

A tribute to Jeff Rumelhart

'He taught me how strong I really am'

BY MARGARET DELLA SANTINA

On Saturday, March 24, Ruch families and friends gathered at America's Best Karate in south Medford to celebrate the accomplishments of Ruch students earning a green or purple belt in Tae-Kwon-Do. Since fall 2011, these students worked under the masterful direction of Jeff Rumelhart in after-school classes at Ruch School, progressing from belt-level to belt-level with increasing skill and determination. At the end of the March 24 test, which included a complex 36-move *palge* form that the students executed smoothly and confidently, we watched proudly as Mr. Rumelhart and his assistants tied a new belt on each student.

Just a few days later, on Wednesday, March 28, we were stunned and saddened to learn of the death of Jeff Rumelhart, an honorary member of the Ruch School community. Mr. Rumelhart, who had been undergoing treatments for leukemia for some time, died from cardiac arrest after complications with his blood levels.

Mr. Rumelhart took obvious pride in his "Ruch satellite program." He and an assistant (often his daughter, who has a black belt in Tae-Kwon-Do) drove out to Ruch School two days a week to offer a karate program for about 20 kids. They

practiced in the cafeteria, tables pushed back against the walls; Mr. Rumelhart made the karate and the kids feel important even in this make-do studio—there were no mats and no mirrors, but there was always a tremendous amount of respect and learning.

A consummate teacher, Mr. Rumelhart often reminded his students to "be safe, have fun, and learn something." He challenged them physically and mentally while providing just the right amount of support for them to succeed: he understood the importance of creating the optimal "learning zone" where students would feel a legitimate sense of accomplishment. He held students accountable for their behavior, yet always made it clear that he respected and enjoyed them. He was patient even when disciplining students or asking them to work harder; he clearly had a vision for where they were headed and he held that vision for his students. And at each step of the journey, he made sure the students thought about *why* they were doing what they were doing and were aware of their own progress.

By offering Tae-Kwon-Do at Ruch School, Mr. Rumelhart exemplified the role of a "community partner." He

responded enthusiastically to the idea of bringing karate to Ruch, offered a reduced group rate for us, and drove from Medford to Ruch twice a week so that our students wouldn't have to commute in the other direction. He contributed to our school community through the respectful, caring relationships he developed with our students. "Take the karate outside that door," he told them. "We're not talking about the kicking and punching. We're talking about your *character*."

Mr. Rumelhart's students took their karate *inside* themselves, as much as they took it *outside* the cafeteria doors.

Our son William remembers that Mr. Rumelhart "taught me to be patient." Not to get frustrated when you can't do something right away, or don't have immediate success, but to practice and feel the excitement of accomplishment that comes from training over time. Also, William says, "He taught me how strong I really am."

What better tribute to a teacher? This



The late Jeff Rumelhart, former Tae-Kwon-Do instructor at Ruch School

is what education is really about. Education is not just about *what* you learn, it's about *who* you are becoming in the process. We are among the many students and families who will miss Mr. Rumelhart deeply, but we feel fortunate that our son's life has been touched by such a gifted teacher.

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Death Notice

Ken Holyome, 69 of Jacksonville, Oregon, passed away on Friday, March 9, 2012, at his home (www.memorygardensmortuary.com).

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Poetry Corner

Starcrossed Lovers

by John Taylor, Grants Pass, OR

You and I have met before,
And then, as now,
Our stars have softly exploded
Into one another.

We are changed for all time,
The path of our lives altered forever.
Such is the power of love between us,
Between you and me.

The voices of all lovers past
Will go singing through the halls of time...
And you and I have become part of that song.



Lupines

by John Taylor, Grants Pass, OR

Through fields of flowers, hand in hand
In sun so warm and sweet,
Pretty bowers...skin that's tanned,
On bare and wand'ring feet.

Forgetting time and feeling free,
We laugh into the wind,
In loving rhyme like you and me,
Those lovely lupines bend.

Happy Father's Day!

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