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**SELF-DEFENSE TAKES TRAINING AND PRACTICE, SAY LOCAL EXPERTS (Published Feb. 12, 2005, in the Columbia Business Times) - 1/20/2005**

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SELF-DEFENSE TAKES TRAINING AND PRACTICE, SAY LOCAL EXPERTS

COLUMBIA, Mo. – If you want to learn to defend yourself, training and practice are key, say Columbia experts.

“There is a huge disparity between your ability to defend yourself in a training class and what happens in real life,” said Sgt. Danny Grant of the Columbia Police Department. “If you are really good in training, it makes you average in a real situation. So you should focus on getting really good in your class situation.”

Columbia offers several training situations and styles of self-defense. The City Parks and Recreation department offers classes in martial arts such as Taekwondo, Ju-Jitsu and Karate. Columbia also offers a few martial arts schools that integrate self-defense into traditional martial arts training, the most common of which is Taekwondo, a martial art style imported from Korea.

For instance, Hockman’s Black Belt Academy offers self-defense and rape prevention classes upon request to groups of 10 or more, sometimes free of charge. Having just passed its tenth anniversary in mid-Missouri, Hockman’s traditional taekwondo classes incorporate self-defense techniques into the training for each belt rank. The techniques are based on different situations according to the ten most common attacks as reported by the FBI, including attacks with guns and knives.

“Training in a martial arts program is important because it develops self-confidence,” said Jeff Hockman, fifth-degree black belt and owner of Hockman’s Black Belt Academy in the Broadway Marketplace. “Bad people tend to look for weak targets, so training in avoidance tips and self-confidence goes a long way to keeping you from being a victim. Secondly, training teaches you to develop skills to defend yourself if there is a need to do so. People need to be

trained to react. Self-defense is not something to think about; it needs to be a reaction."

An internationally certified instructor, Hockman has earned specific certifications in such fields as joint manipulation, throwing techniques, pressure point control tactics, street self-defense, ground fighting, spontaneous knife and gun defense, various traditional weapons and kick-boxing.

"Basic self-defense is knowing how to attack and where to attack," Hockman said. "It is relatively easy to break a nose, rake the eyes or crush a windpipe if you know how vulnerable those areas are and how to attack them."

Taekwondo is Korean, but there are several martial arts traditions derived from various locations in the Far East. The American Taekwondo Association, of which Hockman's school is a member, has borrowed elements from many other disciplines, such as Ju-Jitsu, Karate, Kung Fu and kickboxing.

"Although the martial arts are traditional, we are not stuck in tradition," Hockman said. "Many techniques from other styles have been borrowed to make the ATA's program a complete martial arts system."

The Columbia Police Department periodically talks to groups about crime prevention and sexual assault. The University of Missouri-Columbia Police Department offers free, 12-hour, basic self-defense courses for women and children once a month at its offices at 901 Virginia Street, on campus east of University Hospital. Both classes come under the acronym RAD, standing for Rape Aggression Defense when involving women and Resisting Aggression Defensively when involving children.

The RAD courses are taught only by police officers and teach basic techniques against an officer dressed in a "Red Man" padded suit. "It is not a judo class," said Jenna Redel, crime prevention officer with the MU Police Department. "We don't teach advanced moves, just basic moves proven to work in a stress situation."

Dexter's Training Center also integrates self-defense time into its martial arts classes, but it also offers separate self-defense courses for the public and law enforcement that train people to react to various attack scenarios.

"Escape is always the first option," said Kevin Purvis, advanced close-quarters combative instructor at Dexter's. "What I try to teach the students is basic awareness; always try to be aware of what's going on around you, your environment. Stay away from areas that are known for problems or trouble. Avoidance is pretty much the best as far as self-defense if at all possible."

Purvis said working with different scenarios is important because the necessary reactions change depending on the situation, such as if the victim is inside or outside of a car. Purvis also teaches how to use weapons such as pepper sprays and electrical tasers.

"Tasers are more of a deterrent than anything else," Purvis said. "Unless you get the high-end with a high voltage, they are more likely not going to do anything but annoy a big person."

Sgt. Grant says to make sure to get training if you plan to use a weapon. He suggests

that, if you decide to carry a can of mace, purchase two cans and practice with one of them to see how the spray works. Similarly, if you are considering buying a handgun, practice with it and sign up for a combat course to train you how to use it in a life-like situation.

Grant said to understand that an attacker could take away any weapon and use it on its owner; police officers often get killed with their own weapons. He added that there are always legal implications when using force to defend one's self and that the Columbia Police Department offers no opinion on the use of weapons to do so.

At one point several years ago, personal alarms were a hot item, but they don't work as well today because so many people have car alarms now, said Brandy Wells, client liaison for Columbia Executive Protection, a local security firm. People hear so many alarms nowadays that their ability to grab attention is diminished.

An ounce of prevention goes a long way to staying safe. "Above all, be aware of your surroundings; look around to know who is there before stepping from your car into a dark parking lot," Wells said. "When you are on a long trip by yourself, talk often to relatives or friends on a cell phone whenever you make a stop, and let them know how your trip is going so that they may follow your progress."

