



DALHOUSIE ENGINEERING STUDENT ORGANIZES SELF-DEFENCE CLASS FOR WOMEN

CLASS IN ISRAELI MARTIAL ART KRAV MAGA WAS SOLD OUT

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Women of all majors filed into the Studley Gymnasium on the evening of Jan. 11.

They came to study something in an unfamiliar field: Krav Maga.

They were there for a women's specific self-defence class, organized by Efiran Penkar.

Lobke Rotteveel has some martial arts training in her background but attended the event with the hopes of brushing up on her knowledge.

"A lot of people don't have the benefit of that kind of a background, and I think, especially where it's a free event, this allows a lot more people to gain that confidence, to not be afraid when they're walking around at night," she says.

Having begun his professional career in the hotel management industry, Penkar noticed female employees faced certain hurdles that men in the same roles didn't. For example, women were far more likely to be harassed by patrons after denying them alcohol.

Penkar is in his fourth year of a mechanical engineering degree at Dalhousie. He was born in India but also lived in Israel before moving to Canada. He recalls that in his family, both boys and girls were taught self-defence skills early in life.

"I noticed in North America that it's not very harped on that we teach our daughters and sisters self-defence skills right off the get go," says Penkar.

His observations of the difficulties women face in the workplace, combined with his cultural and familial values, motivated him to organize an event on campus that could help empower women.

He also noted that the #metoo campaign has strengthened his desire to help women learn the skills they need to avoid becoming a victim.

The class, taught by instructors Paul Donnelly and Karolina Siadaczka of Kings Progressive Combat (KPC), filled up quickly. The instructors requested a cap on the number of participants in the class for safety reasons.

Because KPC doesn't normally offer women-specific courses, Penkar and Donnelly had to decide what would be the most important for women to learn. From there, Penkar took control of the organization and promotion of the event.

In addition to being a student, Penkar is also a member of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity at Dalhousie.

Penkar contacted the international branch of AEPi this past fall; he says they were excited to sponsor a portion of the event. He also received funding from the Center for Israeli Jewish Affairs and Stand With Us. This financial support allowed him to offer the class for free.

Penkar has spent months preparing for this event.

"The inspiration was mostly from Eli; this event is his love child," says Zane Brown, President of AEPi Halifax, who volunteered his time to the event.

If you missed it, don't worry. Penkar has said that he hopes to run another women's self-defence class on campus. However, he couldn't specify when that might be. Donnelly also said he would be interested in teaching a class like this again.

"We're very proud to have 16 to 18 women that are willing to participate in an event such as this, take control of their life and better themselves" says Penkar "not just for today, but for the lifelong."