

The Art of Judo

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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The martial arts all have a dual purpose in their practice, as defined in the very name. On one hand they may be used in both aggressive and defensive ways, but the movements are an art form, more closely related to dance than to fighting.

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Sensei Miguel Garcia has been operating the Gallup Judo Club for the past three years, building up a clientele of interested students who are excelling at their own pace in the practice of this ancient form.

Located at 230 W. Coal, next to and upstairs from City Electric Shoe Shop, the normally quiet Club becomes a beehive of activity when the students show up for the next session. At every age, they congregate, don their gi's for the rigorous practices, and prepare their minds and bodies for what is to come.

The transformation is little short of amazing as they become miniature warriors, intent and determined, instead of carefree youngsters. *Sensei* Miguel is sometimes helped by another instructor, Gallup Police Officer Matthew Graham, who is the 2015 National Master Champion. Graham doesn't necessarily rely on his own physical skills, since he is also the K-9 officer for his police unit.

But Graham is not the only student to earn recognition for his skills on the mat. Mateo and Arturo Loera both have earned second place medals in competition and Arturo is the 2015 NM State Champion. Haley Gomez also captured second in the Arizona championships while Chester Hubbard was third in his division. Alayson Pinto won the NM title in her group after only three months of training. Alayson is only seven years old and a student at Lincoln Elementary.

The most awarded student though is Nancy Rodriguez, an eighth-grader at Gallup Mid. She has been preparing for competitions for almost four years and has eight medals to show for her efforts: six from Arizona, where she won four titles and placed second twice; three for titles earned in New Mexico; and a more recent International Championship.

A very respectable record for a small, and relatively new club.

If your children would be interested in this activity, please call Sensei Miguel at 879-5641.