

Arnold-Imperial LEADER

'Once a week but never weakly'

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Karate kid

Okinawan gets kick-start to American culture

By Jessica Holdman
For the Leader

His concentration is intense. He has complete control. It looks almost like a dance, but every lightning-fast strike, every kick would deliver a devastating blow.

For Mitsukuni Teruya, 19, of Okinawa, karate is his life, but he had another desire, to visit the United States.

James Foley, 57, of Barnhart was more than happy to help make that dream come true.

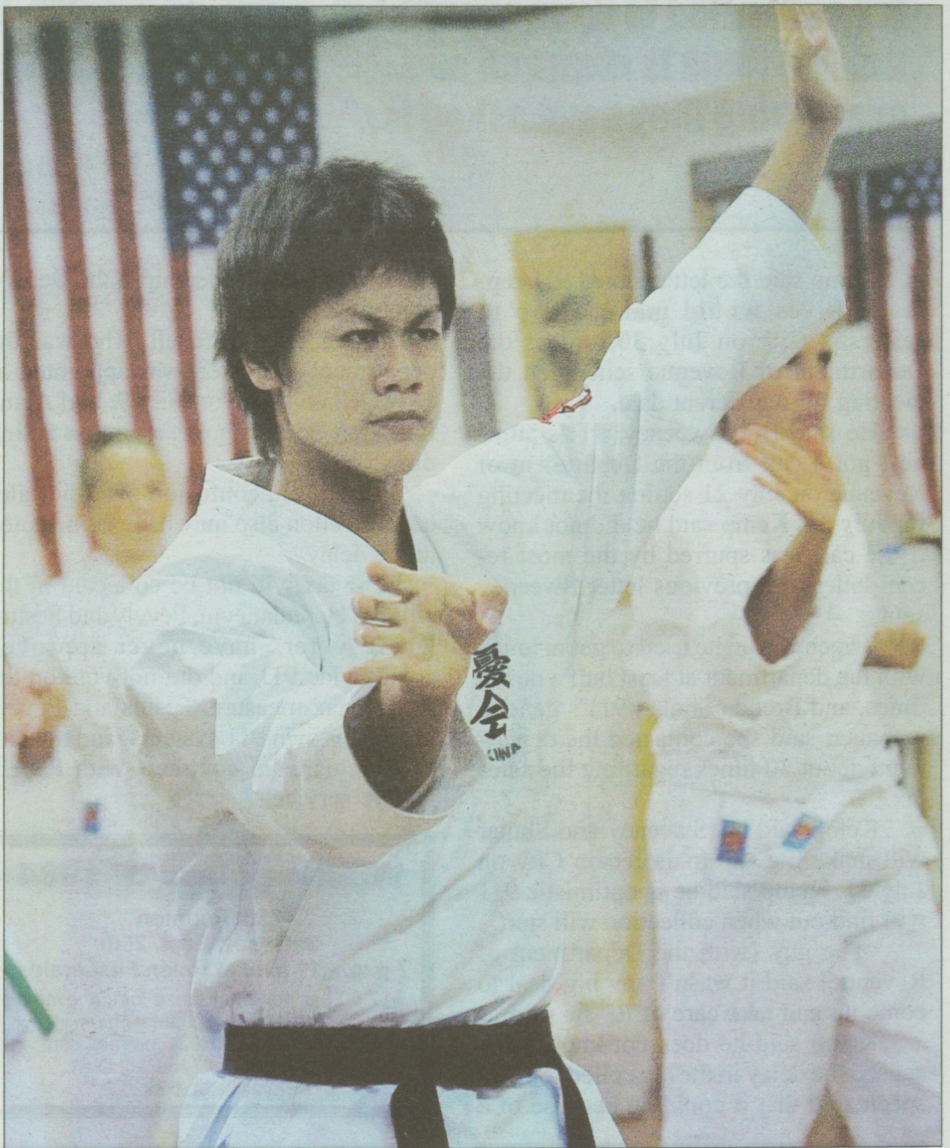
Karate brought them together

Teruya started practicing karate in 1998 at age 8 at Kenyukai Dojo in Kadena, Okinawa.

"When I was little I wanted to do it. It was always inside," Teruya said.

His instructor is Kiyohide Shinjo, who is known in Okinawa as the Okinawa Superman for winning nine consecutive titles at the All-Okinawan Karate Tournament in the 1970s and 1980s.

Foley is another student of Shinjo.



Ted Howell photo

See KARATE KID, Page 4

Mitsukuni Teruya practices karate.

Six school districts hold the line on starting pay

Teacher salaries

	Starting 2009-10	Starting 2008-09	Change	Median 2009-10	Top 2009-10
Fox	\$36,400	\$36,350	\$50	\$55,520	\$84,658
Festus	35,540	35,200	340	48,315	80,790
Windsor	34,600	34,600	0	47,400	65,900

By Leader staff

Starting teacher pay in six of Jefferson County's 11 public school districts has been frozen for the upcoming school year, a reflection of the state's budget cuts.

Karate kid: Third-degree black belt to spend a year in the United States

Continued from Page 1

He first met Teruya in Okinawa in 2005. On a return visit in October 2008, Shinjo asked Foley to arrange for Teruya to come to the United States to experience American culture, learn to speak English and share his karate skills with others.

"English and karate were my two main reasons (for coming to the United States)," Teruya said.

Foley helped Teruya plan a one-year stay in America, kicking off with a summer in Jefferson County at Foley's home.

Teruya will also spend time with other American practitioners of Uechi-Ryu Karate-Do in Texas, Florida, California and Maryland.

Okinawa, an island off the coast of Japan, is the birthplace of karate. Karate is taught in schools and it is a big part of the lifestyle, Foley said.

Teruya said he started out in karate like many other Okinawan children and fell in love with it. He said he likes everything about karate and that it is good exercise.

Teruya is a third-degree black belt, or San-Dan. Foley, a seventh-degree black belt, or Kyoshi-Nanadan, said Teruya has a high skill level for his age and is well respected in his dojo. Foley said Teruya's dedication to the sport will probably make it a lifelong passion for him, both as a practitioner and a teacher.

Foley and his wife, Nikki, went to the Uechi-Ryu World Cup in Clearwater, Fla., to pick up Teruya on June 26-27. At the tournament, Teruya took second place for both his kata and sparring.

A kata is a series of combative movements, blocking and striking. Competitors are judged on precision, posture, speed, timing, power and degree of difficulty.

In sparring, competitors receive points for contact and technique.

Foley said there are many rules for



Ted Howell photos

Mitsukuni Teruya, left, and Kevin Bates work to perfect karate moves.



James Foley, left, leads the class in karate moves.

student as the embodiment of that art.

"To learn it is difficult," Foley said.

"To practice at a high level requires intense dedication and perseverance. They

trict, also has a third-degree black belt. She is giving Teruya English lessons in her spare time. Her husband said Teruya is smart and is catching on quickly. The

take a float trip on one of Missouri's rivers and visit the St. Louis Arch and the St. Louis Science Center.

Foley gave him a driving lesson but Teruya had problems driving American-style; in Okinawa, the lanes are opposite to American roads.

In Okinawa, rice is the staple food. Beef is expensive, so it's no wonder Teruya said his favorite American food is a hamburger. He also enjoys ice cream and fast food from McDonald's and Steak 'n Shake. He said American sushi is good, too.

"The food is different. Karate is the same," Teruya said.

Teruya said he likes to play with the Foleys' Rottweiler, Gus, and he likes to help mow the lawn. He doesn't have a dog or a yard of his own in Okinawa.

Teruya watches a lot of movies with the family. His favorite American movie is "Armageddon."

Back home, Teruya said his parents and older brother and sister are proud of him, but it is a humble pride. It is not a part of Japanese culture to brag. Their main focus is to not bring shame to the family.

"They don't do anything halfway," Foley said. "It's about being good at whatever you decide to do and doing it the best because that's the way to do it."

The Okinawans also believe in a healthy lifestyle and are the longest-lived people on earth.

Teruya has graduated from high school in Okinawa and wants to pursue a career as a firefighter on the U.S. Air Force base in Kadena. He said he was inspired by a fellow karate student who works on the base.

"It's just a dream that I have," Teruya said.

Teruya said he likes staying with the Foleys and they are enjoying their time with

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Foley said there are many rules for safety at U.S. karate competitions but Japanese competitions are a little rougher. There are fewer rules about contact and competitors take some hard hits.

In Okinawa, Teruya practices karate two or three hours each day. He said karate has taught him about courtesy, respect, physical fitness, self-discipline, perseverance, courage and brotherhood.

Foley said it takes a long time to achieve Teruya's level of proficiency. He described karate as an art form and the



James Foley, left, leads the class in karate moves.

student as the embodiment of that art.

"To learn it is difficult," Foley said. "To practice at a high level requires intense dedication and perseverance. They get banged up all the time and they keep doing it. It's more than a sport, it's a way of life."

Learning from each other

Teruya is sharing his knowledge of karate with the Foley family. In exchange, the Foleys are teaching Teruya about life in the United States.

Nikki Foley, a teacher at Kehrs Mill Elementary in the Rockwood School Dis-

trict, also has a third-degree black belt. She is giving Teruya English lessons in her spare time. Her husband said Teruya is smart and is catching on quickly. The Foleys are also expanding their Japanese vocabulary.

"We're learning Japanese in the process of teaching him English," James Foley said.

The Foleys have taken Teruya to the St. Louis Zoo, Ted Drewes and a Cardinal baseball game, where Teruya wore a Pujols T-shirt.

The family also took Teruya to a shooting range where he shot a gun for the first time. They are making plans to

family.

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Teruya said he likes staying with the Foleys and they are enjoying their time with him. The Foleys said they are treating Teruya as a part of their family during his time in the United States and are glad his parents have trusted them to look after him.

"It's great. We're very happy to have him. It's a pretty big honor for us," Foley said.

The Foleys have a karate school in their home and their students are happy to have Teruya around, too. "He's inspirational to our students," Foley said. "They think, 'He can do it. If I work hard, I can do it.'"



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