

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD OF TAI CHI

Sheila Harrigan, Asian Arts Group Tai Chi Center



Welcome to World Tai Chi Day

World Tai Chi and Qi Gong Day, an annual event, is held on the last Saturday of April in eighty countries. It started in 1999 with a motto of "One World....One Breath." On April 28, 2018, I joined others at the Bethlehem Public Library for activities organized by the Asian Arts Group in Albany. Catherine Brenner, librarian-tai chi instructor extraordinaire, and Lorraine Noval, partner of the Asian Arts Group, kicked off the program with everyone joining in a Qi Gong meditative practice.



Lorraine Noval teaching Tai Chi and Qi Gong

After moving our energy, we formed into mixed groups of people new to Tai Chi and experienced players, to practice three Tai Chi family styles – Chen, Sun and Yang, with opportunities to move from one group to another.



Catherine Brenner and John Carrier Demonstrate Push Hands

Chen is the style that provided the framework for all the styles that followed. Yang is one of the most popular family styles world-wide. Sun is based on the martial arts as are the other family styles. It is used for many Tai Chi for Health programs including evidence-based forms designed to help with arthritis and fall prevention as well as heart health, diabetes, energy, rehabilitation, and memory. All styles share a common foundation of Tai Chi principles. After Tai Chi, we calmed our minds through a Wuji Qi Gong energy practice and moved on to conversations and refreshments.



Kathryn McKee leads Wave Hands Like Clouds

Unlike most Western exercise, Tai Chi is a mind-body discipline that focuses on slow, smooth, continuous movement. Anyone can do Tai Chi. It is derived from Qi Gong which includes a wide variety of practices to cultivate life energy. It is best to learn Tai Chi in-person where instructors can provide both expertise and feedback.



Cindy Houting and William Houting Share Tai Chi Enthusiasm



*Participants share Tai Chi symbol of strength, friendship & humility, from left to right: (front) Regina Odom-Swinney, Kathryn McKee, Cindi O'Bryan, Deb Dorsey, (back) Madelon Herzog, Sheila Harrigan and Earl O'Bryan. Photo by **Andy Axler***

While many people come to Tai Chi for health benefits, they stay because it is fun. Groups that play tai chi together over a period of time get to know each other and find social opportunities at special events, such as Chinese New Year celebrations, summer picnics, special skill building workshops with Tai Chi masters, and World Tai Chi Day.