

Area women learn self-defense

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What's this?

PITTSBURG — Pittsburg State University and area high school women spent Sunday afternoon learning how to defend themselves from attackers and raising money for The Ali Kemp Education Foundation.

Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority and Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity teamed up with the T.A.K.E. Foundation and Pittsburg businesses The Jean Scene, and Salon 9 to host the annual Ali's Runway Fashion Show and T.A.K.E. self-defense class at Parrott Bey. About 120 people showed up for the event and raised more than \$400, all of which will go to the T.A.K.E. foundation, which was created "to equip women of all ages with the resources they need to feel safe."

Alexandra "Ali" Kemp was 19-years-old when she was murdered by a stranger in a Johnson County suburb in 2002. Ali's Runway and the subsequent self-defense class are designed to provide a fun atmosphere for young women to view current prom fashions; after the show, specialists from T.A.K.E. give self-defense workshops and talk about ways to remain.

T.A.K.E. Defense was established in 2005 by the Kemp family in partnership with the Johnson County Parks and Recreation District and in cooperation with Blue Valley Recreation Commission and Leawood Parks and Recreation. More than 48,000 girls and women ages 12 and older have been trained with free hands-on self-defense courses. T.A.K.E. Defense specialists visit colleges and universities such as Kansas University, the University of Missouri, Kansas State University, the University of Miami, Vanderbilt University, Southern Methodist University, Texas Christian University, and the University of Wisconsin, among others. T.A.K.E. Defense Training has been featured on America's Most Wanted, ABC's "20/20" and CBS Prime Time as well as local and regional news casts.

After the fashion show, instructor Jill Leiker led the defensive training course. With her son as an assistant, she showed them how to break out of headlocks, repel attackers and escape from being pinned to the ground, among other moves. She also spoke to the group about ways the can stay safe while at home and on vacation.

If attacked, Leiker said, it is important to fight back.

"Your chance of coming home from an abduction is about zero," Leiker said. "You might die here, but you have to think about what you're going to do."

Leiker also said it's important tell friends where they're planning to go and when.

"We know Ali's murderer had no more than 15 minutes from the time he stepped in that pool house and took her life," Leiker said. "Share a plan and have someone who knows where you are. If you go missing, people are going to look for you in the last place you said you were."

Leiker, who is trained in martial arts, said the Kemps approached her in 2004 about helping to coordinate the program.

"I knew it was something I wanted to do," she said. "I never thought we would have taught 48,000 women at this point."

To learn more about defensive courses from T.A.K.E., visit www.takedefense.org. The following are safety precautions endorsed by T.A.K.E.:

Walking

- Dress and behave in an appropriate manner for your surroundings
- Stay away from dark, deserted streets and alleys
- Walk with someone. Most attackers will be discouraged if you have company - male or female
- Stay in well-lit areas, and avoid parking close to alleys or bushes where someone could be hiding
- Stay near people. Avoid shortcuts through parks, vacant lots and other deserted places
- Hold your purse close to you, not dangling. Never set it down on store counters, restaurant seats or bus seats
- Don't accept rides with strangers. If a driver stops to ask you directions, avoid getting too close to car - you could be pulled inside
- If you're being followed by someone on foot, cross the street, act suspicious and keep looking behind you. This may discourage the follower. Vary your pace. If he persists, go to a well-lit store or home, and call the police
- If you're being followed by someone in a car, turn around and walk in the opposite direction or go up a one-way street the opposite direction. If he persists, record his license number, seek a safe location and call the police
- When you return home, have your key ready to open door without delay
- Leave your outside light on so you can easily see anyone who may be waiting for you when you return home
- Avoid talking on your cell phone. If you must be on the phone, keep your head up and be alert. Never text message while walking

Home

- Install a peephole so you can see who is outside, and ask for identification before opening the door
- Don't advertise by leaving a note on the door saying you're not at home
- Use your last name and first initial only on your door, mail box and in the phone book
- The average predator will watch you 6-12 times before they commit their crime. Be aware of who is in your neighborhood
- Buy a big dog dish, and place it by the door. Even if you don't have a dog the idea that a big dog could be inside could work as a deterrent
- Replace the locks when you move to a new house or apartment. You don't know who has keys to the old one
- Remember, the best lock in the world is no good at all if it isn't used. Lock your doors and windows
- Draw the shades after dark, and never dress in front of windows
- Strangers should stay outside. They can go someplace else to make that phone call, or you can make it for them
- Make sure your home is well-lit, and replace burnt out light bulbs immediately
- Don't allow service workers in your home when you're not there. It's best to have more than one person at home when work is being done. Ask service companies questions concerning workers who will be entering your home. Here are some question examples: their name, length of time they have worked with the company and the last time a background check was performed on them
- Know your neighbors, especially the person who is home during the day. They serve as your eyes while you're away
- Keep personal information off of the internet. A predator only needs to know your name to determine where you live

Driving

- Keep your purse and other valuables out of sight - under a seat or in the glove compartment
- Always keep your windows rolled up
- Keep your doors locked at all times. Before you even fasten your seat belt, lock your doors
- When you are unlocking your car with a remote be sure to only push the unlock button once in order to only unlock the driver's door. Pressing the unlock button twice will unlock all the doors which can allow someone access to the passenger side or back seat
- Put your valuables in your locked trunk or take them with you.
- Intersections and stoplights are favorite places for potential attackers. Keep your car in gear, and if threatened, lay on your horn and drive away
- Hitchhikers shouldn't be picked up. Don't stop to help disabled drivers if you're alone. Help them by reporting them to police or service station
- If you're having car trouble, raise the hood, and stay inside with the doors locked. If strangers stop, ask them to report your predicament to nearest service station. And remember - a cell phone makes sense when you are traveling any distance alone
- If you're being followed don't drive into your driveway or attempt to leave your car. Drive to the nearest police station or open business for help
- If another driver is forcing you to a curb, don't allow it and keep driving. Write down their license number, the car and driver's description, and report the incident to police immediately
- When parking your car, park in areas that will be well-lit when you return to your car. Be sure to lock your doors. Check when you return to make sure no one is hiding in your car. Avoid parking next to vans as you could be pulled into the vehicle through the sliding door
- Never leave keys to your home on your key ring when your car is left with a valet or at a service station

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