Nursing Professor Achieves Rare Feat in Taekwondo

UA College of Nursing
August 2015

When Ki Moore, division director and professor in the UA College of Nursing, opened a Christmas gift from her colleagues in 2002, she had no idea what the neatly folded, white garment was.

Her fellow faculty members explained it was a *dobok*, the uniform for taekwondo. Several of them had started training in the Korean martial art and they wanted her to join them.

"I worked out in a lot of different ways, but I'd never tried martial arts," said Moore, who took her first class in January 2003. "What I liked about taekwondo from the beginning, and still find really valuable, is it's great for balance and focus."

Taekwondo, which means "the art of smashing with the hands and feet," is similar to karate and a form of self-defense. Other benefits of practicing taekwondo include increased self-control, discipline, flexibility, balance, coordination, strength and stamina. Moore describes it as a "fast tai chi."

In May 2015, 12 years after taking her first class, Moore, who is in her 60s, earned her fourth-degree black belt. She is only the third woman in the history of her martial arts school to do so.

"Some people ask, 'How long does it take to get a black belt for the average person?' and the answer is, the average person doesn't get a black belt," said Brian Malm, an eighth-degree black belt and Moore's instructor at Desert Taekwondo. "The old statistic is that 2 percent of people who start a martial arts program get a black belt. To get a black belt at an older age is much harder, and to go to fourth-degree black belt is very, very rare. It's a testament to Ki's tenacity, perseverance and how hard she works to be able to do what she does."

The testing for a fourth-degree black belt is rigorous and consists of five parts:

- **Group forms**: Forms are a sequence of movements. Each one has a Korean name and meaning. People in the upper ranks perform the three lowest, or easiest, forms together on the floor as a warm-up.
- **Partner forms**: The person testing and their partner perform the forms associated with the rank being sought. The three advanced forms Moore performed had 33, 46 and 68 moves.
- **Sparring sets**: The person testing performs a series of take-downs on their partner, choreographed to showcase their strengths. Four of Moore's five takedowns involved her throwing her male partner, who is 6 feet 1 inch tall.
- **Self-defense**: In one-on-one, two-on-one and three-on-one staged scenarios, the person testing must disarm others during simulated attacks. Moore said that learning how to handle these situations gave her a sense of self-confidence she didn't have before.
Board breaking: The person testing breaks 1-inch boards in three different ways. Moore broke one with her elbow, two with a side kick and two with a spin side kick.

"There's something about breaking a board that makes you feel really powerful," Moore said. "But the real purpose in a self-defense situation, if you have to, is you can break a bone."

Moore plans to test for her fifth-degree black belt in four years, the required amount of time she must wait. Until then, she'll continue her weekly, two-hour private lessons, and one-hour group classes on Saturdays with students of all levels.

In addition to improving her conditioning and awareness, Moore says the lessons she has learned in taekwondo have positively impacted both her professional and personal life.

"In taekwondo, we have six tenets: courtesy, respect, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit," said Moore. "I hope that I've always been a respectful and kind person, but I think taekwondo has helped me to approach situations, whether I'm with a student or a colleague, in a very respectful way. I try to role model resolution in a way that is thoughtful of others. It's helped me be the kind of person I would like to be in every part of my life."

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