

Students get kick — and confidence — out of K

Dec. 4, 2011

Recommend

Be the



Rohini Sonawane delivers a kick to the bag.

Rohini Sonawane, 38, of Farmington Hills, decided to join in the action after watching her kids' classes at Kil's [Taekwondo](#) in downtown Farmington.

Three years later, Sonawane has earned a black belt, presented to her at the business in a short ceremony last month.

"It has been a great experience for me," said Sonawane, the mom of Om, 8, and Preeti, 6. "I come five days a week."

Sonawane said she's not only learned self defense, but gained in confidence and physical fitness from the Korean [martial art](#)

"The best thing of all is that Master Jack is a great instructor and he really knows how to take people to the next level, with love."

Farmington

Also presented a [black belt](#) during the ceremony was student Mike Wiest, 77, of Northville.

All skill levels

Jack Kittinger, 67, a fourth-degree black belt, runs the studio on Grand River at Power Road with the help of his wife, Hilda, 65, a three-time National [Gold Medal](#) Winner.



Preeti Sonawane, 6, of Farmington, and a Longacre Elementary student, enjoys the class. / John Stormzand | Staff Photographer

The studio's emphasis is on being family friendly, while providing individual attention.

While a serious sport, it's also a fun one that can be done by anyone, he said. Students practice at their own pace.

"You can walk in this door and start right away," said Kittinger.

Those who sign up for a class get a white work out outfit to wear. Classes incorporate kicks, stretching, push ups, sparring and more.

Class members on a recent day ranged in age from 4 to 77.

One exercise involved students forming lines according to size, running up to a bag and kicking it.

Hilda Kittinger encouraged her line of small barefoot students to let out a loud scream as they did so.

"Good," she said. "Come on. Very good. Wow."





Hilda Kittinger demonstrates a Taekwondo stance. / John Stormzand | Staff Photographer

A class at Kil's Taekowondo practices some moves. / John Stormzand | Staff Photographer

Less

"You scream when you make the move because it gives you more power," she explained later.

The proper technique is important said Hilda Kittinger, a retired nurse.

"When they kick I always tell them, knees up, pivot and kick, because if you don't pivot you can hurt the knee."

Many benefits

Students asked said they would recommend the class for many reasons.

"I used to be the shy girl who stared at the floor," said Gabby Cleveland, 13, of Farmington, and a seventh grader at East Middle School. "It's given me more confidence and self control and it's a great work out for me and my family."

Her mom, Dolly Cleveland, 51, said after her doctor recommended daily exercise, she started taking the class with great health benefits.

"I feel better and I have more energy," she said.

Shrey Udupa, 8, of Farmington Hills said the class has provided confidence and techniques when it comes to bullying.

Students learn "RAD," which stands for "recognize, avoid, defend."

"I know how to defend myself," should he have to, said Udupa, of Farmington Hills.

"The techniques are simple and effective," said instructor Erin Lienhardt of the self-defense moves taught.

The Kittingers said they have heard a few instances of students using the [self defense](#) moves successfully when confronted by the “bad guy.”

Longtime love of the art

The Kittingers say they started practicing Taekwondo as a result of enrolling their own son Paul in classes when he was in school. He is now an attorney and second-degree black belt.

When Kittinger lost his longtime manufacturing job, he was encouraged by Taekwondo Grand Master Sang Sop Kil, of Kil's Taekwondo in Canton, to turn his love of the art into a business venture. The Kittingers took over the Kils Taekwondo franchise in Livonia in May 2002; then sold it to move to the more spacious Farmington studio when it became available.

“I love what I'm doing,” said Jack Kittinger.

For more information, visit www.kilsfarmington.com.

ssteinmueller@hometownlife.com