

Hinton Parklander

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Just Yell Fire: Young women learn to avoid assault

By Martin Wissmath

A dramatization of a young woman being attacked while out jogging, from the **Just Yell Fire: Campus Life** video. She executes a few simple street fighting techniques such as a reverse head butt and foot stomp to free herself from his grip and run away. Women in Hinton can see these techniques demonstrated in a series of seminars in the West Yellowhead region this week.

You have the right to live your life without fear.

That's just one right in a 28-line Dating Bill of Rights from Just Yell Fire, a non-profit organization started in the United States to teach girls and young women how

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Marjorie Luger
Executive Director,
Yellowhead Emergency Shelter



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to protect themselves against violence and sexual abuse. The organization's founder, Dallas Jessup, has been invited by the Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women to speak in the West Yellowhead region this week. Jessup will be holding seminars at the Jasper Sawridge Inn on Nov. 20 and the Hinton Centre on Nov. 21 at 8 a.m. Tickets are \$10 available at The Old Grind. Jessup continues on to Edson to speak at the Red Brick Arts Centre on Nov. 22 and will be at the Royal Canadian Legion in Evansburg on Nov. 23.

"[Jessup's] been on Good Morning America and USA Today," said Marjorie Luger, executive director of the Yellowhead Emergency Shelter for Women. "One of our staff was watching it and thought that this is something that Hinton and people in the Yellowhead region needed to hear."

Jessup started the Just Yell Fire project in 2006 when she was 14 after hearing about two abductions and murders of teen girls in her hometown of Portland, Oregon; Jessup also saw security camera footage of a girl in Florida being taken before she was murdered. Having earned a black belt in Taekwondo at the age of 13, she produced a web video aimed at teaching girls aged 11 to 19 some simple, fast street fighting techniques so they could escape from a male attacker more than twice their size.

Celebrities from the hit show *Lost* also appeared in the video to promote the cause.

Part of the education program is to encourage girls to yell, "Fire!" if they are being assaulted. The idea is that it's more effective than yelling for help, since bystanders may be reluctant to get involved. If someone yells the word "fire" it is more likely to draw a crowd, according to the video available on Jessup's website justyellfire.com. In addition to alerting others, the word is intended to kick-start the victim's own instinctual self-defence, to fight back and run away as fast as possible, avoiding becoming another statistic.

The Just Yell Fire video for teenagers is set in a number of scenarios such as at a bus top, an ATM, in a house or on a jogging trail.

Jessup recently produced another Just Yell Fire film for college women. It adds a number of fighting techniques and depicts different danger scenarios, such as a dorm room, campus party or parking lot. It also tackles issues such as date rape and drugged drinks.

According to the website, 1 in 3 women will be a victim of dating abuse, and 1 in 4 will be a victim of some form of sexual assault in the United States. Those numbers are similar in Canada, according to sexassault.ca, although Statistics

Canada reports the rates of sexual assault have been falling steadily every year since their peak in 1993.

Young women in Canada are also abducted and trafficked into the sex trade, said Luger.

"That happens everywhere," she said. "Who knows where they're taken. There's a lot of missing women in Canada."

Luger said nothing like Just Yell Fire has been done here before, and she hopes Jessup will have sell-out crowds for each of her seminars.

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