

Blue Wave Spirit to Host "Kicking in the New Year" Martial Arts Training in Alton

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
December 28 2023 1:25 PM



ALTON - Blue Wave Spirit will host a “Kicking in the New Year” event for all who want to show off their martial arts skills on Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023.

Attendees will do 24 reps of 20 different kicks to “kick in” 2024. The hour-long event starts at 11 a.m. at the YWCA in Alton, and it encourages confidence and empowerment, two major parts of Blue Wave Spirit’s regular martial arts training.

“It’s very much focused on self-defense and building a lot of those personal skills like discipline, confidence, self-management,” Blue Wave Spirit Director Tom Withee explained. “That’s the number one draw of training in martial arts. Learning self-defense is really great and being able to protect yourself, but that’s not what most people get out of training. What they get is they develop self-confidence, they develop a sense of peace, and they learn how to interact with other people in a way that they don’t feel anxiety.”

Blue Wave Spirit is a part of the Chung Do Association, which is made up of 11 martial arts schools across the Greater St. Louis region. Based at the YWCA, Blue Wave Spirit teaches a form of traditional tae kwon do that focuses on self-defense. Withee noted that his students also learn leadership skills and how to control their bodies through martial arts training.

“We get young adults and even older adults that start training, and the growth that you see is just fantastic,” he added. “Not only the confidence in those interpersonal skills, the confidence in their own body, just learning how to move and as you get older that becomes an important aspect. Just staying physical, staying active. But that confidence in your own self, not just your emotions and communicating with other people but just being able to control your body.”

The “Kicking in the New Year” event will invite students from across the Chung Do Association to participate. Spectators and people who want to give it a try are also welcome, though Withee asks that new trainees come early to talk through a few safety points with him before the event begins.

Blue Wave Spirit and YWCA will also host the Chung Do Association’s [Winter 2024 Sparring Tournament](#) on Feb. 3, 2024. The sparring tournament will have several kids’ activities and a warm-up training before the competition begins.

But while it is a tournament, Withee emphasizes that martial arts training is rarely about competing. Instead, it’s about building skills and self-growth.

“We don’t have these big showy tournaments with huge crowds that people come into. It’s about your own journey and your own personal growth. It’s not about winning trophies and having medals,” Withee said. “We’re putting on these events, we’re trying to get our name out there in the community, and that’s the reason we put these on.”

Blue Wave Spirit trains at 6 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays at the YWCA. Anyone is welcome to walk in and join them. The “Kicking in the New Year” event starts at 11 a. m. on Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, and you can visit the [official Facebook event page](#) for additional information. Check out [Blue Wave Spirit on Facebook](#) to learn more about their work.