

People

Local karate teacher emphasizes self-confidence, values and kicks

by PHIL CHRISTENSEN
Correspondent

Bob Croeni's karate classes don't look unusual.

The robes, the moves and the discipline appear typical of any such class. In fact, if you didn't know the class was meeting at Damascus Christian School, and didn't hear it open in prayer, you might not know it was a Christian Martial Arts Association class.

The class has 27 trophies and medals it has garnered just since

'Because of the self-confidence they get, they don't have to fight anymore.'

— Bob Croeni

August. Croeni, who works in Wemme, is pleased with the progress the students are making. "All 15 of my beginning students have passed to second-degree white belt," he said.

Sixteen-year-old Jason Riley commutes to the classes from Tigard and has been studying under Croeni since last July. Said Riley, "I like the tournaments the most. It's a rush of excitement."

Jason's mother, Tura Riley, is as enthusiastic about the sport as her son. "It's changed Jason's life," she said.

Both she and her husband initially were opposed to Jason taking the lessons. "Our thoughts were, 'Why does a kid with a hot temper need to know karate?'" she recalled.

She said, however, just the opposite happened. "It's taught him self-control and patience."

Croeni said Riley's experience is not unusual. The skills attained in learning the martial arts often are social as much as physical.

Croeni has noticed a decline in violent tendencies in students, especially in the juvenile delinquents he has worked with. "Because of the self-confidence they get, they don't have to fight



Bob Croeni, who is an employee of Son Village in Wemme, works with a student in a karate class.

anymore," Croeni said. "A lot of the kids were street fighters, and

when they learn real control, they lose the desire to fight."

An affirming, learning environment and team spirit are important parts of Croeni's style. "They have to have total encouragement at all times. If there are any put-downs, that person is talked to immediately. If they get into a fight using karate, unless it's a total self-defense situation, they are suspended."

Croeni's moral "tight ship" has resulted in a unique record — he has never had a student penalized in a tournament for excessive contact. "I'm really proud of that," he said.

Croeni himself attained his black belt in November 1984. Most of his study was under Bruce Terrell from the Oregon Karate Association.

Besides his karate credentials, Croeni is also a certified child care worker for the state. He has spent the past 10 years working with youth, most of that time on staff at Son Village in Wemme, where he now works.

He has been teaching karate disciplines to the boys placed in that custody over the years. "I was teaching the boys there for several years, taking them to tournaments, and they were doing really well."

Croeni says that many of the troubled boys he was working with at Son Village began to grow out of their problems as they became involved with karate. "When two of the kids at Son Village didn't have enough money to enter the tournaments, others chipped in so they could. They began to show a lot of team spirit." He said the continual success he experienced at Son Village helped encourage him to start his own karate association.

Croeni said there is much current interest in karate and attributed it to being "a lot of fun and good conditioning. Parents like it for the self-discipline the kids learn."

"A lot of people I've talked to said that ever since their kids saw 'Karate Kid,' they've wanted to do karate," Croeni said. "Many parents, however, are uncomfortable with the Eastern religions that often accompany those disciplines. We've offered an alternative."

Group plans trip to Europe

High school students interested in a 21-day visit to Europe next summer are invited to attend meetings to prepare for the tour.

Tina Mattsen, a Sandy resident who provides occupational therapy in schools in the Sandy and Estacada areas, is local coordinator of the Cultural Heritage Alliance educational tour. The group will leave Portland June 30 and return from Europe on July 20.

For more information about the tour and for meeting dates, contact Mattsen at 668-5006.



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On the honor roll

Bull Run School

Eighteen students at Bull Run achieved honor roll status for the first quarter by earning a grade-point average of 3.5 or better.

They are sixth-graders Ian Kirkpatrick, Stephanie Little and Shannon Schneider; seventh-graders Cindy Cox, Aimee deCarteret, Toni Fujiwara, Justin Holm, Heidi Poutala, Ryan Samples and Amy Smith; and eighth-graders Lisa Forester, Damon Hodge, Heather Knight, Amanda Moore, Scott Nelson, Andy Schneider, Kevin Titsworth and Dan Whitlock.

Welches School

Nineteen students at Welches School earned perfect grades during the first semester, according to Principal Teri Prochaska.

They are Levi Dalton, Nate

Coutour, Chris Hanken, Landon Lythgoe, Robbie Walker, Rebecca Bliesner, Mike McCarthy, Anna Gille, Jimmie Buchanan, Jaime Espenel, Alex Enna, Jeni Atkins, Megan McCarthy, Rayna Reed, Darcie Simpson, Emile Draper, Sarah Beard, Paula Bishop and Jake Morrison.

Other students who achieved honor roll status by earning a grade-point average of 3.5 or better are eighth-graders Ryan Atkins, Dulcinea Myers-Newcomb, Lindsey Draper, Elizabeth Morrison, Lori Fraijo, Emily Untalan and Heather Guintini.

Seventh-graders on the honor roll are Jack Henniger, Katy Stines, Christy Wallace, Ryan Novotny and Charles Taylor.

Sixth-grader on the honor roll are Ross Martin, Jon Wolf, Brandy Wilson and Abe McMahan.

Fifth-graders on the honor roll are Reggie Wicks, Rachall Martin, Kristen Sinclair, Jessica Burke and Jacob McKinley.

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