

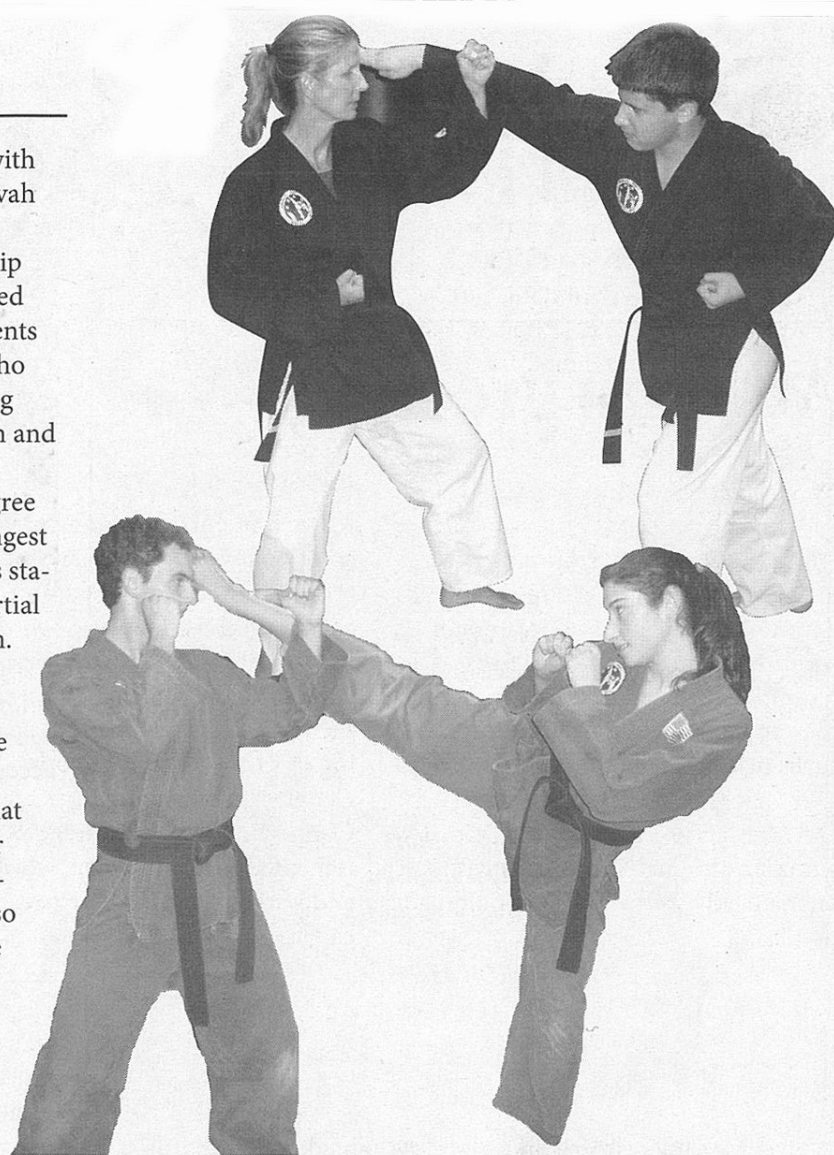
# The zen of dynamic tension

By Jeanne Ferris

People at the Solana Beach train station are often seen looking towards the ruckus heard across the street. The ruckus is the American Family Martial Arts (AFMA) studio where dynamic tension is practiced daily. As you get closer, you will see doctors who are mothers exercising with sons, involved fathers bonding with their daughters or siblings practicing their yells and forms harmoniously. The zen of dynamic tension is created with controlled movement and breathing in memorized forms required for taekwon do advancement in belt ranking. Sole owner since 1990, sensei Stephanie Zeno, is a fifth degree black belt. This feminine version of "Mr. Miyagi" is an inspiring humanitarian, mentor extraordinaire; as well as a devoted mother with daughters in college. The studio is in association with Family Karate founded by Master Charles E. Hawkins, eighth degree black belt, a student of Grand Master J. Pat Burleson, 10th degree black belt and the first U.S. National Karate Champion in 1964 who studied under Grand Master Jhoon Rhee. Rhee is credited with bringing taekwon do to the United States. "After 30 years, Master Truscott is still my instructor," said

Zeno. "In fact, I now teach his daughter martial arts." Her nurturing tutelage of young children and their siblings has been a remarkable formula for emotional maturity and stellar academic achievement. Internship as instructors and the demonstration team are by invitation only. "I think what makes this studio unique from others is the unusually high percentage of teens here," said Zeno. "I love mentoring the teenagers." Twelve of Zeno's high school senior members and leaders of the demonstration team are leaving for universities in the fall of 2010. All of the teens began martial arts as children. Two of the black belt seniors, AFMA demo co-captain Andy Ribner (18) and Amanda Reis (20), were the youngest ever to be nationally certified as karate instructors. "I always thought of myself as very un-athletic when I was younger, but martial arts gave me something that I could be proud of about myself physically," said Reis. "More importantly, it challenged me mentally to take on responsibilities and be a leader, especially when we created the demonstration team and I started teaching." Reis is majoring in neurosciences in her second year at Middlebury College in Vermont. At 13 years of age, Ribner cre-

ated a scholarship fund with a portion of his Bar Mitzvah monies called AFMA Junior Black Belt Scholarship Fund. The fund was started for underprivileged students within the community who were interested in training but couldn't afford tuition and equipment. Ribner is now a third degree black belt and is the youngest student ever to attain this status within the World Martial Arts Ranking Association. "Without my 10 years of training at AMFA, I would not have nearly the self-confidence, self-respect, or self discipline that I have now," he said. "Nor would I have the embodiment of the tenets that I so value." Andy leaves in the fall for Wesleyan University in Connecticut. Zeno, the scholarship administrator, is willing to work with any charity wishing to make scholarship grants for AFMA students. Contributions are not deductible because the scholarship is not a formal charity, however, 100 percent of the monies are administered for scholarships. Checks can be mailed to: American Family Martial Arts 124 Lomas Santa Fe, Ste 106 Solana Beach, CA 92075 Today, most everyone is interested in managing tension



Andy Ribner and Amanda Reis practice their moves at American Family Martial Arts #2 Dr. Francine Duval spars with Colin Shanahan at American Family Martial Arts (Photo Jeanne Ferris)

through exercise and positive thinking. To create dynamic tension is to also control it. Martial arts is not just self-defense, it is an art, which follows one through life's challenges with the valor and heart of a trained warrior elevated

with random acts of altruism and philanthropy. To help a child, a spouse or yourself find one's inner Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan, register online at: [www.solanabeachkarate.com](http://www.solanabeachkarate.com).



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