

Karate continues to rock Ruch School

BY MARGARET PERROW DELLA SANTINA

Tables and trash cans pushed back against the walls, the Ruch School cafeteria is transformed twice a week into a karate studio where students practice kicking combinations, self-defense maneuvers, and "forms" under the watchful eyes of their instructors. Loud "Aai-ya's" reverberate off the walls, as the students execute increasingly complex spin kicks, reverse punches, and other elements of Tae Kwan Do, a Korean martial art whose name means "the way of the hand and the foot."




Since September 2010, about 20 Ruch students have been participating in this after-school karate program taught by two black-belt instructors from America's Best Karate (ABK) in south Medford. The instructors regularly remind the students of their three basic "rules": "be safe, have fun, and learn something." And learn they do! The growth in their physical skills, self-confidence, respect, and focus has been very exciting to their instructors, to their parents and teachers, and to the students themselves. From the outset, each "belt test" has brought opportunities for students to demonstrate their accomplishments: as early as the yellow-belt test in December 2010, each student was able to break a board with a powerful side kick. A year later at the December 2011 belt test, it was exciting to see how far the students have come, as they executed complicated 24-move palge forms (palge means "power" in Korean) and spin-kick combinations with focus and confidence.

The program was initiated by parents who wanted a karate opportunity for their elementary-age children, but did not want to drive to Medford on school days. By negotiating directly with Jeff Rumelhart at ABK, we were able to work out a class at a reasonable cost to parents. We are grateful to Mr. Rumelhart and his staff, who have been amazing in their willingness to bring such a high-quality program to our community. Thanks are also due to Ruch School's 2010-11 principal, Louis Dix, who supported the idea from the outset, made the facilities available, and welcomed the ABK instructors to our school. Our current principal, Julie Hill, and the school staff have continued to enthusiastically support karate at Ruch School. This exciting and successful class represents the kind of innovative programs that a small rural school can implement when parents, community, and administrators work together and think creatively about ways to support our children's learning and development.

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VOICES of the APPLGATE



What a wonderful year we had in 2011 singing with our director Blake Weller for three different sessions. We had concerts at the Applegate Ranch House, the Old Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, and the Pacifica Winter Festival in Williams.

We will be starting again this year with Wednesday rehearsals at the Applegate Library beginning January 25 and rehearsing until April 11. We will end this first session with two concerts: the first one on Friday, April 13, at 7:30 pm at the Old Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, and the second one at the Applegate Ranch House on Sunday, April 15, at 3 pm.

Voices of the Applegate is a community choir consisting of about 25 members. Everyone is invited to join; no auditions are required. Voices of the Applegate sings music in four-part harmony: soprano, alto, tenor and bass.

Even if you can't join us for rehearsals, please attend one of our free concerts and share our joy in singing. We will also supply refreshments at no charge, but donations are welcome.

For more information, call Joan Peterson at 541-846-6988.

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