

# West Valley VIEW

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## Glendale resident teaches Haidong Gumdo in Buckeye

by **Brennan Stebbins**

special to the *View*

If there's one person in the West Valley you don't want to mess around with, it's got to be Glendale resident Chris Guffey.

Guffey could use the straight cut on you, or the left-right cut. Maybe even a cross cut and then a diagonal cut, and he's only getting started with Haidong Gumdo.

Guffey, who holds a black belt in numerous martial arts, is currently teaching Haidong Gumdo, or Korean sword, class in Buckeye at the Dr. Saide Recreation Center for people 13 and older.

"Students can get self-defense from it, believe it or not," Guffey said at a recent class session. "When it's just training with a sword, they get great endurance. They build their physical endurance and mental endurance immensely through the stance training we do.

"It gives you a better mental awareness of yourself and your surroundings."

The class began June 5 and runs through June 28. Another session will last from July 3 to July 31, and a third session runs from Aug. 2 to Aug. 30.

Korean Sword is an ancient martial art that has just recently gained popularity with the public, Guffey said.

"It's a fairly recent spread to the public, but it's very popular," he said. "It's in over 50 countries with a million practitioners and more. Over ten thousand compete in Korea every two years. It's a very big, very awesome martial art just based solely on the sword, so it's a lot of fun."

Guffey said he enjoys the art because it's different from the other contemporary and traditional martial arts - the main focus is on a weapon the entire time. He's been involved with the sword art for a year and martial arts for 15 years. He's also in an accelerated program



**CHRIS GUFFEY** of Glendale is the instructor of Korean sword class in Buckeye.



**MARICELA MADRIGAL** of Glendale practices her Korean sword technique in Buckeye.

for master instructors, and trains with the third-highest rank in the martial art every six months.

"We get beat down for about three hours a day for two weeks at a time when my master comes down from Korea," Guffey said. "We work our butts off and I train for about two or three hours every day by myself and with the other masters, so I put the time in."

### **Students of the sword**

Kelby Gutkosky and her father, Richard, are taking the sword class together.

"The whole flow of movement, like poetry, it's just really amazing," Kelby said. "And the energy you feel from everything, that's also really cool. It's just a wonderful experience."

Richard said he gets a lot of testosterone and excitement from the class, but Kelby is more addicted than even him.

"I love it," he said. "It's hard for parents to find something in common with their kids. I've always been doing martial arts. I've studied Japanese martial arts for about 12 years and she's always had interest."

"I didn't feel I was good enough to teach her myself because I've been in and out of it, so I thought it would be exciting to join together."

Students learn basic cuts and stances in the class, as well as deep breathing exercises to build their ki. Then, it's on to sword forms, where students practice throwing a ball in the air and cutting it down with their sword. Self-defense techniques are also taught, and the class goes through paper, bamboo and straw cutting.

"It's a very versatile art," Guffey said.

Until students reach the black belt level, they use a wooden practice sword, or mok gum. When participants get higher up in the color belt levels, they can use a dull practice sword.

"It's used so they know how to use a real sword without the risks of using a real sword, cutting themselves or whatever else," Guffey said.

Costs for the series of hour-long classes are \$45 for Buckeye residents and \$55 for non-residents.

"I'm the only one teaching martial arts out here as far as I know," Guffey said. "I just want to bring it out to my students and spread the martial art and be able to spread Haidong Gumdo and build a student base to make it more popular."

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