

South End assaults along bus routes inspire women's self-defense classes

Recent sexual assaults on Asian women in the Rainier Valley and Beacon Hill neighborhoods has prompted two community centers to offer free self-defense classes. These programs for women age 14 and older will begin on March 1 at the Van Asselt Community Center, 2820 S. Myrtle St., and March 6 at the Jefferson Community Center, 3801 Beacon Ave. S.

According to the Seattle Police Department, since 2006 a man has been attacking Asian women while they were near the Metro No. 7, 32 or 36 bus stops. The assaults initially involved primarily groping, but the most recent attacks have become more violent. The assailant has been described as a young, dark-complexioned man in his late teens to early 30s with a penchant for approaching his victims from behind.

The community center classes will focus on strategies that women can use to enhance their safety. These include verbal and physical techniques to deter attacks and to help escape a physical assault.

The Van Asselt Community Center classes will be held on three Thursday mornings (March 1, 8 and 15) from 10-11:30 a.m. For more information, or to register, call 386-1921.

The Jefferson Community Center classes will also be held over three Thursday mornings (March 6, 13 and 20) from 10-11:30 a.m. For more information, or to register, call 684-7481.

Joanne Factor, owner of Strategic Living, will teach the classes. Factor's company provides personal safety and self-defense training for individuals and groups.