

Hometown Sports

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YMCA hosts taekwondo tournament



Barry Decker / Intelligencer Journals

Michael Rios, left, spars with Briony Brundidge.



Victor Guzman flies over six of his fellow martial arts students to break a board.



They're not the Rockettes, but Tyler Griffin (front) and his classmates are still pretty good kickers.

Martial arts program offers fitness and teaches focus, confidence

BY BARRY DECKER
Intelligencer Journal Correspondent

Some competitors were a bit nervous and some were a bit scared, but all did their best in the first Lancaster Family YMCA Taekwondo Tournament on Saturday.

The partnership of Korean Martial Arts and the YMCA is part of the Y's SafeKids Program.

The event began with a demonstration of skills from tourney director Master Steve Kirby (a fifth degree black belt) and his students.

"We had a great day," Kirby said. "We saw how the kids realized their ability to take those nervous and scared feelings and turn them into very positive results."

Kirby's wife, program director Judy Kirby, added, "We hope that it is a life lesson they can use in the future when they find themselves

facing new situations."

Competitors represented YMCAs from Lancaster, Lebanon, Littlestown and Reading, plus a contingency from the School District of Lancaster's Life After School Program.

Lisa Clement of Lancaster stepped in front of the group of 200 youths, parents and special guests and showed Taekwondo skills using her fists and feet.

Later, during the tourney, she used the same skills to earn a first place finish in a sport characterized by its fast, high spinning kicks.

Among the special guests were State Representative Roy Baldwin and Lancaster Mayor Charlie Smithgall.

Baldwin, who is a wellness advocate, said, "With the problem with children's obesity today, this program is an important alterna-

tive for a healthy lifestyle."

During a demonstration, Kirby showed the advanced skills and focus of taekwondo by walking on eggs without breaking them and crunching everything from wood to concrete with his bare feet and hands.

"The program, which has been in Lancaster for about a year shows the kids how they can not only feel healthier, but use their improved focus and concentration to get higher grades in school," Kirby said.

The SafeKids program emphasizes stranger danger, gang avoidance, gun avoidance, drug avoidance, correct use of the 911 system and the art of taekwondo.

Susana Lopez-Puffer said, "I love this program. It teaches children discipline and respect. The kids find that if they put their mind to something they can do it."

Her sons, Michael Rios, 15, and Samuel Betancourt, 11, participate in the program.

"It's not just taekwondo, it's a program which gets kids to listen to their parents," said Jeffrey Dawkins, a Lancaster Y kids assistant and a senior belt holder.

Dawkins children, Jewan, 10, and Angelyn, 7, both participate.

Lancaster YMCA CEO Jeff Kenderdine said, "This program reflects our mission of strengthening the mind, body and spirit."

For more information on the sport or classes, which are offered each week, contact the Lancaster Family YMCA at 397-7474, or the Web site, (www.taekwondonetwork.com). Lancaster Family YMCA Taekwondo results include:

GIRLS — 1. Lisa Clement, Danye Cooper, Rachel Freeman and Bethany Hess; 2. Briony Brundidge, Angelyn Dawkins,

Merally Santiago

BOYS — 1. Sammy Betancourt, Tyler Griffin, Victor Guzman, Kyle Lefever; 2. Jewan Dawkins, Herbert Herrera, Gregory Martinez, Michael Rios; 3. Nick Barton, Isreali colon, Dashonn Cooper,

Luis Santiago, Hector Vecchioli.

MEN — 1. Mark Freeman, 2. Ricky Baumbach, Jeff Dawkins, 3. Allen Hamers.

In addition, all participants received a certificate of participation.