

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

### TESTIMONIAL

#### The Benefits of Aikido: A Parental Perspective

Several years ago, my wife and I were looking for summer programs to enroll our son in. The pickings were pretty slim for 3 year olds. There was an Aikido class offered at Rowe Middle School, but the age requirement was 4 and older. My wife contacted the instructor (Craig Fife) and asked if he would consider enrolling a 3 year old. Craig asked if our son was able to listen, follow instructions, and was well behaved. Upon confirming these things, Sensei Fife agreed to allow him to take the class under the stipulation that if the child could not follow through as stated we would agree to take him out of the class.

After the program ended, we spoke with our son about his experience. He raved about it! He thoroughly enjoyed the class and the teachers, and asked to go again. We took him to the Aikido Northwest dojo and let him try a class. His enthusiasm grew. We enrolled him for regular training.

That was 11 years ago. He trains 2 - 4 times a week and is now testing for his adult rank! He is only thirteen, but that's OK - he'll be fourteen in the summer.

So what does this story have to do with the benefits of Aikido?

Our son does not overly engage in computer games and other electronic activities. He limits the amount of television he watches. He has set his own parameters in this regard. Not because of parental restrictions, but because of the sense of discipline he has developed as an Aikidoist.

He is a straight A student. Everyday when he comes home from school, he goes right to his room and starts his homework. Sometimes he gets up early in the morning to do homework. And he always makes homework the priority on weekends. Not because of parental prodding, but because of the sense of focus he has developed as an Aikidoist.

He has a variety of daily chores around the house and yard, and extra work is often thrown into the mix on weekends. Like most children, he sometimes needs to be reminded to do his chores, but he always completes them. Not because of parental enforcement, but because of the sense of responsibility he has developed as an Aikidoist.

He has been actively involved in leadership at school. For two years he co-chaired a program that recently qualified his school as "green". He will be involved with student government when he enters high school this fall. He has developed close, personal relationships through Aikido Northwest. This has happened not because of parental encouragement, but because of the sense of community he has developed as an Aikidoist.

It is my observation that the youngsters I have seen enrolled in Aikido who have stuck with the program are disciplined, intelligent, caring, considerate, compassionate, well mannered young men and women. Many of them have moved on to college or university in other parts of the country. Some are studying abroad.

We say our children are the future. What I have seen young people absorb from their involvement with Aikido Northwest makes me feel a whole lot better about what often appears to be a bleak future for the world. They give me hope.

Are you looking for an activity for your child that does not involve electronics, movies, or television? An activity that will engage your child socially, stimulate them mentally, keep them physically fit, help them develop focusing skills, and nurture a sense of self worth and community? I highly recommend enrolling them in classes at Aikido Northwest.

I am not suggesting that your son or daughter will have the same experiences our child has, or take away the same things ours has. However, I believe participation in Aikido will better prepare any child for the future. And ours.

William Wild aka "Everett's Dad"