wanted her classmates to know about it as well.

She's become involved with the One Love Foundation, an organization established by Yeardeley's family, and at a recent girls lacrosse game against Governor Livingston, the teams dedicated the game to Yeardeley and the One Love Foundation. Isabella read the One Love mission before the game, and both teams wore blue ribbons in their hair in honor of Yeardeley.

"I had a friend whose sister passed away unfortunately due to domestic violence, so it was always something important to me," Isabella said. "One day I was listening to one of my favorite True Crime podcasts, and the story of Yeardeley came about, and I decided to click on the website and get more education on it, because I feel that it's a topic that should be shared with more teenagers."

And after that initial look at the One Love Foundation website, Isabella was further interested.

"Once I checked out the website and I found out more information on One Love, I saw that you could join their student leader program," she said. "I joined it, and I was contacted quickly by their youth leader who runs the tri-state area. She got me involved,



The Villa Walsh and Governor Livingston Lacrosse programs dedicate their game on May 15 to Yeardeley Love and the One Love Foundation

we had a meeting and she asked what my goals were, and what I wanted to do in my community, and I said I wanted spread awareness on healthy relationships and I really wanted share it with my school community, because we're an all-girls school and I felt like it's something that when you go on to college and for the rest of your life, you should have with you. So I was really passionate about sharing it."

On its website, the foundation states that it "was founded to honor the unnecessary and tragic death of Yeardeley Love by engaging young people through compelling, relatable films and honest conversations around healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviors." Its goal is to empower young people with tools and resources to see the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and bring live-saving prevention education to their communities.

The lacrosse game dedicated to Yeardeley, the foundation and its mission is only a small part of what Isabella has done so far.

"We recently went to Washington, D.C., and we talked to state legislators and senators on passing laws on relationship health education," she said. "We really got into Yeardeley's story and their learning more about the curriculum and advocacy work that One Love does. This is all something that can happen to absolutely anyone. It doesn't matter what your age is, race or gender. It can happen to anyone."

Isabella's interest in the Yeardeley Love story struck a chord with Villa Walsh athletic director Jen Fleury, since she was also an active athlete growing up and became a women's lacrosse team captain during her own four-year career at the University of Delaware.

"I played in college and I played against UVA" she said. "When you hear her story, it hits very close to home."

And when Isabella asked for a meeting to discuss her interest, Fleury was both excited and proud of her commitment to the cause.

"I was thrilled," Fleury said. "Bella asked to come see me, and sat in my office. She's someone who doesn't even play lacrosse and she wanted to bring this program to our lacrosse program and do the



Isabella Cantave stands with Jen Fleury, the athletic director at Villa Walsh Academy

workshop with our girls, and then dedicate one of our games to Yeardeley's memory. We contacted the team we were playing, and Governor Livingston joined us, as well. I thought it was absolutely wonderful. This is something we need to bring awareness to, and it's something that they need to be cautious of as they move on to college. The girls were thrilled to hear that Bella was bringing something like this to them."

"I was so happy to share Yeardeley's memory and her story," Isabella said. "I know I had the opportunity to talk with some close relatives of hers, and they love these game dedications. Athletics were such an important thing for her, so to see other people playing in her memory and thinking about her and wearing the ribbons, it was like her spirit was there."

And going forward, Villa Walsh plans to do much more to spread the program throughout its entire school community.

"Bella and I are talking about ways to improve it for next year," Fleury said. "As Bella said, this is something that could happen anywhere and to anyone."

To learn more about the foundation and its work on behalf of Yeardeley Love, visit its website at joinonelove.org