



PHOTOS: BLAINE OHGASHI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Self-defense instructor Janet Goliger, left, teaches 8-year-old Sarala Gopale of La Crescenta how to kick the knee of an attacker during a youth self-defense class on Sunday at the Community Center of La Cañada Flintridge.

LESSONS GIVE STUDENTS A FIGHTING CHANCE

La Cañada Youth Council hires karate black belt for classes on self-defense.

BY AMERICA HERNANDEZ
STAFF WRITER

The forceful voices of 20 children reverberated off the walls of the Community Center in La Cañada Flintridge on Sunday with a collective "No!"

The group was practicing evasive tactics in a self-defense class sponsored by the city's Youth Council.

"Practicing yelling 'no' builds up their confidence and can prevent them from becoming a victim in the first place," said Janet Goliger, a double black belt in karate and a PE teacher with the Glendale Unified School District.

Goliger led the class of 8- to 13-year-olds through maneuvers to break free from grabs and escape an abductor's hold. Conflict resolution and anti-bullying techniques also were taught.

Goliger has written books on safety, including "Are They Safe?: CLASS Self-Defense Curriculum for Grades 7-12." She conducts self-defense workshops for women and teens.

For information on upcoming classes, visit classifieducation.org.



Above, Goliger demonstrates the effectiveness of using arms as a form of head protection. At left, 9-year-old Andrew Richards of Valencia, right, tries to grab 11-year-old Sammy Boudanos of Altadena during an exercise that practices escape from an attacker.

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH ... SELF-DEFENSE INSTRUCTOR JANET GOLIGER SHARES TIPS TO KEEP KIDS SAFE

BY AMERICA HERNANDEZ
STAFF WRITER

LA CAÑADA-FLINTRIDGE • They call her "The Protector."

By day, she teaches P.E. at Glendale Unified elementary schools. By night, she's a second-degree black belt helping women and youth protect themselves.

Janet Goliger recently took some time off from the dojo to share her safety advice with the Register.

1 Q. How did you get involved in teaching self-defense to the community?

A. A few years ago, I was watching a news story on yet another child abduction, and it was really the straw that broke the camel's back.

I'm an elementary school teacher, but a martial artist as well, so I took a bit of both worlds of my life and for two years designed a program for my own students, which my district purchased. From there, it snowballed, and various organizations like Girl Scouts have reached out to organize workshops.

2 Q. What does your method focus on for young children?

A. The Children Learning Awareness Safety and Self-Defense program shows kids how to be proactive so they know what to do ahead of time to avoid becoming a victim.

We don't want them to fight, but we do want them to fight back, escape immediately to a safe place and tell an adult. The one thing I never do is give a child a false sense of security.

3 Q. What physical techniques do you emphasize?

A. We start with using the voice as a tool. Many kids don't know to yell the word "stranger" when being attacked, but that is what other adults respond to the most.

It's important that kids not try to muscle an adult because they'll lose. That being said, small children can use their balance and their bodies against an adult to get out of certain holds.

The kids learn three basic techniques that they can practice at home so it becomes second nature during an attack.

4 Q. How does self-defense training differ with older students?

A. The difference is in the types of ways the different age groups are likely to be attacked.

With elementary school, it's about conflict resolution and dealing with bullying. In middle and high school, we're talking sexual harassment, shakedowns and peer pressure.

I contacted black belts across the country for input on harassment in cities, rural and suburban areas because kids are being threatened in different ways in each kind of area.

5 Q. What's the most important take-away from your course?

A. I want my students to leave with their self-confidence boosted, to feel empowered and realize they don't have to be a victim in life.

You can feel that difference with kids after a two-hour class. I have handwritten letters from parents thanking me that their children were able to escape would-be abductions, and local police have told me we've saved five lives in the La Crescenta area with this program.