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News

Fire that would-be assailant

Planning for a kidnapping attempt is probably the last thing any parent and child want to do, so it rarely gets done. Especially when they're little, boys are abducted or targeted too, but as the years go by, females are more at risk.

One in four females (reported; the actual estimate is one in three) is a victim of sexual assault, and over 120,000 abductions of women and girls are reported annually in the U.S. Other than keeping a watchful eye and being wary of strangers, there is something simple to do: get a free video. Watch it. Talk about it. Share it.

Plugged on Good Morning America and CNN, "Just Yell Fire" is a DVD the Soroptimists Center have and Women's teamed up to offer the public free of charge. Designed for girls age 11 to 19, the program was created by 15-year-old martial arts student Dallas Jessup from Vancouver, Wash., so it communicates on a teen level.

To turn the tables on attackers, Jessup wrote and produced a film (with help from others at her school, a local college, and law enforcement) to illustrate simple ways for a 100-pound girl to get away from almost any size attacker by eye-gouging, biting, slapping an ear, and other quick-learn techniques. The film demonstrates 10 street fighting techniques to get away from attack and date rape situations, shares a dating bill of rights, and includes stay-safe strategies from law enforcement agencies. Over 325,000 copies of her free DVDs have been distributed and downloaded.

Jessup has received numerous local and national awards for her dedication to reducing sexual abuse and abductions.

Why "fire?" Kids play around. When a teen yells "help," people think it's horseplay and do nothing; if someone yells "rape," people may be fearful or complacent and do nothing. Yelling "fire" captures self interest and others are more likely to rush to see what is happening. Attention is the last thing a predator wants, and often this strategy can stop an abduction.

Free copies of the video (up to 100) are available at the Women's Center, 850 N. Fourth St. in Coeur d'Alene; by calling (208) 664-9303; or www.justyellfire.com.

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Caption: Sholeh Patrick

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