

West Valley VIEW

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ

12/15/2006

Martial arts tournament coming to Saide

Robin N. Clayton
staff writer

If you know absolutely nothing about martial arts, it is next to impossible to make out the commands instructor Chris Guffey's booming voice calls out to his students at the Dr. Saide Recreation Center in Buckeye.

Except for the occasional, "turn to the right - your other right."

But all 15 of the barefoot 5- to 10-year-olds in yellow belts have it down, twisting and fashioning kicks, punches and other maneuvers that to the novice look too confusing to remember.

On Saturday, some of those students will take those skills to task by competing in a martial arts tournament at the Saide Center.

The tournament is open to all of Guffey's students, and he is expecting approximately 25 competitors, he said. Competitors will be separated by rank and age.

Guffey teaches both children and adults at the Saide Recreation Center as well as at Fitness One in Surprise.

He has studied in the United States, Japan, Korea and Guam. He spent seven years overseas, and knows four forms of martial arts and "I am working on more," he said.

When asked what got him started in martial arts at 6 years old, Guffey's answer comes quickly.

"My parents," he said. "Power Rangers and my parents."

Guffey said he enjoys teaching children, but there are good things about teaching adults too.

"The children make me laugh," he said. "But with the adults, I can focus more in the philosophy, the art. I can share the knowledge that I have and teach them."



BUCKEYE MARTIAL ARTS CLASS INSTRUCTOR CHRIS GUFFEY works with Mason Adams, 9, on forms at the Dr. Saide Recreation Center in Buckeye in preparation for an upcoming tournament.



ZACHARY BURT, 10, AND HIS SISTER, SYDNEY, 7, work on forms during practice.

The tournament consists of two categories, forms and sparring.

Forms are the students' responses to commands as they had been doing in class that day, Guffey said.

Sparring is a different matter altogether, at least according to 7-year-old Sydney Burt, one of Guffey's students.

"I was afraid to [be in the tournament] because I was afraid I would fall down," Sydney said, adding that in a recent gentle sparring episode, her opponent brought her down "flat on my right knee."

"But now I am not, because I found out we get to wear padding," she said.

Sydney's brother, 10-year-old Zachary, took lessons in California before his family moved to Arizona. When they got here, both Zachary and Sydney started classes together, but they both like it for different reasons.

"I like it because it is challenging and will help with strength," Zachary said.

Sydney said her favorite part of the lessons is the people.

"I like coming here and making new friends," she said.

Sydney took a few moments to recount recent events in class, stories of Zachary's experience in the martial arts school in California and told of a recent injury that was still sore but didn't deter her from coming to class just the same.

After a brief pause, she said, "And I think you have got enough from me," and headed for the door.

The tournament, which is open to the public, will be held from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday at Saide Recreation Center, 1003 E. Eason Ave.

Robin Clayton can be reached by e-mail at rclayton@westvalleyview.com.