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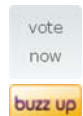
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Seniors earn Aikido black belts

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By BRIAN WRIGHT | For the Stafford County Sun
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STAFFORD — We've seen "The Karate Kid." But in Stafford, many play the role of "The Aikido Grandma."

That's because many over 55 years old participate in the "Aikido for Seniors" classes every Wednesday night at 6:30 at the Rowser Building.



This course was started in January 2006 by Aikido in Fredericksburg, a local non-profit organization dedicated to the teaching and practice of this non-violent martial art that is a traditional Japanese self-defense form.

One lady who has been there since the very beginning is Kate Logan — who is in her sixties and has been married to husband Chuck for 25 years.

"I got to see a demonstration and I liked how it was presented," Logan said. "I liked the people who were doing it."

Once she joined, she was hooked.

"It's just felt right, she said. "It's helped me become more physically fit, more confident and give me greater balance."

She convinced friend Ida Ansell to take part. After watching one session, she saw the benefits of Aikido and started in May of 2006.

"It appealed to me. I went and observed and saw that it would be very useful," said Ansell, a great grandmother in her eighties. "It's for self-defense."

The technique is great for people who live alone or want to be able to protect themselves.

Ansell and Logan have both stayed committed to this martial art, thanks in part to its usefulness as an exercise and a protective tool as well as the positive reinforcement of the instructors — Aviv Goldsmith and Robert Kravetz.

"They know how to handle us old people," Ansell said. "They say nothing negative to you. That's what keeps me motivated and enjoying it."

With that consistent commitment of more than four years, they reached the final step in their progression toward learning Aikido.

These golden girls of martial arts shined on July 23 at the Aikido of Fredericksburg headquarters. Both Logan and Ansell earned senior black belts in a performance that drew a standing ovation from the audience.

"It was a great accomplishment," Logan said. "Obviously, you're very nervous before it begins, but it was great when it was over."

"I felt kind of nervous, actually," Ansell said. "I almost got the feeling that I didn't really deserve it, because you're reaching the top when you get a black belt. Still, though, it was very exciting, of course. I still can't believe it happened."

There isn't much higher of a step to go in the world of martial arts than black belt. But that certainly doesn't mean that either is kicking away their chance to improve and help others along the way.

"There's always more to do," Logan said. "There are still chances to improve and opportunities to provide instruction."

Ansell also intends to regularly attend this Aikido course that has given her and many other local seniors quality physical fitness and valuable self-assurance.

"I wouldn't miss it," she said.

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