

Building Relationships, Skill and Character through Inter-Club Competition

By: The Gattey Family

The past year has brought our family a new perspective to 'our world' of karate. As we ventured abroad to Spain in 2013 for the International Tournament our eyes and hearts were opened to the amazing skill, dedication and perseverance of fellow karatekas from around the world. Skill was but one aspiring attribute we noted. Kinship and hospitality were overwhelming even in a far off land. As we were welcomed by new friends to visit their hometown of la Seu d'Urgell, Catalonia, Spain, and spent hours exploring their world together, relationships formed and 'our world' of karate grew. Not only is this sport one we enjoy immensely, but this common bond has sparked relationships we regard highly.

A bit closer to home, we welcomed an invite by Mendonca AMA to participate in their Karate Camp over the Christmas holiday. We were welcomed with incredible hospitality by the Mendonca family and their extended family of karatekas in McMinnville, OR. Three days of intense training allowed our children's skills to be tested, strengthened and challenged. Despite being the 'outsiders' we never felt out of place. Each Mendonca AMA student eagerly greeted and trained with the visiting MATC family. A new style of training and cross-dojō sharing has brought new found growth and inspiration.

Since this initial McMinnville visit we have returned twice more. January 25, 2014, and April 5, 2014, Inter-club tournaments were platforms for inter-club relationship building. Competing with other Saito-Ha Shito-Ryu karatekas has encouraged us tremendously. Each Gattey child has a new found friend in McMinnville. At the young age of four, Andreas looks forward to sparring with Logan Mendonca and Logan Rodgers, or sparring against Natalie Lai and Hannah Newhouse. Even our shy Elise has found friendship in young Cheyenne Fleck, as they competed against one another in kata. Sebastian, as a new Shodan-ho, was put to the test by sparring older counterparts Mark Bickell and Jason Stanley. First Dan Seth von Eggers and Joel Clark, from the Pendelton, OR, dojo cross trained with our karatekas and pushed them to new heights.

The art of karate inspires the competitive nature to thrive and win yet the means of attaining such a goal requires much humility and dedication. Sparring matches were occasionally paused to critique and revise skill sets. This invaluable type of learning could only be done in an Inter-club setting and by humble students who are seeking to grow. Matthias and his sparring partner, Ethan Carter, monopolized on their unique sparring styles to challenge one another. As soon as the event was over they shared their 'training secrets'. Why not help one another grow by sharing skills and training styles? This became standard practice as each child 'took' with him/her new moves, and 'gave away' some tried and true favorite moves. Some may say this is allowing the opponent into one's mind and giving them the secret key to one's own defeat. We view this Inter-club camaraderie as a way to grow and spread our wings further than we ever thought possible in Grants Pass alone.

The deep bond Del Saito and Tony Mendonca share is evident by their dedication to the sport of karate. The support we have felt by both Soke and Sensei Tony has caused our children to flourish in their karate skill sets. How many Senseis would conduct a private lesson, the day of hip surgery, for out-of-town, Inter-club guests? That could only be Tony Mendonca. The Mendonca family, as well as their extended dojo family, have welcomed visiting karatekas into their homes and hearts. Inter-club training has provided our family with a broader sense of the 'karate world', and greatly enhanced our training and lives in general. We only hope to reflect this same blessing back to Mendonca AMA, and sister dojos, when they head to Grants Pass for a competition or to train at the hombu dojo.