

BERGEN Buzz

by Carol Bialkowski



A call to arms:
Phil Ross helps
student Jennifer Forst
"martial" her defenses
at American Eagle
Martial Arts Academy.

BEST bet

The best defense No matter how many miles you run, how much weight you can bench-press or how many minutes you spend on the elliptical trainer, you may not be able to defend yourself against a purse snatcher, car jacker or burglar.

For this reason, schools like American Eagle Martial Arts Academy in Ho-Ho-Kus have begun offering self-defense classes geared toward "average" people interested in protecting themselves and their families, says owner Phil Ross. Translation? No uniforms. No bowing. No mantras. No flying kicks. Just a few hours of practical, commonsense instruction focused on three key areas: how to avoid becoming a victim, how to disable the attacker and how to escape.

That was the thrust of the program at Gary Stevens Tae Kwon Do in Glen Rock that Patricia Peterman of Teaneck took last year. "It was great to learn about the psychology of the situation and the techniques to protect yourself," says Peterman, whose fellow female students ranged in age from 20 to 60. "It really heightens your awareness and makes you feel that you're not totally at someone's mercy."

For more information, contact a martial arts school in your area or one of the following programs. Keep in mind that each school has a different philosophy of self defense, so be sure to ask questions before you sign up. American Eagle Martial Arts Academy in Ho-Ho-Kus (201-612-1429) offers a coed evening class as well as classes for women three mornings a week.