

Wang's Martial Arts

92-B Wilson Rd.
Humble, TX 77338
U.S.A.

Phone (281) 548-1638, (281) 682-3387

E-mail: wang3888@embarqmail.com

Web site: <http://www.WangsMartialArts.com>

School Phone number:

281-548-1638,

281-682-3387 (Cell)

October 2011 Newsletter Summary

INNER SCHOOL TOURNAMENT

Date: 12-03-2011 (Saturday)
Ages 5 - 80 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Entry Fee: \$40.00 up to three events
\$ 5.00 goes to scholarship fund

Brown and Black rank test

October 25, 2011 (Tue.) 6 – 8 pm
October 27, 2011 (Thur.) 6 – 8 pm
October 29, 2011 (Sat.) 9 am – 3 pm

Proverbs 2.

⁷ He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
⁸ for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Red, Brown and Black Belt Class

Every Saturday morning from 9:00 – 10:00 am

Basic Bo

Dates: 11-03-2011 (Thur.) Time: 8-9 pm
11-10-2011 (Thur.) 8-9 pm
11-17-2011 (Thur.) 8-9 pm

Cost: \$39.00 or \$19.50 for review

Pre-requisite: Adults (15 years old and up) –
Yellow belt and up.

Jr. students (5–14 years old)- green belt and
above.

Accelerated program Rank Test

Date: 11-19-2011 (Sat.)
Time: 3:00 pm –5:30 pm

Tai Chi Rank Test

Date: 11-5-2011 (Sat.)
Time: 12 noon – 2:00 pm

Fire Dragon Championship tournament -

Date: 10-22-2011 (Saturday)
Place: Austin, Tx

Kung Fu Rank Test

Date: 9-14 yrs: 10-13-2011, Thursday, 6-8:30 pm
5-8 yrs: 10-15-2011, Saturday, 2-3:30 pm
15 yrs +: 10-15-2011, Saturday, 3:30-5:30 pm
Must register on or before 10-08-2011.
Test fee : \$35.00 and up

Report card point:

Jaquelin Ajucum - 6.75
Diego Ramirez – 5.25
Zoe Whitehead – 4.50
Alan Whitehead – 4.50
Jacob Brewer – 4.50
Sean Paul – 4.50
Alyssa Ramirez – 4.50
Tim Garcia – 4.50
Nicholas Becerra – 4.50
Daniel Hernandez – 3.75
Emmory Leach – 3.00
Lauren Brewer – 2.25
Carsen Rushing – 2.25
Jose Guzman – 2.00
Manuel Salgado – 1.50
Julian Rosas – 1.50
Kamrie Abbs – 1.50
Kevin Papa - 1.50
Jamal Smith – 0.50
Jonathan Alvarez – 0.5

Be sure turn in a copy of your report card
as you receive it.



Black Belt Club & Accelerated Program

Tournament Competition Class:

Date: 10-1-11, 11-05-11 (Saturday)
Time: 1:00 – 2:00 pm

Nunchaku Class:

Date: November 12, 2011 (Saturday)
Time: 1:00 – 2:00 pm

Conditioning & Reaction Drill Class:

Age 5 –12 years old
Date: 10/20/2011 (Thursday)
Time: 8:00 – 9:00 pm

Age 13 – 80 years old
Date: 09/22/2011 (Thursday)
10/06/2011 (Thursday)
10/27/2011 (Thursday)

Time: 8:00 – 9:00 pm

Wang's Martial Arts College Student
Scholarship Fund:
2009 Scholarship Fundraising Banquet -
\$628.98

Inner-School tournament:
December 5, 2009 - \$105.00
March 6, 2010 - \$85.00
July 10, 2010 - \$100.00
November 6, 2010 - \$105.00
March 19, 2011 - \$80.00
June 4, 2011 - \$115.00
September 10, 2011 - \$150.00
Total - \$1368.98

Current student at Wang's Martial Arts
who is taking 12 or more credit hours at
semester final report card:
All A's - \$300.00
A & B's - \$200.00
All B's - \$100.00

Report Card Points – Turn in your report cards
all year long for a chance to win a seven foot
trophy at the Chinese New Year Banquet!
All A's-12pts; A's & B's- 9pts; All B's-6pts;
Turn in your report card – 3pts

Tournament Points: Don't forget to turn in your
points after each tournament for a chance to win
a seven foot trophy at the Chinese New Year
Banquet!
1st Place-12pts; 2nd Place-9pts; 3rd Place-6pts;
Participation-3pts

Inner-School tournament: 9/10/2011

Ages 5-8

Beginner Form:

- 1st - Justyn Davis
- 2nd - Conner Roll-Bush
- 3rd - Chase Griffin

Adv. Form:

- 1st - Daniel hernandez
- 2nd - Sean paul
- 3rd - Jaquelin Ajucum

Ages 9-14

Beginner Form:

- 1st - kevin Papa
- 2nd - Brandon Roll-Bush
- 3rd - Christian Griffin

Adv. Form:

- 1st - Julian Rosas
- 2nd - Emmory leach
- 3rd - Tim Garcia

Jr. Black

1st- Jose Guzman

Ad. adv. Form:

- 1st - Pardiac Gilbert
- 2nd - James Dyess
- 3rd - Diana Garcia

Black Belt Form:

- 1st - Marvin Henderson
- 2nd - Allen DeWoody

Black belt Weapon:

- 1st - Marvin henderson
- 2nd - Jose Guzman
- 3rd - Allen DeWoody

Jr. Weapons:

- 1st - Julian Rosas
- 2nd - Daniel Hernandez
- 3rd - Emmory Leach

Ad. Weapons:

- 1st - James Dyess
- 2nd - Richard Dunsmore
- 3rd - Paul Turk

Tai Chi Form:

- 1st - Marilyn Kidd
- 2nd - Richard Dunsmore
- 3rd - Paul Turk

Sparring:

Ages 5-8

Beginner:

- 1st - Justyn Davis
- 2nd - Chase Griffin
- 3rd - Conner Roll-Bush

Adv.

- 1st - Daniel Hernandez
- 2nd - Jaquelin Ajucum
- 3rd - Sean Paul

- 3rd - Andrik Sanchez

Ages 9-14

Beginner:

- 1st - Christian Griffin
- 2nd - Kevin Papa
- 3rd - Brandon Roll-Bush

Adv.

- 1st - Emmory Leach
- 2nd - Ayden Sower
- 3rd - Julian Rosas

Ad. Adv. Sparring:

- 1st - Darren Bush
- 2nd - James Dyess
- 3rd - Padraic Gilbert

Black Belt

- 1st - Marvin Henderson
- 2nd - Jose Guzman

Congratulations!

Rank Test Results - 8/27/2011

- Justyn Davis - Yellow
- Kaerden Sims - Purple
- Jaquelin Ajucum - Blue/stripe
- Daniel Hernandez - Brown
- Mark Limones - Green
- Emmory Leach - Brown
- Diego Ramirez - Brown
- Bryc Sapinhour - Yellow/stripe
- Elizabeth Lehmann - Yellow/stripe
- David Wilkerson - Orange/stripe
- Carrie Wilkerson - Green
- Darren Bush - Purple/stripe
- Padraic Gilbert - Brown

Congratulations!

Tournament Point:

- Daniel Hernandez - 102
 - Marvin Henderson - 90
 - Jose Guzman - 87
 - Tim Garcia - 78
 - Emmory Leach - 75
 - Jaquelin Ajucum - 63
 - Julian Rosas - 57
 - Padraic Gilbert - 54
 - Chris Avelar - 51
 - Diana Garcia - 42
 - Allen DeWoody - 33
 - Andrik Sanchez - 30
 - James Dyess - 30
 - Jaci Moricca - 24
 - Justyn Davis - 24
 - Kevin Papa - 21
 - Michael Barton - 18
 - Diego Ramirez - 18
 - Marilyn Kidd - 15
 - Darren Bush - 15
 - Conner Roll-Bush - 15
 - Brandon Roll-Bush - 15
 - Ayden Sowers - 9
- Turn in tournament point form.

September Birthday

Abel DeJora	10/09
Andrea Barela	10/04
Daniele Cauvet	10/12
Greg Burton	10/18
Jorel Rivera	10/06
Lukasz Cupial	10/30
Mako Jaeger	10/24
Marvin Henderson	10/20
Sarah Kennedy	10/14
Victor Donatto	10/23
Daniel Hernandez	10/11
Elmer Whitehead	10/02
Daris Moore	10/21
Bill Cadwallader	10/03
Alan Whitehead	10/30
Julian Salgado	10/09
William Koch	10/13
Da'Quan Gunter	10/08
Maxx House	10/10
Daniel Hernandez	10/11
David ramirez	10/11
Margret Swarely	10/17
Samuel Wallace-Parker	10/27
Carsen Rushing	10/31
Josh McDonald	10/05
Keenan Robinson	10/30
Christopher Seijo	10/19

Happy Birthday

New Student:

- Taylor Dupre
- Jane Rogers
- Juan Salazor
- Jeannette Osterhan-Adams
- Susan Fishman
- Rex Robertson
- Christopher Robertson

Welcome!



WANG'S MARTIAL ARTS

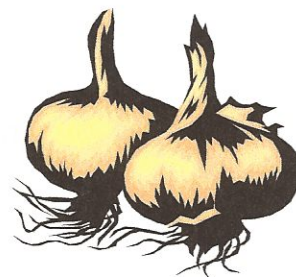
勇仁智德

Bravery Kindness Wisdom Integrity

Kung Fu - Tai Chi

Humble, Tx
281-682-3387

GARLIC: Powerful (pungent) medicine



GARLIC, PUNGENT GARLIC. IT'S COME A LONG WAY SINCE ITS FAME AS A NECKLACE warding off DRACULA'S DEADLY BITE. GARLIC, TODAY, IS AMONG THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR HERBS, REVERED BY MILLIONS AS A FOOD AND A TRADITIONAL MEDICINAL. FOR A PLANT ALSO FAMOUS FOR ITS AUDACIOUS, PIQUANT, OFFENSIVE SMELL (TO SOME), THAT'S PRETTY GOOD NEWS.

Surprisingly enough, garlic, botanically referred to as *Allium sativa*, is a member of the Liliceae or Lily family of plants. Like its more comely cousin, garlic grows from a bulb, sending a tall green stalk up from the earth to catch sunlight and to flower. Garlic is indigenous to the Mediterranean part of the world, and is today easily cultivated during dry, sunny summers in a variety of climates. If you like to garden, you'll find garlic a fun addition to your herb patch. Its flower is round and spiky, looking a bit like a sea urchin placed on a stalk. At the season's end, harvesting the bulb, made up of many individual cloves, is a little like hunting for underground

Easter eggs—digging deep in the soil, wise farmers know that within the tan knobby clump lies the true wealth of this special plant.

AGE BEFORE BEAUTY?

Although one form of garlic is not necessarily more physically attractive than another, there certainly is a big debate over the value of age when it comes to garlic. Proponents of garlic-as-medicine generally divide themselves into two camps: the garlic extract (or aged garlic) group, and the powdered garlic group.

Research done by the powdered group tells them that alliin/allicin, an important sulfur compound, is one of the key ingredients in garlic effectiveness in fighting disease. Alliin/allicin is lost in the aging process. Therefore, the powdered garlic group argues that fresh garlic is the best medicine.

The garlic extract group believes that many stable organosulfur compounds, other than alliin/allicin, provide garlic with its medicinal punch. Since these compounds are not destroyed by aging, the garlic extract group says that theirs is an equally viable medicine. Furthermore, they assert, aged garlic is preferable because with

aging, garlic's harsh, irritating and odiferous qualities can be tamed.

Research has been done on both forms of garlic, and both forms seem clearly to convey health benefits. Choosing the form that is right for you is somewhat a matter of preference, and somewhat dependant on your desired health goal. Let's explore garlic's health benefits more specifically.

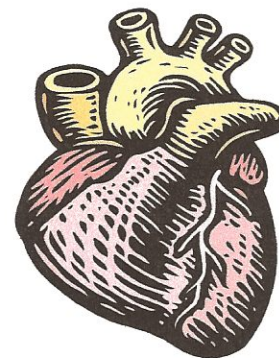
CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

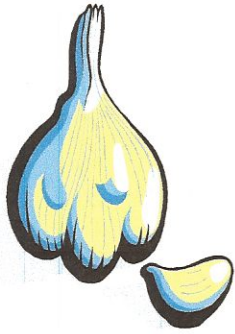
When it comes to preventing heart disease, just about everyone can benefit from garlic. Without a doubt, garlic provides the body with protection against cardiovascular disease. It does this in a number of ways: lowering cholesterol and triglycerides, raising HDL (good cholesterol), reducing the formation of plaque in cartoid arteries, and providing protection against aging in the all-important aorta—the cardiac blood vessel responsible for maintaining blood flow and pressure throughout the heart pumping cycle.

Two recent powdered garlic studies are worth reviewing. In a 1997 study which appeared in the journal *Circulation*, Gustav Belz, M.D., worked with the hypothesis that garlic

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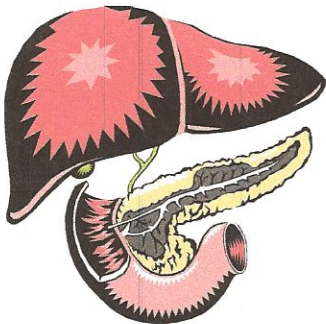


Garlic also seems to help the body in fighting other challenges to the immune system.

“GARLIC” continues...

may provide cardiovascular benefit by preventing age-related stiffening of the aorta. Stiffening of the aorta is quite common in aging. The process is hastened by things like cigarette smoking, a diet high in fats and sugars and some pharmacologic medicines. Living with a less-than-flexible aorta is a risk factor for myocardial infarction and for vascular damage in arteries.

Belz's group (at the Center of Cardiovascular Pharmacology, Mainz, Germany), did a cross-sectional, observational study comparing 101 healthy non-smoking adults, ranging in age from 50 to 80 years, who had taken a minimum of 300 mg/day of standardized garlic powder daily for at least two years against a similar sized age, health and gender controlled group who did not use garlic. Belz found that although the blood pressures, heart rate and plasma lipid levels of each group were similar, the aortas of the garlic group were significantly more flexible than the aortas of the non-garlic regularly slowed aging in a chief heart vessel.



J.P. Lash, M.D., working at the University of Illinois at Chicago, published a study in *Transplantation Proceedings* (1998), concluding that garlic (powdered) had “significant beneficial effects” in reducing total and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels in kidney transplant patients. Hyperlipidemia is a serious problem in kidney transplant patients; 40 percent of deaths in this group are due to cardiovascular disease. While Lash concluded that garlic, alone, would not be adequate in reducing cholesterol levels for some of his patients, he did surmise that garlic supplementation might well provided the benefit of lowering the necessary dose of more toxic pharmaceutical medications.

LIVER HELP

Another priceless benefit of garlic for health and long life is liver protection. In this regard, many of the studies are on aged garlic. Scientists and nutritionally oriented physicians believe that maintaining high levels of glutathione, a powerful anti-oxidant used by cells throughout the body,

may well be equated with good health. Researchers therefore set about searching for substances that help the body hang on to glutathione.

Exposure to toxic substances lowers glutathione levels. Among these toxic substances is a chemical known as bromobenzene. Scientists treated a group of laboratory rats with garlic, then measured liver glutathione levels both before and after exposing them to bromobenzene. When compared to an equivalent group of rats who were not pretreated with garlic, the animals treated with garlic before exposure to bromobenzene maintained higher, post-exposure levels of glutathione than the untreated group.

It also seems that garlic does more than simply conserve antioxidant levels. Other animal studies have found that garlic protects against liver damage from acetaminophen, and can actually increase the intestinal activity levels of

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“GARLIC” continues...

enzymes used by the body to eliminate toxins. These helpful substances, called “Phase II detoxification enzymes,” specifically quinine reductase and glutathione transferase, were found in elevated numbers in animals treated with garlic.

Garlic may also help the body protect itself from heavy-metal accumulation. It’s a smart idea to take garlic when you travel, when you eat fish that might be high in mercury, or whenever you are exposed to smog or heavy air pollution.

IMMUNITY AND CANCER

In addition to its liver and heart protective activity, garlic may also provide protection against cancer by upping the effectiveness of the body’s immune system. Of interest to scientists are the stable sulfur compounds found in aged garlic, in particular S-allylmercaptocysteine. Test tube and animal studies have so far been encouraging, with speculation that garlic may help slow the proliferation of cancer cells in prostate, breast and bladder cancers.

Garlic also seems to help the body in fighting other challenges to the immune system: allergies, colds, flu and even bacterial and parasitic

illness. In my family practice, garlic oil is a staple amongst my pediatric patients. Their parents put a drop or two in each ear at the onset of otitis (ear infection). This external application, combined with internal doses of echinacea, vitamin C, and the proper homeopathic, is usually enough to cure most cases.

Garlic is also one of my preferred medicines for the common cold. I advised patients to put lots of it in hot soup or, my personal favorite—cut up a clove and eat it sprinkled over hot whole grain toast.

Garlic oil can be used topically against a variety of fungal infections. The powdered herb can be found combined with botanicals like Oregon grape, thyme and ginger in anti-candida and anti-parasite internal medicinal formulas. In the realm of anti-parasitic activity, fresh garlic seems to be superior to aged.

A WORD OF CAUTION

When it comes to maintaining long term health, the expression really should be “a clove a day keeps the doctor away,” since almost everyone can benefit from a bit of garlic daily. Nonetheless, some people should be careful when using garlic, and some people simply cannot tolerate it.

Garlic is a warming and

drying herb. Folks with sensitive stomachs or “hot” constitutions are often bothered by the plant and would be better off not using it. Supplementing with garlic is also contraindicated during things like acute inflammation, dehydration and menopause with hot flashes. In a small percentage of insomnia cases, garlic is the culprit. If you suffer with insomnia and you take garlic, try avoiding the garlic for a few days. If the insomnia doesn’t clear up, garlic probably isn’t the problem. You can return to using garlic, and look for another cause.

Because garlic is a mild blood-thinning agent, people taking anti-coagulant medication should alert their physician before taking garlic supplements. In most of these patients, one clove daily, or supplements equivalent to one clove daily, will not interfere with blood thinning medications.

By Jamison Starbuck, N.D.,J.D.

Taken from the May 2000 Edition of the Better Nutrition magazine.

The expression really should be, “a clove a day keeps the doctor away,” since almost everyone can benefit from a bit of garlic daily.



TV Bashed

Article taken from Better Nutrition

A first-of-its-kind, long-range US study – reported in the March 29, 2002 issue of *Science* – links television viewing in adolescence and young adulthood to violent behavior later in life.

Already strong evidence shows that prolonged exposure to violent television shows during childhood is associated with subsequent aggression. The new study, however, clearly demonstrates this association in adolescents and young adults, thus broadening the range of individuals who are affected by media violence.

Researchers at Columbia University in New York assessed television viewing and aggressive behavior over a 17-year period among 707 individuals. They concluded there is a significant association between the amount of time spent watching television during adolescence and early childhood and the likelihood of subsequent serious acts of aggression – including robbery, assault and threats – before the ages of 22 for boys or 30 for girls.

This association remains significant even after other factors – previous aggressive behavior, childhood neglect, family income, neighborhood violence, parental education, and psychiatric disorders – are controlled.

A growing body of research suggests that children must be taught that real-life aggression actually hurts people. As the American Academy of Pediatrics warned in the February 2001 issue of *Pediatrics*, many younger children cannot discriminate between what they see on TV and what is real.

Trouble on Tap

By: Michael Downey

Murky Waters Lurk at Home

Water is well-known as a keystone to better health. After all, how many times have you heard the proverbial “drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day?” Yet, increasingly, the quality and purity of ordinary drinking water is becoming cause for concern.

For decades, scientists have known of the dangers of contamination from lead water pipes, which were finally banned by the federal government in 1986. There's also the possibility of groundwater contamination from petroleum, pesticides and other environmental toxins—especially in rural communities where the majority of drinking water is supplied from wells.

Bacteria, on the other hand, are seldom a worry in America's municipal drinking water. Municipal water also tends to be “cleaner,” since it's run through purification systems and monitored by government agencies. Yet many experts caution against consuming too much tap water. Why? Because there's a growing body of evidence that some of the very chemicals added to water to guard your health—especially chlorine and fluoride—may be more harm than good.

Chlorine

Chlorine is added to drinking water to keep it bacteria free. But it also reacts with organic material creating chloroform, trihalomethanes (THMs) and other chlorination disinfection byproducts that are strongly linked with cancer.

A 1998 position paper released by Health Canada (the Canadian equivalent of the US Food and Drug Administration) states: “14 to 16 percent of bladder cancers may be attributable to water containing CBPs. There is an urgent need to resolve this. CBPs [may be] the most important environmental carcinogens in terms of attributable cancers.” The study, *Safe Drinking Water: A Public Health Challenge*, also links CBPs with spontaneous abortions, birth defects, respiratory problems and spina bifida.

In 1992, the American Medical Association published statistics showing nearly 28 percent of all cancers

of the intestines and 18 percent of all cancers of the bladder can be traced to chlorinated water. More than a dozen subsequent studies confirm this finding. In 1998, for instance, the journal *Epidemiology* published a study showing that men who drink chlorinated tap water for more than 40 years face double the risk of bladder cancer compared to men who drink non-chlorinated water.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that THMs are present in virtually all chlorinated water. "We're working very hard to achieve a balance between the need for safer water and the importance of disinfecting the water," EPA spokeswoman Robin Wood says.

The agency has ordered cities and towns across the United States to start reducing levels of this compound in drinking water—but chlorination will continue, even though water also can be disinfected with ultraviolet light or ozone without creating CBPs. Ozone is used in some European cities—Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, Munich and others—but chlorination continues to be the norm on this continent.

Fluoride

Fluoride is added to 60 percent of US and 40 percent of Canadian tap water to reduce tooth decay. However, scientists say that actually swallowing this toxin offers virtually no dental advantage. According to recognized fluoride authority Hardy Limeback, DDS, head of Preventative Dentistry at the University of Toronto, fluoride's benefit derives from direct physical contact with tooth's exterior.

"You may as well swish with fluoridated tap water and spit it out. That's how it works," Limeback says.

A dozen Nobel Prize-winning scientists have long warned of a link between fluoride and serious health problems. However, the late Dean Burk, PhD, former chief chemist at the National Cancer Institute, described fluoride's risk in the starkest terms. After conducting the largest US fluoridation study in history, Burk concluded: "Fluoride causes more cancer, and causes it faster, than any other chemical." Fluoride is further linked to osteoporosis, hip fracture, memory and neurological impairment and kidney disorders.

Federal law forbids the EPA from taking a public position for or against fluoride, but the EPA employees' union is not similarly restricted. "Our union—comprising several hundred toxicologists, other scientists and lawyers—maintains its solid opposition to fluoridation," says J. William Hirzy, the union's senior Vice President.

Safe Answers

Before you run out and buy a home filtration system, consider this. The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta says that some of those systems can actually add lead to water. Brass elements (made from copper and lead) are the likely culprits.

Some people think boiling removes impurities. But boiling actually concentrates substances—as anyone who has left soup boiling too long on the stove knows. The longer any liquid boils off steam, the less water remains to hold the dissolved chemicals and metals.

What about bottled water? It's sometimes disinfected with ozone instead of chlorine, but not always. And there's still the question of fluoride, since it may occur naturally in any water source—in substantial quantities—due to geologic action. Check the label for a fluoride content below 0.2 parts per million (ppm), also written as milligrams per liter (mg/L). Of course, some brands are totally fluoride free.

Two other safe options are distilled water and reverse osmosis (RO) water, which is produced using a semi-permeable membrane and pressure to filter out impurities. Critics argue these processes also remove beneficial minerals, but water's a relatively poor source of minerals anyway.

So, the next time you turn on the tap, you may want to ponder exactly what's coming out with the water. If you don't trust it, remember there are safer alternatives.

Sacred Moves

Catholic sister teaches ancient Asian body and spiritual connection.

By Tara Dooley

Houston Chronicle Religion Writer

DICKENSON— Sister Carletta LaCour is suspended by pearls.

At least that is the feeling she is trying to explain to seven women as they stand, rocking back and forth, eyes closed.

LaCour's head and body are straight as she sinks into her knees and slowly shifts her weight from her left foot to her right.

"It's not about lunch; it's not about a party this evening. Just put your concentration in the soles of your feet," LaCour coos in even tones.

"The benefit is in the doing, not the concluding."

As a sunny morning fades into a rainy day, the light dims on a hall of the Christian Renewal Center where the group is assembled for a class on "Praying with Tai Chi Chih." The women, ranging in age from 49 to about 60, are taking time off from their lives and jobs as nurses, secretaries, physical

therapists and sales representatives to gather in a semi-circle facing the Dominican sister from a Houston-based order. For the next five hours, their goal will be to learn how to incorporate a modified version of the century-old practice of Tai Chi into their physical and spiritual lives.

"It is reverencing," LaCour says. "It is honoring the body. In honoring our body, we honor the creator who gave us our body.

If you are in pain, anxious and tensed up, you are not about to remember God's gift."

Rita Bowser of League City is seeking a change of pace on her 50th birthday. Rather than spend the day at her advertising sales job, she wants something new and spiritually renewing.

"I do want to embrace this and I want to start my day this way," Bowser says at the end of the day.

The history of Tai Chi reaches back centuries in China and forms of it are practiced as a martial art, said George Ling Hu, who teaches Tai Chi at the Jung Center, at retirement homes and at his own studio.

The tradition is often associated with Taoism and Buddhism, although Hu stresses that it can be practiced by people of any faith or none at all. In modern forms, the emphasis is often on improving balance and health, he said. There are many forms of Tai Chi, but many combine "a softness and the slowing of the movement," Hu said.

LaCour was introduced to Tai Chi on an eight-month sabbatical. After a 33-year teaching career that included a stint as principal of St. Mary Catholic School in Houston, LaCour discovered that she needed a break.

"It didn't give me energy," she recalled. "I didn't really look forward to the next day of school."

So in 1995, LaCour headed to a retreat center near the Hudson River in New York, where she took a class in Tai Chi Chih—a form of Tai Chi developed by an American.

The movement appealed to her: It was slow, smooth, melodic and easy to grasp. As she learned the 20 movements, she took solitary, early morning practice outdoors as the sun rose over the Hudson.

"I thought, 'All this and we get heaven at the end,'" LaCour said. [Refer to John 3:16 for more information on this topic.]

Refreshed but not ready to return to teaching, LaCour returned to Texas in 1996 and took a position at the Holy Family Retreat Center in Beaumont, where she began to offer Tai Chi classes to visiting groups. She now teaches two six-week sessions a year at the center.

"We are not good to ourselves," LaCour said of people today. "The body will take so much and then it will start talking to us."

Though part of the benefit of practicing the moves is physical, LaCour also emphasizes the spiritual. That drew some of the women to the Dickenson retreat.

"I was always interested in the spiritual part of it, the Eastern and the Western," says Bridget Richnow of Deer Park, who took a day off from her secretarial job to participate. Richnow, a Catholic, says Tai Chi is similar to her experience with yoga.

"You could focus in on your prayer, where your mind doesn't wander," she says. "You could focus in on your closeness to God. There is a difference between religion and spirituality."

Combining Tai Chi with Catholicism is not an easy mix for everyone. But as far as LaCour is concerned, there is no incongruence.

"I'm not asking someone to change their belief system. I'm asking them to move in a gentle way and reap the benefits.

"We have been broadened because the world is our neighborhood," she adds.

In her practice, LaCour combines Western traditions with the recitation of Psalms. Before embarking on a new set of movements she leads the group in a few psalms.

"The Lord lifts up all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down," they repeat.

"Now when I go to church and I hear a psalm, I wasn't to do the movements," LaCour says. "I have to watch myself."