

# KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

## Teacher turns passion into after school club

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
Of the Keizertimes

Eduardo Rodriguez developed a passion for Brazilian jiu-jitsu when he was a student at Western Oregon University in 2010.

Nearly a decade later, he has gotten the chance to share that passion with a group of students at Weddle Elementary.

Rodriguez, who's a fifth-grade teacher at Weddle, started an after school jiu-jitsu club in the gym that takes place Mondays and Fridays from 3:45-5 p.m.

"I noticed that we didn't have very many after school programs," Rodriguez said. "I knew that I had always wanted to teach (jiu-jitsu) and I thought this was the perfect way to do something extra for the kids."

"It's just something fun to do after school."

Rodriguez got the desire to start the club during the 2017-18 school year. After getting the go-ahead from Weddle principal Stacey Lund, he was able to raise \$1,500 through the jiu-jitsu apparel brand Want vs. Need.

With the money, Rodriguez bought a 20x20 rollout mat, and the club was officially formed in January 2018.

Anywhere from 20-45 third, fourth and fifth-grade students can be found at a typical jiu-jitsu club at Weddle, and you would be hard pressed to find a student without a smile on their face.

"It's really fun learning new things and it's just fun to



be with friends after school because not a lot of people get clubs," said fourth-grader Draven Harris.

Rodriguez still competes in jiu-jitsu tournaments and even teaches classes to adults through Impact Jiu-Jitsu at Courthouse Athletic Club.

Over the course of the last nine years, Rodriguez has seen the sport he loves have a large impact on his life, and he believes that it's already having an impact on his kids at Weddle.

"I used to have very little focus on what I wanted to do," Rodriguez said. "With jiu-jitsu, I had to focus all of my attention on one thing. So I wanted to give that to these kids."

Rodriguez acknowledged that he several kids in his class that suffer with ADHD and/or behavioral issues and that the art of jiu-jitsu has helped them

"This was the perfect way to do something extra for the kids."

— Eduardo Rodriguez  
Weddle teacher



better manage their problems.

"There are some kids that show some explosive behaviors when they're in class. But in here, I never see that," Rodriguez said. "Teachers have told me that some of the kids are now walking around with more confidence in themselves because they know how to protect themselves now."

While there's no one-on-one combat in the class, Rodriguez prides himself on challenging his kids by teaching them different kinds of



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

LEFT: Jenedy Garcia Cortez practices kicks in an after school jiu-jitsu program at Weddle Elementary School. RIGHT: Josue Acosta Jimenez grapples with teacher Eduardo Rodriguez.

moves and techniques.

"They're no lions in here. Kids get humbled pretty quickly when there are moves that they can't do," Rodriguez said.

However, it is a thrilling moment for kids when they do master a new move.

"I really like getting to learn new moves," fourth-grader Savannah Dulay said. "I sometimes will get them wrong at first, but Mr. Rodriguez will always help us."

Third-grader Karrson Harris also added: "It's kind of amazing when you learn the move, and then you just know how to do it without thinking about it."

While the club is already pretty popular, Rodriguez encourages any student that is interested to come and join.

"You don't have to be super athletic to do it. If you follow step for step and don't deviate, it will land just perfect," Rodriguez said.

## Casino night at Avamere

Avamere Court at Keizer will hold a casino night to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Association on Friday, March 15. Games begin at 5 p.m. at Independent Living Community Building 3, 510 River Road N.

Door charges are \$10 per person and will give participants \$25 in "funny money" to gamble with, as well as a chance to win the door prize drawing.

RSVP by calling (503) 393-3624, ext. 340 or email Sue Horn at shorn@avamere.com.

## Chamber hosts State of City

The Keizer Chamber of Commerce will host Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark's annual State of the City address Tuesday, March 12.

Clark will discuss the accomplishments of the past year, current projects and the direction of the city over the coming year.

The speech will take place at the Keizer Quality Inn & Suites, 5188 Wittenberg Lane N.E., at 11:30 a.m.

## Confluence chorus celebrates freedom

The Confluence Willamette Valley LGBT Chorus will present their *Finding Freedom* performance on Friday, March 15.

Audiences will hear music filled with inspirational songs of hope and will be energized by the power of human survival, perseverance, and joy.

The concert will be held at the First Congregational United Church, 700 Marion Street NE, and begin at 7:30 p.m.

Senior and student tickets can be purchased online for \$12 and regular tickets can be purchased for \$15. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$18 or \$15 for seniors and students.

They will also be performing in Portland on Saturday, March 16 and Sunday March, 17 in Corvallis.

To get your tickets or to get more information visit [confluencechorus.org](http://confluencechorus.org).

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