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## Self-defense Class for Girls

By Sophie Braccini

It is during the middle school years that girls begin to venture out into the world on their own as they seek more independence. During school minimum day dismissal or on Friday afternoons you will find many preteens at the Rheem Shopping Center enjoying a bite to eat with friends or heading out to watch a movie. A walk to the store, park, school or a friend's house can put them in a situation that they may not be prepared to handle. The Moraga Junior Women's Club plans to offer a three-day self-defense course for girls in middle school.

With the professional direction of Tom Westernoff, owner and instructor of the Karate and Fitness Place USA,

the three sessions promise to be fun, safe and a great learning experience for young girls. "The 3-day series will address self awareness and self defense for young girls," says Westernoff, "middle school kids are getting into more things and it's a good thing to teach them to stand up for themselves." "We wanted to propose something new to our young girls," explains Ana Ramirez of the Juniors, "Moraga is a safe place for our girls to wander, but we feel that they need to be more aware and prepared wherever their life will take them."

Westernoff warns that the 3-day session will not be enough for a lifetime of self-defense, that the skills the girls will learn need to be practiced

regularly. "We've thought about that," responds Ramirez, "this program is a pilot and we hope to make it recurrent."

The sessions will be held on Sundays, April 20, 27 and May 4, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. at the Karate & Fitness Place in Moraga. The cost for all three sessions is \$25. Applications and information can be obtained by going on line to [moragajuniors.org](http://moragajuniors.org) and clicking on Self Defense Course. All applications must be received at the Joaquin Moraga Middle School office by April 11. If you have a daughter who is not yet or not anymore in middle school and would be interested in attending, contact Ana Ramirez at [anam-ramirez@sbcglobal.net](mailto:anam-ramirez@sbcglobal.net).