

# Foetal Alcohol Spectrum discussed

Noluvu Ludidi

Worldwide International Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Day was celebrated on 9 September.

In the West Coast Inner Wheel Saldanha hosted an informative session in collaboration with the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) at Blue Bay Lodge in Saldanha on Monday 9 September giving them the platform to share more about FASD and what it entails.

Various organisations from the business sector, non-profit organisations, Department of Health and community members locked in on the interesting learning facts shared by Dr Jaco Louw from FARR, the researching, monitoring and impact assessment unit coordinator.

What is FASD, you might ask? FASD is caused when an unborn baby or foetus is exposed to alcohol in the womb. A mother does not need to be a heavy drinker or an alcoholic to have a child with FASD. Even small amounts of alcohol can potentially harm the unborn baby (foetus). As explained by Dr Leana Olivier, CEO of FARR, babies born with FASD have lifelong, irreversible brain damage, and often also organ damage. The brain damage might present as learning and behavioural problems. "Due to a lack of

proper training and support for educators, as well as inability to meet the needs of these children within the given educational system, many learners with FASD drop out of school early. International studies also indicate that people living with FASD are more prone to a variety of chronic health conditions, including mental health challenges," said Olivier.

According to Louw in 2013 FARR reported an FASD prevalence of 6,4% cases in the Saldanha Bay Municipal area. Louw said that the prevalence of FASD in the West Coast is more than six times higher than the estimated global average. "It is only through a whole of society, collaborative effort that we will be able to prevent future children from being born with FASD and the hundreds of children and adults living with FASD need the support from all of us to live healthy and happy lives. The first step in making these changes is in spreading awareness about FASD," Louw added.

Dr Lynette Rossouw, president of Inner Wheel, shared the same sentiments and said it is important that everyone contributes to the implementation of alcohol harm reduction measures in our West Coast communities and reducing the number of babies born with FASD.

Rossouw added that the representatives of the different sectors



Pictured is Yvonne Kitchin (Inner Wheel), Dr Lynette Rossouw (president of Inner Wheel), Hayley Hofmeester (FARR: Project coordinator-West Coast) and Dr Jaco Louw (FARR: Researching, monitoring and impact assessment unit coordinator). In front is Pat Woodend (Inner Wheel), Ann Probst-Powers (Inner Wheel) and Estelle Pillay (FARR: Training facilitator). Photo: Noluvu Ludidi

indicated that they found Louw's presentation very informative.

Should residents in the West Coast wish to know more or need help,

contact FARR on 022 713 1689 or send an

email to Hayley Hofmeester, FARR's project coordinator in the West Coast, on westcoast@farrsa.org.za. Alternatively you can contact head office at 021 686 2646 or email info@farrsa.org.za.

TESTAMENTIE WEEK | WILLS WEEK  
16 – 20 September 2024

