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FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE



Dallas Jessup

One teen from Vancouver, Wash., is helping thousands of women and girls all over the world avoid sexual assault. Dallas Jessup, 17, has put her martial arts training to work in a short film, *Just Yell Fire*, which is available to view at www.justyellfire.com. Dallas travels "about 10,000 miles a month" teaching self-defense techniques. And she recently published *Young Revolutionaries Who Rock: An Insiders Guide to Saving the World One Revolution at a Time*, which profiles 10 teenagers and their inspiring community service work.

Current Health: Why did you decide to make the film?

Dallas: When I was 13, I saw [news reports of local girls being attacked]. A lot of [my classmates] were scared. They asked me for some cool getaway moves that I had learned in my street-fighting classes. I asked my mom if we could make a home video to show 10 ways to get away. The word got out we were making a movie, and ... in 60 days we had a professional crew. Even Josh Holloway and Evangeline Lilly from the television show *Lost* volunteered to do cameos.

We ended up with *Just Yell Fire*, a film that gives girls a dating bill of rights, some stay-safe strategies for real life, and 10 street-fighting moves to get away from an attacker. We put the film online for free. Since then, there have been close to 1 million free downloads. We formed a nonprofit so we could have DVDs produced and ship them around the world to schools and to any girl who didn't have Internet access.

CH: What kind of challenges did you face?

Dallas: The biggest challenge was the sheer immensity of the problem we were taking on. It's become a "million girl revolution" against sexual assault and abduction on six continents. Our goal is to protect 5 million girls by the end of 2010.

CH: What's your book about?

Dallas: It is a how-to guide for teens to start their own cool and effective volunteer effort[s] that will have a big impact on the world. I believe that readers will find inspiration, as I have, from the 10 real-life stories of teens ... [who] are fighting for cures, taking on Big Tobacco, feeding the hungry, putting a stop to bullying, and affecting many millions of people across the world. Big things are possible, even if you're too young to drive.

CH: What advice do you have for young activists?

Dallas: First, ask yourself what makes you angry. Is it bullying at school? Kids in our country who go to sleep hungry every night? Or the crisis that some sick people can't get the treatment they need because they can't afford insurance? It shouldn't be volunteering at [your] mom's favorite charity or putting in mandatory service hours at the hospital; it has to be [your] personal, from-the-heart anger and need to do something. Figure out the resources you need: people, money, a film crew, or whatever. Then go see people who have those things, and ask for help. If you can articulate your vision of a better world, people and companies really want to help out. Google, Frito-Lay, and others have stepped up to help my nonprofit just because I asked.