

CULTURE

Two with heart

Portland martial arts center branches out to serve the world

BY GINA DAGGETT

You can feel the positive energy radiating when you walk through the door at One with Heart, a martial arts, fitness and wellness center in Southeast Portland.

Manifesting her own vision, founder and owner Janesa Kruse, along with her partner, Marian Van Leeuwen, have molded the business into a well-oiled wellness machine.

"We encourage healing through movement," says Kruse, who conceived One with Heart more than 20 years ago. "Movement heals more than just our bodies. Movement heals the spirit. Movement creates balance. When people are balanced, our community is balanced."

If you've driven up Hawthorne Boulevard before, no doubt you've seen One with Heart. The vibrant dragon mural on the side of the building—which, years ago, drew bowlers instead of martial arts enthusiasts—is hard to miss. So are the steamy windows on a winter night or the flow of people enjoying one of many mind and body classes.

Poekoelan Tjimindie Tulen Kung Fu

You'll have to stop by (or go online) to get a comprehensive list of services and classes One with Heart offers, as the list is long and diverse. But if one program reflects the namesake heart, it's Poekoelan.

Kruse, who is a fifth-degree black belt, began her training in 1981. "Poekoelan is a beautiful art. Its beauty is felt when you see it. It stirs up emotions. It has incredible energy," she says.

Poekoelan (pronounced Poo-koo-lawn) is the ability to move as fluidly on the ground as when standing. This unique form of ground fighting was brought to the United States in 1956 by Mas Goerue Agoeng Willy Wetzell. While meditation and breathing are also important parts of Poekoelan, it's an Indonesian martial art whose forms, sets and movements are derived from four animals: monkey, tiger, crane and snake.

"Poekoelan has purpose," says 51-year-old Kruse. "It is compassionate, balanced action. It is a very pure art and very close to its source."

Van Leeuwen began practicing Poekoelan in 1985. With her second-degree black belt, she explains that in Poekoelan "we use highly versatile movements—on the ground and in

the air. Our movements are fluid and effortless. We make very fast, whip-style strikes."

Mind, body and weights

Beyond Poekoelan, mind, body and weight training are also important components of One with Heart. While offering classes in kickboxing, yang-style tai chi, soaring crane chi kung, tribal belly dancing and mat pilates, it also has state-of-the-art weight training equipment.

With a team of certified personal trainers, One with Heart aims to enhance the performance of athletes in nontraditional sports. Additionally, the center wants to enhance the lives of women by promoting proper training, up-to-date health and fitness information and a comfortable space.

Tulen Self Defense

Inherent in many One with Heart programs is self-defense. By creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, Van Leeuwen says, "Women bond and encourage each other in a supportive environment."

In the spirit of self-defense, the couple are on the cusp of something big—they're launching their national nonprofit brainchild Tulen Self Defense in the early part of 2004.

The vision is fueled by the desire to help women and children lead safer lives. Dedicated to social change, Kruse and Van Leeuwen hope to provide their self-defense programs to as many people as possible, "regardless of the background and income level," says Kruse, an Oregon native.

The scope of Tulen Self Defense is vast. While not yet officially launched, it was founded last July. "TSD provides original and comprehensive self-defense programs across the country to women and children from diverse backgrounds," says Kruse, noting that it is "really an outgrowth of our practice of Poekoelan and the self-defense work we've been doing for 25 years."

Teaching self-defense is nothing new to either of these women. Since 1988, One with Heart has been teaching women physical and verbal skills to prevent assault. Programs at One with Heart include Strike Back!, a two-day course with a padded attacker, and Fear to

Action, which is offered free four times a year. The last session drew 76 women and girls.

"Learning physical skills is very important," says Kruse, "but more important is the verbal training." By teaching women to negotiate, de-escalate and set boundaries, One with Heart has already touched the lives of hundreds of women. But, Kruse says with anticipation, "TSD will bring this course to thousands of women.... Many former students report that they used their self-defense skills to prevent attacks."

Empowering children

The couple, who met 18 years ago at a martial arts conference in upstate New York, are excited about upcoming Tulen events. February will see a free teen self-defense workshop "serving 100 girls," Van Leeuwen says.

Originally from the Netherlands, Van Leeuwen, 46, moved to Portland in 1992 and is looking forward to an upcoming workshop at the Girls Initiative Network national conference.

One with Heart also helps kids with an anti-bullying class called No Means No. "This program uses a multidisciplinary approach that involves teachers, social workers and police," explains Van Leeuwen. The program is a success in the Netherlands.

Janesa Kruse (left) teaches self-defense at One with Heart

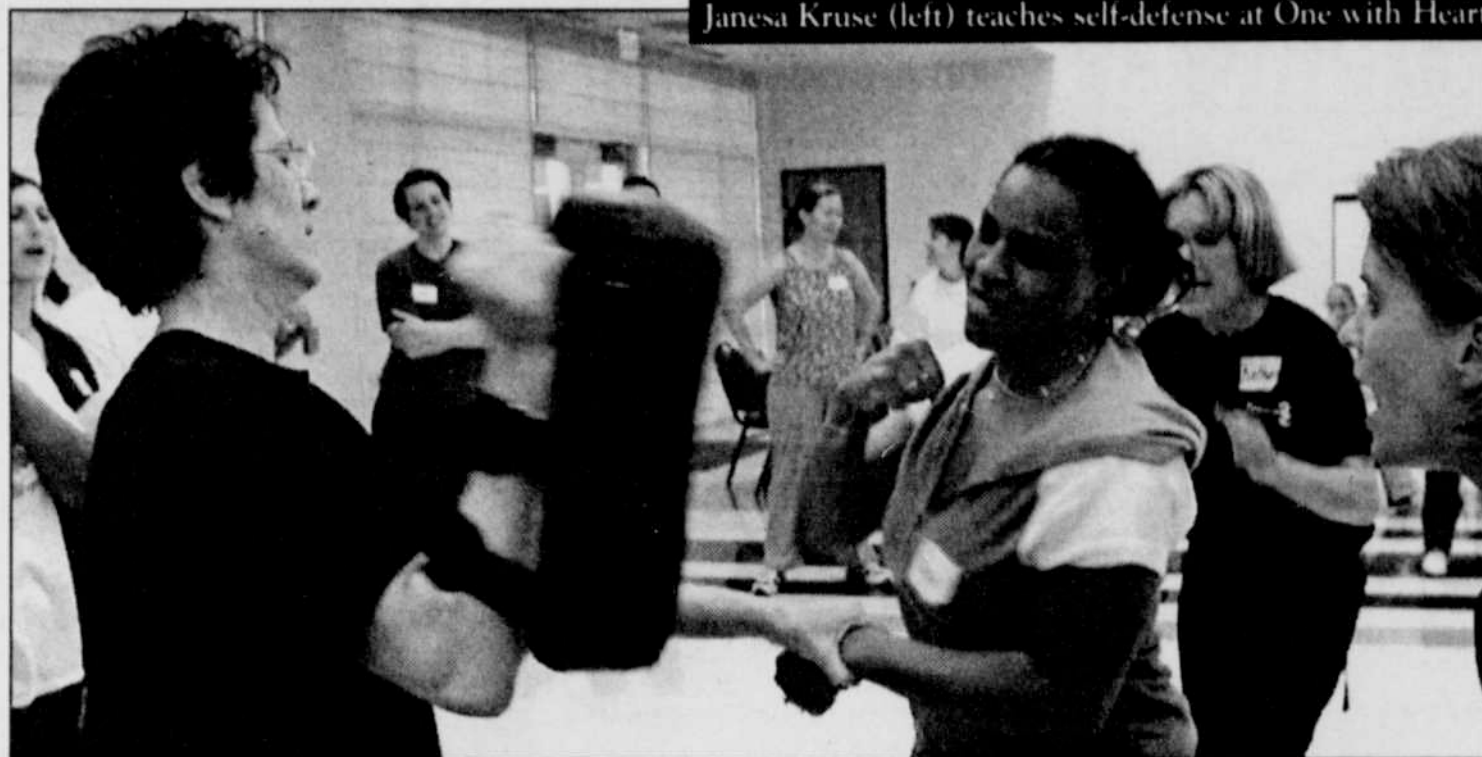


PHOTO BY PAIGE RICHARDSON

"In Amsterdam, we have taught approximately 3,000 inner-city kids over the past couple years."

Tulen Self Defense would take this program to schools nationwide, teaching children to handle (among other things) peer pressure, bullying, dating violence, kidnapping and assault by familiar adults.

It appears there is no stopping Kruse and Van Leeuwen. You can feel the excitement and verve when you talk with them—how they truly believe in their vision and love their work. These dynamic lesbians have created an enlightened paradise in Portland at One with Heart, one that continues to grow and blossom.

And very soon, in their work with Tulen Self Defense, they'll

bring

empowering skills to the world community. "We believe that everybody needs self-defense," Kruse says. "It is like learning how to swim if you live in a country with a lot of water." ■

ONE WITH HEART is located at 4231 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. Contact the martial arts and wellness center at 503-231-1999 or www.onewithheart.com.

Find Portland free-lance writer GINA DAGGETT at www.ginadaggett.com.

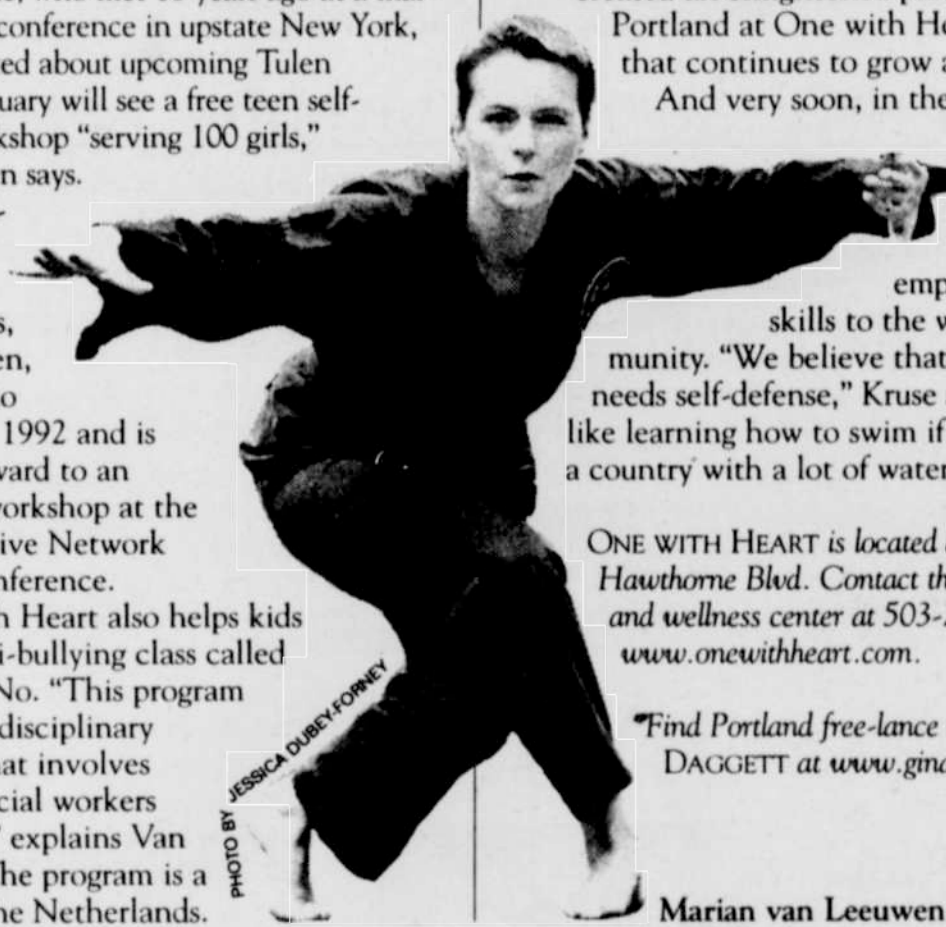
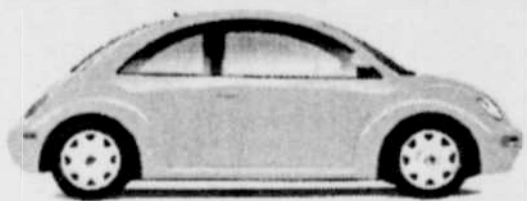


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Marian van Leeuwen

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