

Business Notebook

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Prepared by Sammamish Review advertising dept.

Nation's largest martial arts school, Karate West, celebrates 20 years

Karate West is the place where people go to improve themselves – and it's been that way for 20 years.

In April of 1989, owners Randy and Jan Holeman opened what would become the single largest martial arts school in the nation. One trip to the facility, nestled along East Lake Sammamish, will impress anyone with its size and sophistication. It includes three large training rooms, dual plasma screens, a spacious lobby and a coffee bar. But it is not the world-class facility that has attracted and retained nearly 1,000 active students.

"We started the school to help people succeed in their lives and achieve their goals," Randy says.

Randy and Jan's unique approach to teaching life skills and personal achievement won the community's attention from the beginning. Karate West quickly outgrew its two previous locations on Front Street and Gilman before moving to their current location. To cheering "Islanders," a second location was opened on the south end of Mercer Island in 2007.

Karate West programs are targeted to both adults and children.

"We require a standard of behavior at home, and grade achievement at school, before allowing our students to test for karate belt promotions," Jan Holeman explains.

"We provide that extra motivation and encouragement, and the parents tell us this has significantly increased their child's desire



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to improve at school."

Jackie and Scott Morton agree, and have been bringing their children for over 12 years.

"Enrolling our children here was one of the best things we could have done to positively affect their future. We wish every parent knew what

happens here, but we would never be able to find parking again!"

But what is it about Karate West that has helped it flourish for 20 years?

Sure, the school offers traditional karate taught to exacting standards in 100 classes each week, has a 20-year reputation for

delivering excellence, is the largest single school in the nation, and offers a full range of training programs. But the key to Karate West's longevity and its loyal following is its community of students — they are like a family with 90% of new members coming from referrals.

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"From the beginning, our entire team has focused on building relationships with our members and providing the best experience possible," said Randy.

Every week, students young and old alike go to improve their bodies and mind, to work out and to relieve the stress of their daily lives.

"The people that I meet here, I would never get to meet anywhere else," explains Ken Watrous. "Even though we all come from different walks of life, we share the same kind of family values and the same kind of goals. It's just a great place to be."



Kids' classes target confidence, self discipline and safety skills.