

## **Being A Black Belt at Central Park Taekwondo**

Chava A. Wernick, *March 2016*

I have found, over the many years of my life, that one of the most important things in this world is community. Bridges cannot cross rivers without support, just as a person cannot cross life's still or rocky waters without support. Being a black belt at CPTKD means being part of a community focused on support, and adherent to the tenants of Taekwondo – it means showing courtesy to all belt levels; having integrity on and off the mat; displaying perseverance no matter how many tries it takes; exercising self-control in competition and out in the world; and displaying an indomitable spirit through wins and losses, achievements and setbacks. The focus and self-discipline I learned in Taekwondo has helped me time and again through school work, real-world work, and handling anything that comes my way.

Taekwondo was one of the steady parts of my life, something I have been involved in through all stages. The road that led me to CPTKD was long and filled with twists and turns. At some points, I had no idea of where I would end up next. My Taekwondo career began in Ohio, at the school my father attended, when I was a child. Life and family took me to Chicago, where we eventually found a Taekwondo school we liked. There, I began again my martial arts studies, intermixed with high school classes and the life and challenges of a teenager. All through college and my post-college world exploration, I continued practicing and training whenever I could: at school and over my trips back home, or while roaming the hills and valleys of Europe and the Middle East. Eventually, I found myself living in one of the biggest and busiest cities in the world, a place where it's all too easy to get lost. I was beginning the transition into adulthood through graduate school, internships, and the "real" world. After a long search for a suitable Taekwondo school, and through a chance conversation with a friend on a subway platform, I ended up at CPTKD. Here, I found the perfect balance of community-oriented training, knowledgeable instructors, quality training, and a welcoming, encouraging (albeit, sometimes sweat-inducing) environment.

The CPTKD instructors and community provided confidence-building support and excellent Taekwondo training, in addition to exercises in fitness, endurance, self-defense, and injury-prevention. As a member of the community of black belts, which is merely a subset of the Taekwondo community as a whole, it is my responsibility to help others learn and advance, regardless of their level. In order to help others, I must continue honing my own skills, advancing my knowledge and striving to master new techniques. Ahead of me, I look to my instructors for advice, guidance, and learning; behind me, I recall my own trials and successes as I assist those coming my way. A successful community has learning and teaching flowing in both directions – a black belt can learn from color belts as much as he/she can teach them. A successful community is made up of individuals who support individuals. A successful community grows together, learns together, laughs together, and succeeds together. I am proud to be a part of the Central Park Taekwondo Community.