

# BeYou campaign aims to boost girls' self-esteem

Free workshops, events today at St. Laurent

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Coming of age in an era of media saturation, girls are judging what they see in the mirror against a highlight reel of perfect images from their own peers, as well as Hollywood celebrities and Instagram stars.

With a smartphone in every pocket, girls are looking beyond their friends and family for emotional support. Almost half a million girls have posted YouTube videos of themselves asking the world, "Am I pretty, or am I ugly?"

Girls are drowning in a sea of photos and videos of perfect people, perfect images, perfect moments, and it's causing real harm not only to their self-esteem but to their overall health. According to research compiled by Morguard, owner of Ottawa's St. Laurent Centre and 20 more shopping cen-



Local singer-songwriter (and mother of seven) Tara Shannon will perform her uplifting anthem Be You today at 2 p.m. at St. Laurent. *SUPPLIED*

tres across Canada, nine out of 10 girls say they feel pressure from the media to be thin, half of all girls in Grade 6 are on a diet, and only 11 per cent of 16-year-old girls are physically active enough to benefit their health.

That's why Morguard has teamed up with Big Brothers

and Big Sisters to create BeYou, a weeklong annual campaign to send a message to young girls that the only person you need to impress is yourself.

During the campaign, Morguard will offer free screenings in malls across Canada of the documentary

Dream, Girl, which highlights ambitious female entrepreneurs. Before each screening, girls will also see a special video message from former TV host and wife of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Sophie Grégoire-Trudeau.

According to Carrie Irvine, marketing director at St. Laurent, girls' self-esteem peaks at age nine and rapidly drops as they enter adolescence. As girls begin to worry more about how they look to other people, they begin dropping out of sports and other activities they love.

"Social media plays a huge role in girls' lives," said Irvine. "There's a huge pressure to look perfect, be great at everything. Our message is that it's OK to just be yourself."

Irvine recruited local singer-songwriter Tara Shannon to write and record a song for the campaign and give girls a catchy, uplifting anthem. The song, Be You, begins with a rallying cry: "Don't dim your light / Don't hide your heart / Go show the world just exactly who you are." In the chorus, Shannon tells girls, "All you gotta

do is be you."

"I hope that hook will stay in their head and stick there, and hopefully be an antidote to more negative messaging," said Shannon.

Shannon is touring to perform the song at Morguard centres, and will sing at St. Laurent today at 2 p.m., backed by her nine-piece band and a girls' choir.

Be You is available to stream or download on iTunes, Spotify and YouTube. All proceeds from the song will be donated to Big Brothers and Big Sisters' Go Girls! program, which helps girls aged 12-14 become more active, eat balanced meals and improve self-esteem.

For more information visit [beyougirl.ca](http://beyougirl.ca)