



Martial Communities

In every issue of *Blitz*, we give experienced martial artists and instructors a forum to debate issues of importance in the martial arts scene. This month, we ask: In terms of both building up a martial arts school and the character of students within it, how important is it to engage with the local community or even give back to it in some way?



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Michael Green is the founder of Queensland's Integrated Martial Arts Academy and the Integrated Development Academy. Green began martial arts training with his father at four years old, and has since trained extensively in various styles, including Muay Thai, Hwa Rang Do, Kyokushin karate and Zen Do Kai freestyle. He has also worked for many years in youth support and community development. His academy's mission is to 'seek personal development through inner strength and courage' and is also dedicated to 'community empowerment through unity, cooperation and inspiration'. The academy regularly facilitates self-development courses that are specifically formatted to meet the needs of schools, youth groups and other community organisations.

The journey within the martial arts provides a great avenue for development and progress on all levels. Through perseverance and dedication, the path of disciplined martial arts training gives us all an opportunity to continually develop qualities that will serve us as individuals, and together in comradeship and unity.

Humans are an interdependent species; it is natural to the human instinct to give and share. Although we also have a predisposition to competition and rivalry, we are evolving to have a heightened awareness of cooperation, harmony and equality. The greatest progress and development in life occurs

when empowered individuals join forces with one another in a spirit of cooperation. It's then that we can synchronise our energies to make more powerful contributions in our world and our immediate communities.

One of the best things about training in martial arts is that it's very symbolic of the bigger picture of life. It is because of this that the martial arts is often referred to as a 'path' or 'way' [*do* in Japanese or *tao/dao* in Chinese]. I personally feel it is very character-building for a student to be given the opportunity to participate in regular events that are specifically aligned with making a positive contribution to the community. This can provide a sense of personal empowerment, inspiration and deeper purpose that adds quality and meaning to a student's journey in their chosen form of martial art.

There are some actions in life that cannot necessarily be seen with the eye but are

nevertheless of the most vital significance. Some of the greatest attributes of a martial arts warrior are found in the form of virtue, for example, valour, courage, humility, integrity, kindness, compassion, generosity and honour. These are elements of our true nature that are discovered as we expose the strengths of the heart through training and participation in club activities. Every time the essence of these virtues is given with a genuine intention of selfless service, it sets in motion an exponential ripple effect that can be extremely far-reaching.

Another important benefit of a martial arts school's involvement in community, and charity, events is that it helps to dissolve any misunderstandings and preconceived notions that some people have about the martial arts. By revealing its true nature of benevolence, the martial arts can then serve as a catalyst for mutual respect and appreciation throughout

the wider community. I find it very uplifting to see a growing number of people converging together, realising the true power and potential of positive unity. It is also refreshing to observe an ever-increasing amount of young people in the world who understand that as a true warrior in life, it takes much more courage and strength to rise up to be a leader on a path of development and unity than to be a follower on a path of destruction and separation.

As a martial arts instructor and youth mentor, it is an honour to be in a position where I am able to provide an environment of 'warrior spirit' that also encourages an atmosphere of generosity and service. As martial artists, we all walk a kindred path of self-development, and upon the way we also have many opportunities to contribute to the lives of others. In order to truly receive, one must first be willing to give – and that which is given is never lost.