
[Log In](#) | [Register](#)

UTPD to hold series of 4-day Rape Aggression Defense workshops

Tara Haelle

Daily Texan Staff

Published: Monday, September 22, 2008

Updated: Monday, September 22, 2008

Jeanne Acton used to walk the streets of New York City by herself at night, believing she would never be a target. Acton did not think she was invincible, but she did not think she would ever get robbed.

But at 3 p.m. one afternoon, Acton, the UT's University Interscholastic League director, was nursing her five-month-old son in the parking lot of the UIL building on Manor Road when a woman approached her window and pulled out a knife just inches from the baby's head.

"I chunked my purse at her and peeled out," Acton said. "I got her license plate number and then ran into my office screaming numbers. They didn't know what was going on."

Five months later she took the free Rape Aggression Defense class offered by the UT Police Department to all female students, faculty, staff and their families. The first of this year's free classes begins tonight at the UTPD office on Robert Dedman Drive from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Women can register online at UTPD's Web site or show up at the first class.

"It made me feel empowered again," Acton said. "I have more information and skills than before. If someone pointed a gun at me, I've gone through the motions of disarming someone."

UTPD Sgt. Laura Davis said participants should take all of the classes offered during the four-day sessions but added that participants can take individual classes throughout the 12 workshops offered during the school year. The simulation exercise on the fourth day is not required.

With 10 instructors, UTPD has taught the 16-hour, four-day self-funded program to more than 2,500 women since 2001, Davis said. The program is designed for all women, regardless of previous experience in physical skills training.

"It's not only self-empowerment, but it also fits in well with our crime prevention program," Davis said. "It works at all levels of physical abilities. You can teach women as young as 13 to their late 90s because it's versatile."

College-aged women are four times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and one in every six women has been the victim of sexual assault in her lifetime, according to the Rape Abuse Incest National Network.

In Austin, 334 rapes were reported in 2007, 12 of which were in the 78705 zip code, which encompasses UT and West Campus. Eighteen percent of sexual assault survivors report their assaults to law enforcement, according to SafePlace, a local nonprofit serving victims of sexual assault.

"A lot of people don't want to talk about this issue," said SafePlace spokeswoman Narissa Adams. "It's not comfortable."

Although Adams and Davis said there are ways of reducing the risk of assault, Adams emphasized the assault is never the victim's fault.

"When we talk about what a person should do to avoid being raped, that suggests they are responsible — they brought it

on themselves," Adams said. "Sexual assault and rape isn't about sex. It's about power and control."

Three factors exist for a crime to occur: a victim, an aggressor and opportunity, Davis said. The defense classes teach participants ways to reduce risk.

"Not everything can be avoided, but if you erase that opportunity, there won't be a crime," she said. "If you need to fight, we've given you tools to be able to handle yourself." Acton said the class taught her how to take care of herself if she needed to. "Everybody should go through it," she said. "Hopefully, you'll never, ever need it."

© 2008, Texas Student Media

Cactus Yearbook | Daily Texan | KVRX | TSTV | Texas Travesty

The University of Texas at Austin



College Publisher powered by mtvU and MTV Networks