

How Does Tai Chi Benefit a Community in Hawaii?

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It started with a teapot.

Often, I reflect on the first days of my teaching Tai Chi at the local YMCA on the island of Oahu in Hawaii.

As a new instructor, I was loaded down with all the usual teaching gear...and one special addition, a Chinese Tea Pot. It was the training aids that created the class, but it was that teapot that started to shape our community, or as we say in Hawaii, our Ohana, “family”.



It seemed natural to share tea after class to exchange what we learned and hear each others thoughts about our practice. It also seemed natural to create an environment and feeling of inclusiveness, a tai chi attitude, while embracing the philosophy of Tai Chi for Health.

Many of our participants have improved their physical health and personal sense of well-being by meeting to practice Tai Chi together. Now, many members are voluntarily sharing their Tai Chi with outside organizations such as, retirement residences, State Agency projects, hospitals, senior fairs and expos, or wherever they feel called to go.

Any community begins with individuals. Tai Chi facilitates wonderful transformation for individuals from the inside out. Then, the energy of Tai Chi just naturally overflows to others, as well. When I envisioned my first class, I expected a modest turnout. Today, our attendance has far exceeded the capacity of our studio.

The Tai Chi salute is the respectful reminder of Friendship, Humility and Strength together. These classroom behaviours are naturally carried into outside communities and they seem to expand on their own. Who doesn't enjoy sharing the feeling of peace and harmony?

When we share with others the commitment of a vision or a principle, we strengthen our efforts to give each other the encouragement and support every person needs to be their best. In the world of Tai Chi, whether the vision is for developing compassion, finding peace, or improving total health, individuals can make a difference. As a community, through mutual support and synergy, the difference becomes even greater. It's all moving energy, isn't it?

Looking back, I suppose we could have had classes without taking time afterwards to gather over tea to share our thoughts and feelings. But, I am glad we did. Our membership has grown to become a self-sustaining community that willingly volunteers for many local causes under the name of the Leeward Tai Chi Ohana.

This makes me smile because I know they have embraced Tai Chi for Health as a way of life and will continue their practice as a family. This tells me that they have taken ownership for their health and are empowered to help others towards quality of life.

To think, all this started with a teapot.