

Boss Hogg Christmas Tree Lot



Any Doug Fir 5-7 ft. \$30.00
Any Nobel Fir 5-7 ft. \$45.00

**New location
at MLK and Bryant**



PHOTO BY KAYLA NEWMAN

Martial arts skills, de-escalation techniques and boundary settings are techniques learned by women in self defense classes taught locally by a group called WomenStrength.

Woman Strong

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of victims being under 30. And in Oregon, an estimated 27 percent of females have been raped, compared to 18 percent of women and girls nationally, according to The Women's Foundation of Oregon.

"This has been women's experience probably, I can't say forever, but I can say in my lifetime," Johnson said. "The first time I had sexual harassment/sexual assault [happen to me] I was in sixth grade. That's the first time. And I literally couldn't count the number of times it has happened to me in my adult life. It's too many to name."

Though Johnson said the Me Too campaign has been a powerful tool to bring light to the issue, she also respects women who chose to keep the experiences confidential because she understands it can be painful for women to relive.

Ninety-four percent of women who are raped experience post traumatic stress disorder, which can involve flashbacks of the inciting event during the first two weeks following the rape and 30 percent of women report symptoms of PTSD, nine months after

the rape, according to the Journal of Traumatic Stress and American Psychiatric Press.

In addition to the self defense skills taught at WomenStrength, 40 percent of the course also teaches non-physical safety workshops and verbal de-escalation training.

"I think simply by teaching women boundary setting, more comfortable boundary setting, is a prevention tool," Johnson said.

A 2014 article at University of Oregon showed that female college age students who took self-defense classes experienced fewer and less severe instances of sexual assault the following year than those who didn't.

WomenStrength also teaches a program to males called BoyStrength, which they are also accepting volunteers for and can be taught by men. Instead of teaching self-defense, though, the course teaches things like yoga, breathing and meditation techniques, and lessons healthy relationship to teach boys how to become leaders of non-violence in their communities.

"Men have more power in this country than women, so men have

more power to help end violence against women," Johnson said.

According to a 1997 U.S. Department of Justice report, 99 percent of sexual assaulters in single-victim incidents were men and 6 out of 10 were white.

Johnson said some of the ways men can be allies to the cause of preventing sexual violence against women is by donating to a shelter or violence prevention organization like WomenStrength, getting involved with the Portland-based advocacy group Men Engaging Now (find them on Facebook), and empathizing with women who may have experienced past trauma.

"The other thing I think that men can do is gently ask the women in their lives about their experiences, not that they have to tell them to you. But be open about, 'I don't know how to respond to this, how can I help you?' And I think we need more of that from men, we really, really do."

For more information about volunteering for WomenStrength or attending the year round classes, which occur twice monthly on evenings and weekends at a rotating venue, visit portlandoregon.gov/police/womenstrength.

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