

THE DAILY Transcript

AN EDITION OF THE MiddlesexNews

WEEKEND

SERVING THE GREATER DEDHAM, NORWOOD AND WESTWOOD AREA VOL. 22, NO. 252, 50 CENTS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1996

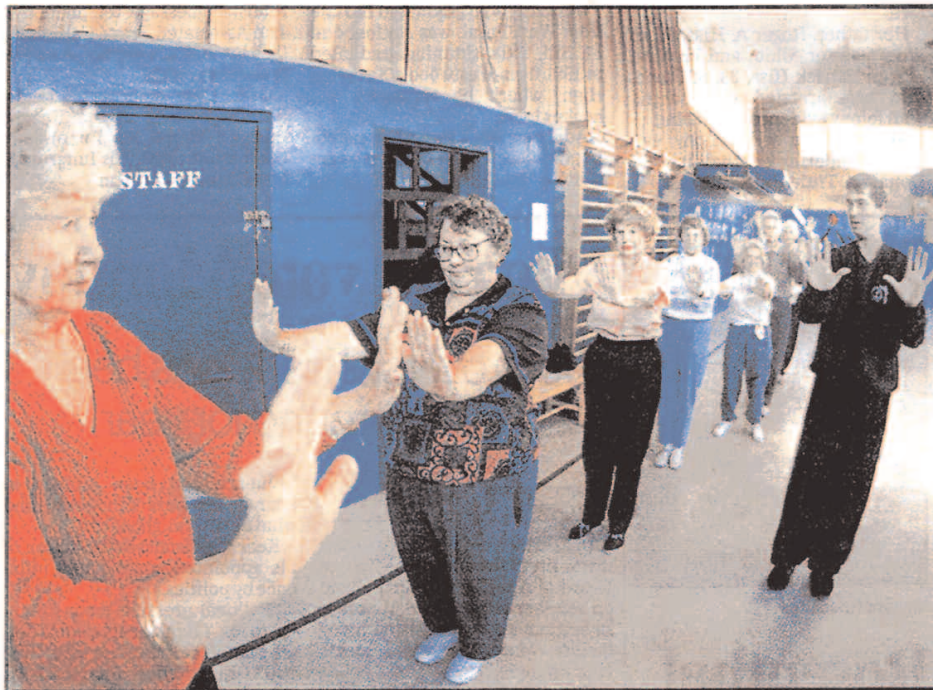


PHOTO BY OTA RICHTER

Instructor Ramel Rones, right, shows the 'pushing hands' maneuver to, from left, Olga Riedl, Joanne Mucciaccio, Dee Doherty and Betty Noonan yesterday during Tai Chi class for seniors at the Dedham Community House.

Gain with no pain

Tai Chi program comes to Dedham Community House

By Dan Bigman
STAFF WRITER

DEDHAM — Half a billion Chinese can't be wrong. For centuries, when it comes to daily exercise, millions and millions of them have turned to Tai Chi — a system of slow-motion stretching and movement used to strike a balance between spirituality, muscle tone, breathing and mental energy.

Yesterday at the Dedham Community House, eight local seniors gave it a shot, taking part in the first session of a new Tai Chi program sponsored by the Council on Aging.

They rolled their torsos, rotated their pelvises. They arched their backs, walked with the exaggerated slowness of herons. And all harbored the hope that this relaxed form of meditation in motion would help them feel better, without giving them the aches and pains of traditional gym workouts.

TAI CHI, See page 6

Seniors journey into self with the art of Tai Chi

TAI CHI, From page 1

What did they feel?

"Not much," said Joseph Whitman, 73. "Because it's easy exercise. There's nothing hurting you."

And that is the point, according to Ramel Rones, the martial arts instructor teaching the class. The point of Tai Chi, he explained, is not to work yourself into a tizzy, but rather to "regulate the body, breathing, mind energy and spirit."

"Tai Chi does not believe in 'no pain, no gain,'" He explains. "That's not Tai Chi. Tai Chi is no pain and gain."

For years, Rones, 35, has taught everyone from dancers to violinists to swimmers elements of this ancient Chinese martial art. He competed in competitions where Tai Chi is used for fighting, winning medals in both China and the United States.

But in the past few years, the Israeli native grew "bored" with competing. He decided to see what would happen if he taught it to the elderly and the sick.

The results have been remarkable, he said. Cancer patients grow stronger, the elderly more limber. Everyone gets healthier, and, just

'I try to use the principals of regulating to help. Maybe by being more relaxed, they'll have a stronger immune system.'

RAMEL RONES
MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR

as important, no one gets hurt doing it.

"I try to use the principals of regulating to help," he said. "Maybe by being more relaxed, they'll have a stronger immune system."

That was what happened to Rones. As a teen-ager, he was lanky and had little muscle tone. His crumpled posture, he said, led to digestive problems and pain in his neck. Unsatisfied with a stream of prescribed pain killers and enemas, he stumbled upon Tai Chi.

Soon, he felt better, and began to take the art seriously. That led to a move to the United States, to Boston, where he began to study with a master teacher, Dr. Yang Jwing

Ming, who now instructs in Hyde Park.

Now, 17 years later, he said he is still learning, even as he teaches seniors the basics.

The key, he said, is to do all the movements with "80 percent" effort, not the traditional "100 percent" most American exercise routines stress. Students are taught to concentrate on the feeling of the movement of the bones, joints, skin and muscle being used.

This both strengthens the body, and in turn, the mind, he said. Breathing, balance and focus — all serve to slow thinking and thus, relax participants.

"This is like a journey into yourself. You start learning the different sensations," he said.

And for those who tried it out, like Priscilla Jones, 71, it's a journey they said they're going to continue.

"It's great," she said. "Relaxing."

And that, Rones said to his class, is the point.

Classes are for all ages. They will be held every Monday and Thursday for the next eight weeks from 9 to 10 a.m. at the Community House. Each session costs \$2. Call the Council On Aging at 461-5976 for more information.