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## WHY I JOINED HAP KIDO, AND WHAT IT MEANS TO ME

I first joined Hap Kido at the urging of my son Mikhael, who was by this time, a student of Tae Kwon Do, and already a yellow belt. As a family we have always considered ourselves to be enlightened in many ways, and always seeking to improve ourselves in mind, body and spirit. My brother, too, is a student of Martial Arts, and has gained much from the experience. My son had learned so much in such a short period of time, and I could see that he had developed not only physically, but mentally and spiritually as well. He was already a very disciplined and respectful young man, and this was his niche. Mikhael practically begged me to join. I thought to myself, “I am too old, how will I learn those kinds of moves?” When I asked my son why it was so important to him that I joined, he replied...”I just want you to have the feeling that I have. I want you to see how great it is!” “You can do it Mom, just try!”

It took me quite awhile to convince myself to join Hap Kido. I was invited to “sit in” on a class to observe. It took several times. I rationalized the fee by telling myself that I would be contributing to my overall health and well being. I would also have the privilege, as did my son, of training under a 9<sup>th</sup> degree black belt “Grand Master”, in the traditional form of the art. This in itself was a unique opportunity.

I had been a stay at home mom, and work at home mom for 23 years! I felt a need to get into shape, make new friends, and improve myself. Frank ally, I also wanted a reason to get out of the house! At home I had practiced Yoga, and had a treadmill, but often did not take the time to exercise. I also had other reasons for joining, having a quick temper and being an emotional person, I welcomed the discipline and a place to channel my energy. Among other things, I thought the exercise would also help improve my asthma and nerve damage from a broken finger, and I hoped that the repetitive nature of the class would help my focus and

memory. I looked forward to having time for myself, and making new friends. What I got from joining, however, was so much more! The first couple of classes were difficult for me. I was so nervous that my stomach was upset, and I thought of staying at home. I thought of my son. If he could do it, so could I. I worked muscles that I didn't know that I had! Even the breathing exercises (Dan Jeon Ho Beop) made my abdomen and arm muscles sore! I was however, welcomed into the class with open arms. On my first day, people came up and introduced themselves. Classmates are always there to lend a helping hand, encouraging word, and moral support. It felt more like a community than just a class. I came to realize that I was a part of something more than just being instructed in a Martial Art. For serious students, you are a part of something much bigger than that! I could hardly believe it when I passed the first testing and earned my yellow belt. I was very proud of my son who on the same day had earned his green belt in Tae Kwon Do. I was happy, but my focus was on him. When we got home, he said to me "Mom, it's okay to be happy, and to feel proud. You don't have to hold it in. I know how good it feels! I remember how I felt when I passed my first test." He was right! I didn't **get** my yellow belt. I had **earned** it!

I have learned more than kicking, striking, falling, techniques, etc. I have a renewed sense of **self respect**. I have respect for my classmates too. People that work so very hard each day to accomplish their goals. You have to check your **jewelry, bad habits, and ego** at the door! You learn to respect yourself and others in a new way. I have renewed **self esteem**, as I have done more than I ever thought that I would or could. After about the 3<sup>rd</sup> class, when I was so sore, and unsure of myself, I was not sure that I would even continue with the class. I now have **confidence** in myself. I have learned to **work through pain**, and to **be humble**. I never thought that that would be a good thing! I **have embraced yet another culture**, and am **learning a new language**! My health has improved, including my asthma. I have **less stress**, perhaps because I now have an outlet. I am **more focused**. I look forward to each class, the people there, and improving my skills.

I do not know if I will pass this, or subsequent testing. I don't know if I will earn my next belt, or break wood, or ever attain the skills of a higher ranking or black belt. It is not about that. **Those are not the reasons that I enrolled in Hap Kido. I do know that I will do my best. I will keep learning, build skills and friendships, improve myself**, and hopefully continue to be a part of something very special! On many levels, joining Hap Kido was one of the best things that I have ever done. My son feels the same about Tae Kwon Do. When the discussion

of moving came up, my son and I both cited our classes at EMAC as a major reason for staying in this community. It has become a part of our lives and a **way of life**, not just a hobby. No matter how long we remain in our classes, we will remain students of our learned arts, and carry our lessons with us throughout life. I never thought that I would feel this way but I do. Being involved in Hap Kido, and having the privilege of training under an experienced, qualified, and dedicated Grand Master is more than learning self defense, or fighting techniques. It is learning a way of life that is **beneficial to the Mind, Body, and Spirit.**