



Tips can help prevent sexual assaults

Lisa Utzig Schafer / Special to the Tribune
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The recent rape, abduction and murder of 19-year-old Brianna Denison has young women and their families worried about who will be the next victim and when and where the perpetrator will strike next.

Although most cases of rape and sexual assault are perpetrated by someone known to the victim, this is a situation in which the perpetrator may be stalking and/or profiling his victims ahead of time.

The following safety tips are not guaranteed to keep you safe, but they can lessen your likelihood of becoming a victim of a sexual assault:

- Stay mentally alert and aware of your surroundings, look confident and in charge.
- Keep your cell phone easily accessible but avoid talking on your cell phone or listening to headphones while walking.
- If you need to walk somewhere, take major public streets and paths, rather than less-populated shortcuts. Plan your route and know what "safe" places are along it.
- Avoid walking alone whenever possible.
- Carry a small noisemaker, like a whistle, and/or a flashlight on your keychain.
- If you think you are being followed, be assertive, look the person in the eye and say something. Don't worry about being rude. Perpetrators look for vulnerable people.
- Have your keys out and ready before you get to your car.
- Lock your door as soon as you get into your car before you fiddle with the stereo or your purse.
- Try not to wait until the last minute to fill your gas tank; keep it at least half-full as often as you can.
- Don't hitchhike or accept rides from strangers. If a driver stops to ask you directions, avoid getting near the car.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened, leave the situation and go to a safe place.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The Women's Center is collaborating with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department to offer self-defense classes during the month of April.

If you would like more information on these classes, please contact South Lake Tahoe Women's Center at

(530) 544-2118 or stop by the office to speak with an advocate at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd., across from South Tahoe Middle School.

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