

ATA World

CREATING TOMORROW'S LEADERS ... ONE BLACK BELT AT A TIME

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New Year

NEW
YOU!

- Goal-Setting Strategies
- Training Tips for All Ages and Abilities
- Secrets to Martial Arts Success

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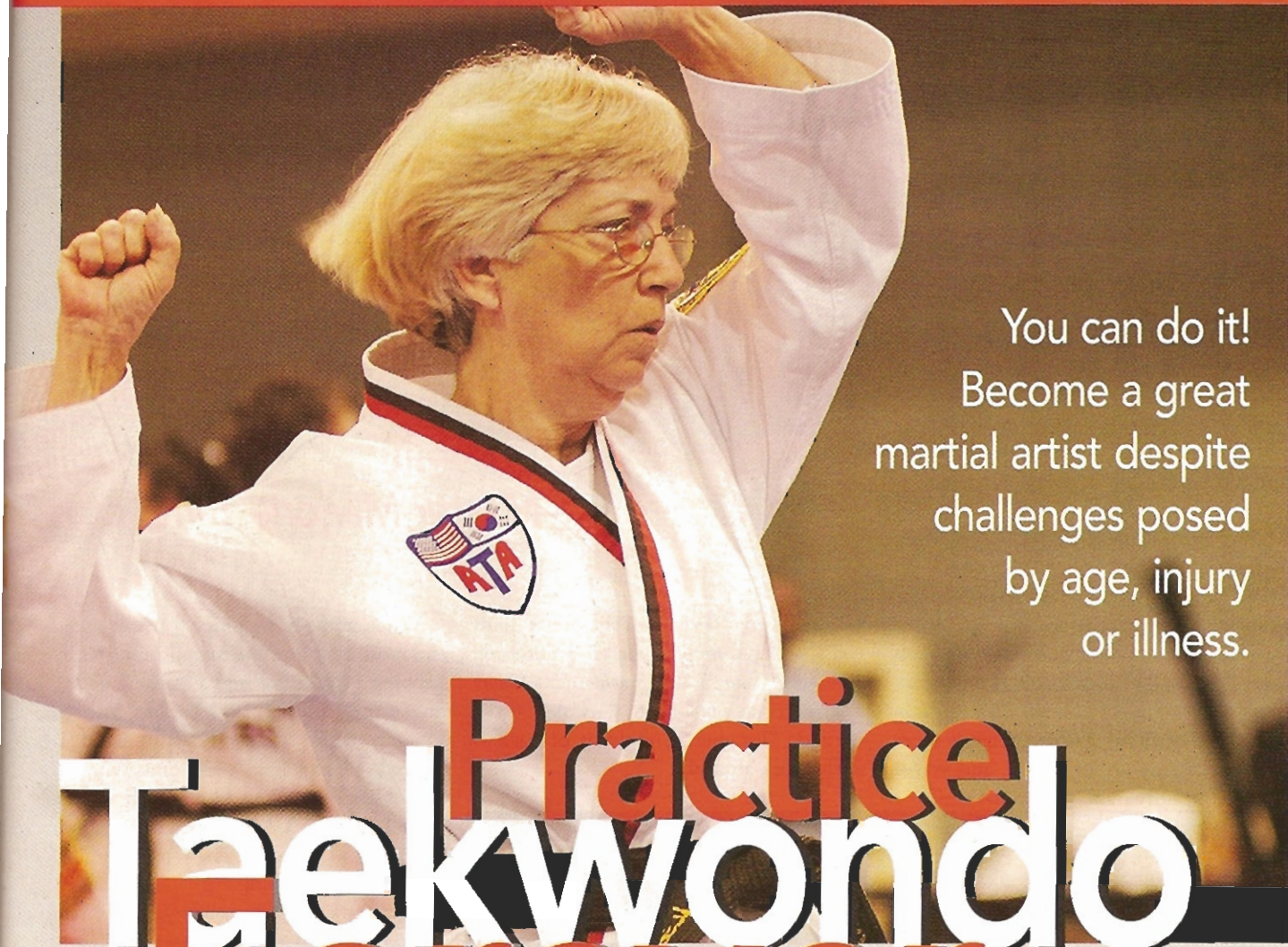
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The ATA and its members donate nearly \$40,000 to hurricane victims.



You can do it!
Become a great
martial artist despite
challenges posed
by age, injury
or illness.

Practice Taekwondo Forever

by Susan T. Lennon

The longer you train in Taekwondo the more it becomes a part of you. Yet at some point, even if you can't imagine your life without the martial arts, you might face obstacles that challenge your commitment. An injury or an illness might keep you from the do-jahng or your motivation might wane as you begin to age.

Two Masters and a surgeon—with a combined 84 years of training—offer ideas about how to accommodate your older, less resilient body; train to keep

your body in tip-top shape; and stay active during and after an injury or illness.

Training for Life

Think you're too old to train? Mention that to Master Marjorie Templeton, a 6th Degree Black Belt, and prepare yourself for a good-natured ribbing. Master Templeton, 80, has been training since 1974. "I started it for the exercise," she chuckles, "but it became my life."

She may not be able to perform a jump spin kick as fast as her teenage students, but, as she says, "Taekwondo is not about comparing yourself with others. You con-

pete only against yourself, and train because it's fun and because it keeps you active, continually learning and growing."

To Master Templeton, Taekwondo also provides an extended family. In the 1980s, her husband and mother died within 11 months of each other. "If I hadn't had Taekwondo, I would have gone crazy," she says. "But the camaraderie, the exercise and the 'just getting out' really brought me out of that period of my life."

If you're feeling discouraged because you're "too old," keep perspective, Master Templeton says. "Look at the football players, the basketball players, the baseball

players. They're still young when they're done." If professional athletes can't perform at peak levels when they get older, you shouldn't expect yourself to either.

"Adjust your attitude as you age," she says, and realize that everyone progresses at their own pace, depending on their abilities at a given time. "Instructors learn to adapt their expectations based on students' evolving needs," she says.

Are you ever too old to start training? Master Templeton is emphatic on this point: "No!" she says with a laugh, "I was 48 when I started ... and look at me now!"

Smart Training = Safe Training

Dubbing martial arts "the closest thing to a perfect workout," Dr. Nicholas A. DiNubile, an orthopedic surgeon who practiced the martial arts for 15 years, says Taekwondo training alone will keep you durable, fit and flexible, but extra strength training and stretching can help keep your body injury-free. "Lightly cross train, balance your workouts, and warm

up before you stretch," he says, adding that low-impact, water-based exercises can help practitioners recover from minor injuries and maintain overall fitness while training. Using meditation is also great for the mindset and mobility needed for Taekwondo, he says.

For instance, if your kneecaps bother you, consider using a neoprene knee sleeve with an open patella. Build up endurance in your quadriceps using a stationary bicycle and avoid squats, lunges and leg extensions, which put undue pressure on the cap.

"Taekwondo is not about comparing yourself with others. You compete only against yourself."

—Master Marjorie Templeton

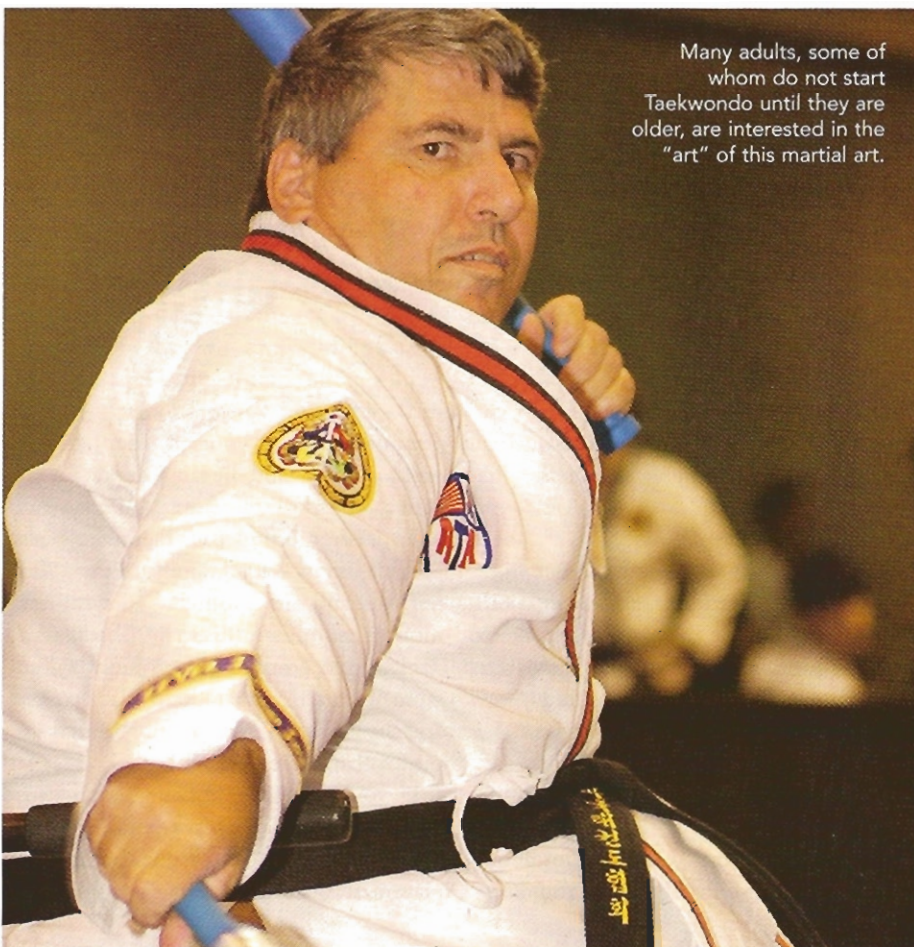
"Find your 'weak link' before it finds you," says DiNubile, who also authored *Framework: Your 7-Step Program for Healthy Muscles, Bones, and Joints* (Rodale, 2005). He adds, "Toughen it, resolve it, or learn to safely work around it."

When actively training, you can avoid the most common Taekwondo injuries by keeping a "tight fist" and a "locked ankle," says Chief Master In Ho Lee, an 8th Degree Black Belt. "If your hand is relaxed," he explains, "your joints will pull out easily. But when you punch with a tight fist, you won't get an elbow injury from over-extension." The same principle holds true for kicking.

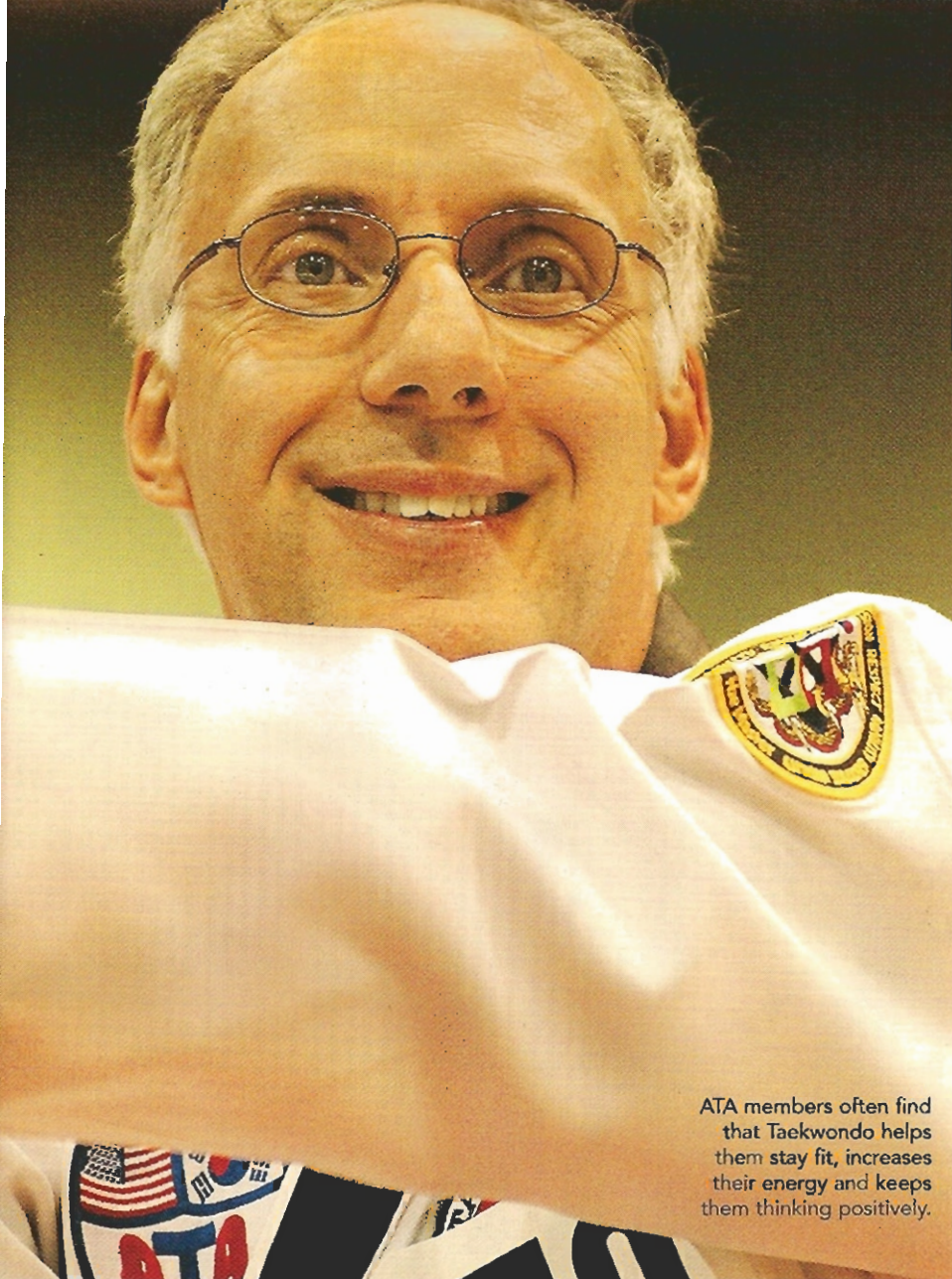
After training for 38 years, Chief Master Lee advises students to think of Taekwondo as "the art of your body." He suggests constantly striving to improve balance, posture and coordination. "You can also prevent small injuries from becoming big ones through acupuncture and massage," he says, "which keep blood flowing and enhance health and healing."

Chief Master Lee also cautions students to be sensible about their expectations. "Many students drop out after three to four months when they realize they can't do what they think they 'should' be able to do." But Taekwondo is so much more than just techniques. "Getting involved in the spiritual and mental aspects will help you learn to love the 'art,' as well as the physical side."

Chief Master Lee also recommends good nutrition and suggests the book *Eat Right 4 Your Type* by Dr. Peter J. D'Adamo. "It will help you understand the type of fuel your body needs," he says. "Everyone's needs are different."



Many adults, some of whom do not start Taekwondo until they are older, are interested in the "art" of this martial art.



ATA members often find that Taekwondo helps them stay fit, increases their energy and keeps them thinking positively.



Staying Motivated

Sometimes, no matter how fit you are, an injury or illness will take you by surprise. "When that happens," says Master Templeton, who also scuba dives and attends every Cincinnati Bengals home game, "your attitude is everything."

She speaks from experience. In 2002, just after she returned from her Mastership, she learned that she had colon cancer. "Sure, it rained on my parade a little," she admits, "but as I fought it, I kept working out and going to Taekwondo, and that made all the difference."

Master Templeton also drew strength from the encouragement she received from ATA friends around the country. "I don't think of a setback as a negative," she muses, "but as something that happens for a purpose." It might be to make us stronger, teach us a lesson or let us walk in another's shoes. "It's the whole yin and yang of life," she says. "Everyone will have both bad times and good times—it's a law of nature."

Chief Master Lee shares this philosophy. "If you are injured, it's not the end of the world," he says. "Taekwondo is not just physical, it's mental training too." If you can't train physically, you can still go to the do-jahng and observe.

There are four ways to learn: looking, hearing, reading or feeling, and 60 to 70 percent of students learn from looking, says Chief Master Lee. Plus, by staying involved with your school, you can stay motivated and reinforce the habits, techniques and attitudes you're learning—even when you can't train physically.

"Balancing body with mind is what makes a martial artist," says Chief Master Lee, who recommends studying Taekwondo history and culture through reading. Try *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, translated by Samuel B. Griffith, and *Promise and Fulfillment in the Art of Taekwondo* by Grand Master Sang Kyu Shim. "Gaining knowledge and skill is not a one-time event—it takes a long time to develop habits that will last for your lifetime." **ATA**

Susan T. Lennon, a 2nd Degree Black Belt, writes about health-related topics for various national publications.