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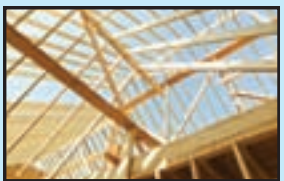
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Never too late for martial arts



PHOTOS BY ANNE STOKES • GOLD COUNTRY NEWS SERVICE

Wise Warrior Taekwondo student Laurie Rich, of Carmichael, works out at The Studio in Granite Bay.

Seniors earning black belts, staying active

BY MARGARET SNIDER
GOLD COUNTRY NEWS SERVICE

Many older adults have expressed a desire to participate in martial arts, or regret that they didn't do it when they were younger. As evidenced by those who have successfully joined and completed martial arts programs, it is possible to attain these goals with programs that take into consideration the person's capabilities, such as in the Wise Warriors program now offered by The Studio Martial Arts & Fitness in Granite Bay.

"We wanted to make sure that even those with physical limitations are still active and healthy and those that are in their 50s and 60s and 70s, even folks that are in retirement, can have something that they work hard for and attain," said Amittis Pourarian, 35, owner of The Studio Martial Arts & Fitness in Granite Bay and San Diego. "It's never too late to do martial arts."

The Studio conceived of Wise Warriors because of the number of people Pourarian encountered who said they would love to learn martial arts, but thought they were too old or too limited, or were leery of injuries from the contact part of the sport.

"The criteria are modified slightly based on physical limitations and age group," Pourarian said. "But they'll still earn every belt, they'll still work hard for every belt, they just won't have that physical contact part of it unless they choose to engage in some of it, then we can incorporate it."

It will keep them fresh mentally as well as physically, Pourarian said, as they continuously learn new material.

"We still do all the traditional forms," Pourarian said. "We've added in a little bit of Qigong in there, too, a little bit of Tai Chi, a little bit of yoga, a little bit of meditation, plus all the martial arts aspects. ... They will do weapons,

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BELT: Benefits of learning martial arts include physical fitness and self-confidence

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they'll do all the kicks, all the basic self-defense, so all the components minus the injury. We just saw the need in our community."

Pourarian began learning Taekwondo as a teen when she tried a class with a family friend and fell in love with it.

She graduated high school a year early, earned a bachelor's degree in business and a master's in construction engineering, but as far as Taekwondo goes, she said, it has never been for business.

"This has always been my passion, my way to give to my community, to better it in so many different ways," Pourarian said. "I just come to teach."

Pourarian, who is a sixth-degree black belt,



ANNE STOKES • GOLD COUNTRY NEWS SERVICE

Master Amitis Pourarian, left, helps Chris Stewart, of Carmichael, during the Wise Warriors class at The Studio.

has won four national championships and made the United States

GOOD TO KNOW

Who: The Studio Martial Arts & Fitness
What: Wise Warriors non-contact martial arts program
When: 10-11:30 a.m. or 7-8:30 p.m. Fridays
Where: 4130 Douglas Blvd., Suite 405, Granite Bay
Phone: (916) 258-5425
Website: www.trainatthestudio.com

Who: Extreme Martial Arts
What: Tai Chi Chuan, Kung Fu
Where: 8601 Auburn Folsom Road, Granite Bay; 7823 Lichen Drive, Citrus Heights
Phone: (916) 781-9777 (Granite Bay); (916) 726-5425 (Citrus Heights)
Website: www.extrememartialartcenter.com

sparring team, competing in the World Cup in 2001.

Laurie Rich, 51, is one of her students, and now also program director for Wise Warriors.

"Seriously, if someone had told me 19 months ago, before I walked into The Studio, that in 2013 I could be earning my black

belt, I would have laughed so hard, and told them that they were insane," Rich said. "For me, some of the specific benefits have been believing in myself, believing that I could do something that I thought was completely impossible, because of some of the physical dis-

abilities that I deal with."

There are many other examples of people who have, later in life, decided to take on martial arts as a physical discipline. Doris Murphy, 83, lived in Granite Bay and began Tai Chi with Extreme Martial Arts of Granite Bay when she was 76. She lost her battle with cancer in March, but before she passed away she gave an interview describing her experience with martial arts.

"The main thing with the Tai Chi moves is stretching," Murphy said. "Your body starts feeling good because the blood is circulating better. ... It makes you feel good and yet you don't have to be stressing yourself out."

She started in 2005, and after progressing through

the different levels, even while battling health issues, Murphy tested and attained her black fringe at the end of 2012.

The owner of Extreme Martial Arts, Ron Dillman, said that while Murphy was training at his studio, she participated in local and international competitions and also helped at the Granite Bay Eskaton with the senior Tai Chi program.

"For the most part, our masters and grand masters are in their 50s, 60s and 70s," Pourarian said. "They are flexible, have great muscle mass and they're healthy. And they do amazing things because they've trained in martial arts. So we want to share that with everyone."

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