

Exciting journey through tai chi

- by Lissa Alexander - Parksville Qualicum Beach News
- posted Nov 28, 2013 at 9:00 AM



From left, tai chi instructor Eva Grodt strikes a tai chi move while handing over all the proceeds from her classes to Salvation Army representative Major Norman Hamelin last week. Middle, Sandra Desrosiers, will be teaching beginner classes in January.

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Before Sandra Desrosiers started taking tai chi she had trouble walking. Today she's not only mobile but teaching a beginners class.

"When I first came to tai chi I could not walk up stairs, I would have to use an elevator, and I walked with a cane," said Desrosiers, who has been living with multiple sclerosis for 20 years.

Seven years ago Desrosiers took up tai chi, along with some other healthy lifestyle choices, and today her health has improved substantially.

"It has been quite an exciting journey," she said.

Tai chi, she said, has helped improve her health, mobility and balance, and she hopes others will try the meditative exercise.

"I encourage others to try it, they have nothing to loose and everything to gain," she said.

Desrosiers is teaching a beginners class starting January 9 which runs from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Thursdays at St. Edmund's Church in Parksville. The cost is \$20 a month or \$50 for three months and all the proceeds from the class go back to the community.

Eva Grodt will continue her classes on Tuesdays at the same location from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

There are also classes Fridays from 10:15 to 11:45 at the church where people can do continuous tai chi sets.

Finally, on Sundays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. sets are done at the band shelter in the Parksville Community Park and this is free of charge.

Recently Grodt donated all the proceeds from her classes to the Salvation Army and handed over a cheque for \$500 to Major Norman Hamelin with that organization.

Tai chi involves a sequence of 108 moves which are said to engage the entire body including the spine, tendons, joints and internal organs.

The stretching builds little cushions in the spine, Grodt told The News previously, and the practice also promotes strength in places like the legs and abdomen and improves flexibility, balance and endurance.

Tai chi has been known to improve circulation, lower blood pressure, and improve arthritis, back pain, respiratory problems, digestive disorders and other health benefits.

People can show up at the classes and watch, register at the door, or call or e-mail Grodt to register for any of the classes and for more information at 250-954-1002 or e-mail evagrodt@telus.net.