



Carlie's Crusade comes to PJ Middle School

Safety program teaches kids not to be victims

The message of Carlie's Crusade is simple: "It could happen to you...*Don't Be a Victim. Be a Survivor.*" Two volunteers from the local nonprofit abduction prevention and internet safety group spent three days, June 10-12, at the Middle School teaching students practical skills to keep them safe.

Carlie's Crusade Foundation was founded in 2004 in response to the abduction and murder of 11-year-old Carlie Brucia in Florida. The case received national attention because the abduction was caught on tape by a surveillance camera in the carwash parking lot. The tape, which was shown to Port Jervis students at a school assembly, shows that it took the man 15 seconds to force Carlie into his car.

During the assembly, Town of Newburgh police officer John Jenerose and martial arts instructor Dominick Magistro said if Carlie had screamed or fought, she might be alive today. "Our goal is to teach kids how not to look like an attractive target and how to get away from a bad situation as quickly as possible," says foundation co-founder Jenerose. "If we can get kids to make noise - lots of noise - and fight back, they have a greater chance of getting out of a dangerous situation."



Students got to practice hitting techniques on dummies.



TIP: Use the palm of your hand, not your fist to defend yourself.

On the two days that followed the informational assembly, the two self-defense experts shared simple, easy-to-remember "self preservation" techniques with all of the students in gym classes. "When people are threatened they generally do one of three things - fight, flight, or freeze," explains Magistro. "We aren't here to teach students to fight. We're working on the flight skills - when to yell, how to make lots of noise, and how to use simple moves like the soccer kick to save themselves."

Magistro told the students that their two strongest weapons are their brains and their voices. "Use your brain to assess the situation. Then, yell - yell as loud as you can," he said, noting that if Carlie had yelled it is likely someone at the carwash would have heard her.

During the gym classes, Jenerose had the kids practice yelling. All of the students also got a chance to practice several self preservation techniques on two large dummies. Demonstrating the techniques, Jenerose told the students to use the palm of their hand, not their fist to hit a threatening adult. "As you hit the person with the palm of your hands, move forward to throw him off guard - and continue to scream," he said. The instructors also showed the students how to use the inner or outer sides of their feet to kick the person in the shin area.

Both men stressed that the intent of using these moves isn't about winning a fight or trying to take an adult down. "It's more about throwing the bad guy off guard and giving yourself time to get away," said Magistro. "Winning in this situation is being able to go home."



TIP: If you feel threatened, put your hands up, move forward, and scream "back" or "fire."

[Carlie's Crusade Foundation web site](#) contains more



Every gym class participated in the abduction prevention training.

information on the self preservation program and internet safety. The site also contains links to numerous child safety web sites and product lines. A few of the foundation's recommended sites are copied below:

- [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#)
- [Family Watch Dog - National sex offender registry](#)
- [NetSmartz Workshop - Keeping kids and teens safe on the internet.](#)

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