

# Connections

The Newsletter of Abundant Peace Aikido and T'ai Chi School

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## Holiday Gathering

Each year at this time we hold a potluck gathering at the Dojo, to celebrate the festive season and to enhance and grow our own sense of community. This year, we will hold this special event on the evening of Wednesday, 21 December; those available will gather for our regular dojo care session beginning at 5:30 PM. The potluck meal will begin at 7:00 PM, and there will be no classes held that evening. Bring your friends, bring your family!



## Major Test Dates

Many of our senior students will undergo arduous testing this month. Reg and Tim will test to 4<sup>th</sup> Kyu on the evening of December 16<sup>th</sup>; Joo and Michele will test to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kyu on the evening of December 20<sup>th</sup>; and, we are still hoping to find a date for a 5<sup>th</sup> Kyu test for Colleen, Marc and Terry. Come and observe these, first to support our friends as they submit to this challenge, but also because watching these more senior examinations is an excellent learning process.

## Editorial

The holiday season is upon us... it seems we are subjected to awful canned Christmas Music earlier each year, as the various retailers seek to grow their holiday sales figures. We should choose to make use of this season, and the sentiments it engenders, for a more noble purpose. Spend time with those important few in your life that truly matter to you, for starters. Reflect upon the real meaning of this time of year, regardless of your spiritual or religious bent. Finally, remember that while gift giving is great, it always feels more rewarding when we give of ourselves, rather than just exchanging money for the latest gadget or fad.

Classes will run throughout the season; make use of that time to burn off some of the many delicious but excess calories we will consume these coming weeks!

## Promotions

We congratulate those ~~members~~ members of our aikido school who were promoted in October:

**Kids:** Kenna K. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Erik P. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Ethan M. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Saddle M. Jr. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Nathaniel A. 14<sup>th</sup> Kyu; William H. Jr. 13<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Rachel T. 12<sup>th</sup> Kyu; and, Lacey S. 12<sup>th</sup> Kyu.

**Adults:** Melvin S. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Daniel M. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Skyler G. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Sean C. 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Chad S. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Leigh F. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu; Donna P. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu; and, France M. 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu.

We also congratulate the members of our beginner T'ai Chi program who achieved the significant milestone of the first "cross hands" in the set. They celebrated this achievement with their first "Noodle Night" which was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed.

*Remember as well our Library, named for a member of the Canadian Forces, Corporal Francisco Gomez, who was killed in Afghanistan. The Library exists for all to enjoy.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Special Training for the month of December** will take place on the evening of Friday, the 9<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30 to 9:30 PM. Our focus will be on the principles of awase, musubi, irimi, kuzushi, and aiki; connection, blending, entering, and balance taking... working from centre to take centre.

**Classes will be held** during the Christmas Season. Sensei asked that I extend his thanks to those students who agreed to cover class!

**Gift Certificates are now available** from Sensei Brad. "Give the Gift of Health"! Purchase these gift certificates for your friends and family members, for T'ai Chi or Aikido classes, to encourage them to keep their health and wellness goals in the New Year.

**Training supplies such as uniforms and weapons** are available for purchase through the School. Prices are competitive; you can be guaranteed that the goods you acquire will be of sufficient quality for the rigors of our training; and, the convenience of having these items delivered to you at class cannot be beat! Ask us for details.

**New at [www.abundantpeace.com](http://www.abundantpeace.com)** is our new T'ai Chi video, pictures from the recent trip to Missoula. Coming soon are new Aikido, Kids Aikido, and self defense videos. Check our web site regularly, as it is always kept fresh by our Web Master; in addition to the regular events pages and the like, there are always new videos, articles and story pages.

**We have an opportunity** to support a worthy cause, and take care of our 2012 calendar needs at the same time. See Sensei Brad to purchase a 2012 Calendar, featuring family pets who have received cancer treatments through this worthy program. Calendars are only \$15.00 each, every penny of which goes to this charity.

**Sensei Brad is pleased to announce** the launch of a new Health Newsletter! This on line publication will cover a wide range of general health related topics, with a special focus on the blending of timeless wisdom with modern science and technology. Check it out at [www.improvehealthnow.net](http://www.improvehealthnow.net) or ask Brad for details.

## Dojo Etiquette

It is common for people to ask about the practice of bowing in aikido. In particular, many people are concerned that bowing may have some religious significance. It does not. Incorporating this particular aspect of Japanese culture into our aikido practice serves several purposes: It inculcates a familiarity with an important aspect of Japanese culture in aikido practitioners. This is especially important for anyone who may wish, at some time, to travel to Japan to practice aikido. There is also a case to be made for simply broadening one's cultural horizons.

Bowing may be an expression of respect. As such, it expresses open-mindedness and a willingness to learn from one's teachers and fellow students.

Bowing to a partner may serve to remind you that your partner is a person -- not a practice dummy. Always train within the limits of your partner's abilities.

The initial bow, which signifies the beginning of formal practice, is much like a "ready, begin" uttered at the beginning of an examination. So long as class is in session, you should behave in accordance with certain standards of deportment. Aikido class should be somewhat like a world unto itself. While in this "world," your attention should be focused on the practice of aikido. Bowing out is like signaling a return to the "ordinary" world.

When bowing either to the instructor at the beginning of practice or to one's partner at the beginning of a technique it is considered proper to say "**Onegai Shimasu**" (lit. "I request a favor") and when bowing either to the instructor at the end of class or to one's partner at the end of a technique it is considered proper to say "**Domo arigato gozaimashita.**" ("thank you").

*Taken from the Aikido Primer by Eric Sotnak*

## O' Sensei's Wisdom

*"The Path is exceedingly vast. From ancient times to the present day, even the greatest sages were unable to perceive and comprehend the entire truth; the explanation and teachings of masters and saints express only part of the whole. It is not possible for anyone to speak of such things in their entirety. Just head for the light and heat, learn from the gods, and through the virtue of devoted practice of the Art of Peace, become one with the Divine."*