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**TAI JI QUAN:**

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the class is to help elderly people reduce their chances of falling, although that outcome is not guaranteed.

"Will it keep you from falling? No," she said. "But it will make you stronger and hopefully prevent breaks and other serious injuries."

Wolfe said serious breaks and other injuries caused by falls can often lead to a variety of other serious health ailments among elderly people. She said, many times, a fall that leads to a break could be the beginning of a long and hard battle with other health problems.

During the classes, which take place from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Hermiston Senior Center, Wolfe runs her group through eight Tai Ji Quan forms, which feature a combination of fluid hand and arm movements and steps that force the participants to use certain muscles that improve balance when a person feels like he or she is about to fall or help prevent bones from breaking if a person does fall.

During her class Thursday, Wolfe started members with a breathing exercise meant to relax their minds, which was followed by slow



MAEGAN MURRAY PHOTO

Hermiston resident Mary Solomon completes a form with the rest of her classmates during the Tai Ji Quan Movement for Better Balance class Thursday at the Hermiston Senior Center. The class has helped Solomon further recover from a knee replacement she had last April.

and fluid movements as a warm up and then the full forms.

For the first time, Wolfe also took her class through some new exercises that had her students up and moving around as they completed parts of the forms. The goal with those exercises, she said, was to strengthen other parts of the body while also contributing to endurance levels.

"This was the first time I've had them move around the room, but it won't be the last time," she said.

Many class members said they appreciate having

an activity aimed at their age group that also provided an opportunity to get out of the house.

Hermiston resident Carol Poulson said she decided to sign up for the class after reading about it in the news-

paper. She said the main reason it appealed to her was because it is something that would give her a reason to leave the house after her husband passed away recently.

"I think this is great," she said. "Anytime you can get out and do something, it is always a good thing."

Hermiston resident Donna Okay agreed.

"It's nice to be out with people and having something to do," she said.

Morris said she has used the classes to help strengthen her shoulder, which needed surgery after she injured it. With tai ji quan, her shoulder feels much better, and she is doing just fine.

"It's a great activity," she said.

Wolfe said the age ranges of the people in her classes runs from 64 to 84 years old. She said the class benefits everyone in a low-intensity

setting.

"What I like about it is it is a gentle exercise," Solomon said. "It's not one that wears you out, but you still get a good workout."

Wolfe said the session encompasses 48 total classes through the year. The class is currently in week 14, but it is still open to new members.

"I can work with them afterwards to help get them caught up on the forms, or they can just come and follow the leader," she said.

Wolfe said the Tai Ji Quan Movement for Better Balance class is evidence-based and was created by senior scientist Fuzhong Li of the Oregon Research Institute.

"It really works," she said.

For more information about the class, people can contact Wolfe at 541-561-5443 or email her at hwolfe@capeco-works.org.



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