



## Empowering Women Through Self-Defense: A Community Partnership

The Wilbraham Police Department and the GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club are teaming up to give local women the tools to protect themselves — both physically and mentally — through the nationally recognized R.A.D. (Rape Aggression Defense) program.

The R.A.D. program is a comprehensive self-defense course designed specifically for women. It focuses on awareness, prevention, risk reduction, and realistic self-defense tactics. Participants learn practical strategies to recognize and avoid dangerous situations, along with hands-on physical defense techniques taught by certified Wilbraham Police instructors.

The GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club, known for its dedication to volunteerism and community service, saw the R.A.D. program as a natural fit with its mission. "This program isn't about fear — it's about confidence," said Ann Matthews, Wilbraham Junior Women's Club member. "Our goal is to empower women with knowledge and skills that can make a real difference in their safety. Our club believes in strengthening women through friendship, leadership, and community involvement, partnering with the Wilbraham Police Department on this program helps us extend that mission in a truly meaningful way."

The program combines education, awareness, and practical defense skills (suitable for women of all ages and abilities) in a supportive, encouraging environment. The course is open to women and teen girls 16 years and older and no prior experience or fitness level is required. This program is an excellent opportunity for mothers and high school girls to participate together — a meaningful and empowering experience before students head off to college or into the workplace.

The R.A.D. program will be held at The Wilbraham Senior Center 240 Springfield Street in Wilbraham. Participants meet for 2 hours once a week for four weeks on Wednesday evenings from 6pm – 8pm, April 8, 15, 29 and May 6, 2026. Participants are asked to register only if they can commit to attending all four sessions, as each class builds on the previous one for maximum effectiveness. Space is limited to the first 30 people to sign up, and early registration is recommended. .

The Wilbraham Junior Women's Club is proud to help make this valuable program accessible to everyone by offsetting the cost for participants. Thanks to the Club's support, the entire course is offered at a reduced fee of just \$10. To register, visit [www.wilbrahamjuniorwomens.org](http://www.wilbrahamjuniorwomens.org) or contact Ann Matthews [annmatthews@outlook.com](mailto:annmatthews@outlook.com) 413-949-0920