

Consumer Advisory Team Update

CAT Members Learn About Self-Defense

By Jay Connor, CAT Chairman

At the April CAT meeting, Taryn Roberts of Project Get Safe presented a program showing how people with disabilities can protect themselves from someone who might try to harm them. Since being able to stay safe is important to independence, I wanted to share some of the tips we learned from her.

The presentation was very interactive, with everyone in the group participating in demonstrating the self-defense techniques. We learned how each of us can use our mind, our voice and our body or wheelchair to defend ourselves.

- **Using our Minds** – Learning to recognize situations that are unsafe and avoiding them is a



big part of self-defense. Remembering the Buddy System is one of the easiest things we can do to stay safe. The Buddy System means that we take a “buddy” – a friend, family member or trusted caregiver – whenever we go somewhere, rather than going alone. We also make sure that a family member, roommate or caregiver knows where we are going and when we will be back.

- **Using our Voices** – Even if we have a Buddy with us, someone could try to get too close to us, or do something to make us feel uncomfortable or frightened. By speaking up loudly, shouting “Back off!” “I don’t know you!” or “Leave me alone!” we can draw the attention of others in the community who can help us.
- **Using our Bodies** – As a last resort, we learned some ways to physically defend ourselves. Depending on a person’s individual abilities, these could include running away, hand movements such

Upcoming CAT Meeting Dates

August 12

September 16

October 21

November 11

CAT meetings are from 10 a.m. to noon at RCOC’s Santa Ana office, 801 Civic Center Drive West. Call Nancy Mata at (714) 796-5206 ahead of time to let her know you will be there.

as raising arms to keep from being hit, or using a wheelchair to strike back at an attacker.

After the presentation, Taryn presented Get Safe kits to all the CAT members who attended. The kits included Get Safe t-shirts and handbooks, emergency identity cards for us to fill-out and carry in our wallets, and Get Safe stuffed bears. These materials will remind us of the important skills we learned to avoid harm. As Stuart Haskins, the founder of Project Get Safe, says: “Look for trouble, then stay away from it!”