

July 30, 2009

Dear Master Cariati,

Thank you for coming to Essex recently to share your knowledge and experience of TaeKwon Do in a seminar. Near the end of the seminar you asked me if I knew that people had noticed my skills and that younger students look up to me. I never really thought of that until you asked me but I think I understand that you were really asking me to look at the opportunities I have in TaeKwon Do and how I can use these skills not only in the Dojang, but in other areas of my life. I asked my Mom to interview me so that I could tell you exactly how my involvement in Martial Arts has become part of who I am.

***Why did you join?***

I was only four years old so I really did not make my own choices at that time. My parents were involved in TaeKwon Do and they thought it would be something I would do well at. I had tried some team sports and was so shy that it did not work out well for me. I needed something that would help my self-confidence.

***Why did you stick with it?***

I am 15 years old now. There have been times when I felt like quitting but I don't think that way any more. There are still some nights where I am tired and it is hard to get out the door but I always feel good after working out and teaching the little kids is always fun. My favourite part of TaeKwon Do right now is training for and participating in tournaments.

I have made so many friends in the School and also at tournaments. TaeKwon do friendships are more serious but they are still fun relationships. We train together and have martial arts in common and share ideas.

***What skills have you learned that you might be able to use when you are looking for a job?***

I would have to say communication skills. As I said before, I was very shy and I have learned to talk to people that I don't know and have learned how to react to different personalities. There are some students with learning disabilities and I have had to learn how to be creative when I teach to make it easier for them to learn. One thing I still have to work on is using that confidence and communication in other situations, like in school. I still get nervous doing a speech in front of a classroom but I don't get nervous teaching TaeKwon Do. That is something I am continuing to work on – transferring this skill to other areas of my life.

I think I have also learned how to adapt to changes better and when I learn something new in school I try to compare it to learning a new pattern – there is a beginning and an end and I picture how I want it to look.

***What is the best part of TaeKwon Do/favourite part?***

I like that my learning and skills keep growing – not like some team sports where the only goal is to win. My goal is to keep learning and improving on what I already know. I also get paid a bit for helping out in class – I really like that! I also think it is really cool to train with my Dad, Mom and brother.

***What do you like least?***

Sometimes I am tired but I just pick up and do it. It is getting out the door that is the worst part, but I always like it when I get to the School. I feel energized after a good work out.

***What could we do better to attract more teenagers?***

Teenagers are scared of being at the bottom – white belt. I think that is why it is easier for me because I started so young. My friends know I am in TaeKwon Do and they admire that and think it is cool. My friends wish they could do what I do but what is stopping them is they feel self-conscious about starting at the bottom – teens like to think they are at the top of the heap.

Maybe doing demonstrations for teen groups or in the community might get more teens interested as they like action and the “wow” factor.

***Do you like teaching the kids? Why?***

Yes, they look up to me and always make me laugh. I like it when they see me out side of the school and call out to me and say hi. It feels weird to have these little kids look up to me and I hope I don't let them down.

***If you had the opportunity to ask Master Cariati one question, what would that be?***

I would want to know what it feels like to have all of the responsibility of being President of ICTF and Founder of Woodbridge Group and having everyone look up to you (including myself). How do you manage all of that?

***What is the best part of Master Cariati?***

He is a really generous man. At seminars and tournaments he shares everything he knows with us and he wants us to be as good as or even better, if that is even possible, than him. It's

funny because some people might think a person would have to be really mean to be such a powerful man, but that is not true. He told me once that my skills were good and that meant a lot to me coming from him and it makes me want to be better and progress in my training even more.

I also owe a lot to Mr. MacEachern, VII Dan, as he believes in me and pushes me to stay on track with my training.

Master Cariati, thank you again for believing in me and asking me my opinion about my experience in TaeKwon Do. Sometimes teenagers don't feel like anyone is listening to us so it was nice to be asked.

Sincerely,

Phil Cammalleri, III Dan