



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Community Gets Sexual Assault Defense Training at SAAM Event hosted by Sanders

[James Sanders Jr.](#)

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In recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) hosted a defense training and prevention event to educate community members on how to protect themselves from becoming the victim of a sexual assault. Information on resources for survivors including support services, counseling, and legal rights were also presented. Some 40 people participated in the program, which was held yesterday at Praise Tabernacle Church in Jamaica.

“Sexual assault is a serious crime that affects the physical and emotional well-being of survivors long after the attack is over,” Senator Sanders said. “We are here today to raise awareness of this type of violence and do our part to educate as many people as we can in an effort to prevent future incidents from occurring, and to encourage those who have been victimized to seek help.”

One in three women and one in eleven men will be the victims of sexual assault at least once in their lifetime, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, which cites data from the FBI and Journal of Traumatic Stress. It is estimated that there is one sexual assault every 90 seconds in the United States.

Connie Pacheco, president of Recoveries R US, a vocational training program, located in Inwood, New York, bravely shared her own personal story of survival. After many years of being sexually assaulted, first as a child by family members, and then later in life by strangers, Pacheco said she blamed herself for being victimized and felt embarrassed and ashamed.

Pacheco started using drugs in order to cope. Eventually she sought treatment which helped turn her life around. She also took self defense classes and continued her formal education, which boosted her self confidence. The most significant turning point, however, occurred after Pacheco’s now ex-husband physically attacked her, grabbing her by the neck and attempting to choke her. She quickly and instinctively fought back, elbowing him to the face and breaking his nose.

“I decided right then and there – I am nobody’s punching bag,” she said. “I am not anyone’s possession. I am a human being. I am a woman. I have a lot to offer, and I matter.”

The centerpiece of the event was a live safety demonstration conducted by Avi Avramcheyiv, the founder and chief instructor of NY Self Defense Academy and a former hand-to-hand combat instructor with the Israeli military. He taught attendees how to fight off an attacker who is armed with a knife or a gun, as well as how to escape from a variety of other scenarios such as being choked, pinned to the

