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14-year-old brown belt in karate rids herself of threat chop-chop

By Bianca Prieto, Rocky Mountain News
April 29, 2006

WESTMINSTER - Brittney Richardson didn't have to think about her next move when a stranger reached out to grab her last Friday.

She'd been through the motions a hundred times before in karate class, but this was the first time she put them into action.

"Leave me alone," the 14-year-old yelled as the man's hand closed around her small wrist, pulling her toward him.

Instinctively, Brittney swung her right hand and landed a fist on his cheek.

"I heard him thump and (moan) 'Ugh,' " when he hit the ground, she said. "I think it was the fastest I'd ever run."

For two years, Brittney has practiced martial arts at Mile High Karate in Westminster. She's done well. In that time, she's earned a brown belt.

"She did what she was taught," said her instructor, Amanda Christensen, who has a black belt. "And she did it almost step by step."

Brittney was aware of her surroundings, verbalized her warnings, stayed calm and attacked only until the danger was gone. Those are the lessons Christensen has tried to teach her students.

In response to the incident, all eight of the Denver-area Mile High Karate locations will offer a free self-defense class to women over the age of 14 on May 17.

The incident occurred near dusk as Brittney was walking home from the grocery store. On the way to her house near West 92nd Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard, she cut through an apartment complex to shorten the walk.

A white man in his 30s with bleach-blond hair and "really perfect teeth" beckoned to her. As she got closer to him, he started walking beside her.

Then he grabbed her.

The self-described "airly girl" kept her cool as she fought off her would-be abductor, who tried



Ahmad Terry © News

Brittney Richardson, pictured with her mother, Barb, knocked down a would-be abductor - a man in his 30s. "She did what she was taught," said her instructor, Amanda Christensen.

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coaxing her with promises of "you'll have fun." Instead, she said, "I punched him in the face ."

After Brittney got home, she and her mother reported the incident to police, who were unable to find the man.

"I'm very proud" of Brittney, Barb Richardson said. "I'm thankful that she had the skills."

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