

Your North Shore Guide
to life and style

living

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Stand Strong

Course offers self-defence tips for seniors

ANNA DIMOFF
reporter@nsnews.com

Head up, shoulders back and chest out. The classic direction elders would prompt to slouchy teens is being used to help seniors improve their awareness and balance in a self-defence program.

Starting Wednesday, April 6, Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre will be hosting Stand Strong: Safety Strategies for Seniors run by Fit4Defense Program founder Suzanne Jean. By focusing on setting boundaries, increasing assertiveness and self-confidence, Jean and her team of instructors will help seniors properly address and respond to negative scenarios in their day-to-day life.

"Self-defence is a lot about self-confidence," said Jean. "Being able to walk around with your head up and look people in the eye, it makes a big difference when you're in the community. Folks will look quite vulnerable, so a lot of it is being able to understand how to improve that stability and stance, and that ability to improve what their vital points are and to do wrist releases so people can't grab them."

Fit4Defense was originally started as an anti-bullying program for at-risk youth, but once the popularity of the program grew, Jean saw the benefits of expanding the curriculum to include seniors.

"We really saw a connection to be able to use the program to really focus on building stability and flexibility and awareness, so we modified the curriculum for that age group and it's been tremendously successful," she said.

To get the class moving, instructors have participants hit focus pads, which Jean says is a great stress buster. But physical



Fit4Defense Program founder Suzanne Jean invites community members to register for Stand Strong: Safety Strategies for Seniors, a six-session program designed to help participants build confidence and a sense of well-being, improving their personal and street safety, launching this Wednesday at Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre. PHOTO CINDY GOODMAN

fitness is only one part of the strategy, forming boundaries and teaching seniors how to say "no" is a large part of the curriculum to help build mental strength and assertiveness.

"That generation, being able to express themselves assertively, is not something they have a lot of practice in we've discovered," explained Jean. "We also cover things like dealing with telemarketers, saying no to somebody, setting boundaries,

because there's a lot of abuse in that area as well."

Through the program, Jean hopes to improve not only personal safety but the overall safety of the community. Allowing the participants to have a common space to discuss their worries or experiences brings awareness to the larger issues at play

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Course helps seniors stay strong

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like abuse and manipulation. "People have definitely used the assertive skills and felt much more comfortable being able to deal with telemarketers, or in relationships," she said. "They love the discussion. They just love talking about some of these things with each other and realizing that other people feel the same way they do, that they're not alone in how they feel."

Jean says the six-week program caters to plenty of different aspects to help seniors stay strong and savvy in their daily lives, and "they get to hit things." Defending against trips, slips and falls,



Participants in a previous Stand Strong: Safety Strategies for Seniors course develop their self-defence skills. PHOTO SUPPLIED

and potential purse snatchers, this course will allow the community's older demographic to build strength and confidence while networking with like minds. The course runs for six Wednesdays, starting April 6, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Cost: \$10 for six classes. Registration: 604-980-2474.

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

SENTINEL GRAD 76 A reception will be held Saturday, June 11, 6 p.m. at Hollyburn Country Club, 950 Cross Creek Rd., West Vancouver. Food will be served throughout the evening to allow for mingling. Help find missing grads by joining Sentinel Grad 76 on Facebook. \$63. brownpapertickets.com/event/2498866

CARSON GRAHAM CLASS OF 84 – BIRTHDAY BASH Celebrate your 50th birthday at a class reunion with your childhood friends Saturday, May 21, 7 p.m. at Seymour's Pub, 210-720 Old Lillooet Rd., North Vancouver. Info: send a request to the Class of 1984 Carson Graham, North Vancouver, BC Facebook page or email Carol Walker (nee Seminoff) at walkercf@shaw.ca.

LET'S START THE CONVERSATION The Blueridge Community Association will host a special forum to begin addressing the future of public lands in Blueridge Monday, April 4, 7-9 p.m. at Blueridge elementary, 2650 Bronte Dr., North Vancouver. As a first step, school district trustee Barry Forward will give his perspective on the issue. Free, but must register for a ticket. eventbrite.ca/e/public-land-in-blueridge-lets-start-the-conversation-tickets-22619105353

LUNCHTIME LECTURE SERIES Feature presentations by academics, students, teachers and community leaders Mondays, 1:15-2 p.m. at Mulgrave school, 2330 Cypress Bowl Lane, West

Vancouver. April 4: History and development of the English language. mulgrave.com

LET'S TALK Develop English language skills while discussing current events at West Vancouver Memorial Library, 1950 Marine Dr. Beginners: Tuesdays, April 5, 12, 19 and 26, 1-2:30 p.m. Intermediate: Wednesdays, April 6, 13, 20 and 27, 7-8:30 p.m. 604-925-7400 westvanlibrary.ca

DIGNITY DAY The Salvation Army will host this annual community outreach event that provides free health and community services to North Shore residents who may be at-risk or marginalized and who may experience barriers to care Wednesday, April 6, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at 105 West 12th St., North Vancouver. Free hot meals will be offered at 8 a.m. and noon. There will also be free hair cuts, flu shots, eye exams, hearing tests, income tax preparation help and much more.

POWER OF RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL Two short films about CBT Vietnam, a community-based tourism initiative that works with ethnic minority villages in the Sapa region of Vietnam, followed by a panel of speakers who will share their expertise about the topic of responsible, sustainable and ethical travel Thursday, April 7, 6 p.m. at the Bosa Centre at Capilano University, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver. powerofresponsibletravel.eventbrite.ca

Compiled by Debbie Caldwell



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