



At Katy Tae Kwon Do, all junior classes are set by belt rank, ensuring that each student gets the attention they need



# GETTING A KICK OUT OF MARTIAL ARTS

Katy Kids Discover Fitness & Fun

*By Natalie Cook Clark*

*Photography by Marisa Hugonnett*

**K**aty kids love the kicks, jabs, and punches performed by action movie stars like Jackie Chan and Jason Statham. The popularity of martial arts is not just seen in the earnings of Hollywood action flicks, though, but also in the continual growth of a variety of programs in Katy. From Tae Kwon Do and Jiu-Jitsu to Karate and Krav Maga, kids can study and perfect a wide range of international self-defense skills close to home.

## **Moves with Meaning**

Having fun getting fit has never looked so cool, with martial arts movies attracting lifelong fans. There is so much more to martial arts than the impressive moves often seen on the big screen, though. “Improving in martial arts is about improving in life,” says Texas Krav Mega owner and instructor Larry Escher. Martial arts programs can teach kids discipline and other important life lessons, as well as help them gain confidence. “The goals you set are goals you will get,” says Angus Pollard, owner and senior staff instructor at Katy Tae Kwon Do Academy, when explaining his school’s black belt system.





Martial arts is a great way for kids to have fun while getting fit



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## Disciplined Tae Kwon Do

Nathan Furman, 10, is a first-degree black belt at Katy Tae Kwon Do Academy and has loved his experience learning the Korean martial art. "My favorite parts are the drills we do," he says. "They are always a challenge, which I love." He also admits he enjoys seeing how the discipline he learns in his Tae Kwon Do classes helps him with managing his school work. Furman is unique because his whole family is also enrolled in the Katy Tae Kwon Do Academy. "It's one thing to watch your child on the mat and say, 'Good job,' and then another to be able to really understand what he is doing from your personal experiences in the sport, as well," explains Melissa Furman, Nathan's mom.

Katy Tae Kwon Do Academy is one of the largest martial arts programs in Katy and is celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year. The school may be large, but there is no bench time for anyone and all junior classes are set by belt rank ensuring that each student gets the attention that they need. Students can also enjoy the Japanese martial arts of Jiu-Jitsu and Judo at the academy.

## Mastering Krav Maga

For an extra kick of fitness and self-defense, kids can also try Krav Maga, one of the fastest growing martial arts programs due to the popularity it is receiving from famous students like Hillary Swank and Jennifer Lopez. Stephanie Mendoza, 18, is a student at Texas Krav Maga in Katy. She enrolled in the Israeli martial art program for different reasons than Nathan and his family did with Tae Kwon Do. "I was getting ready for college and just wanted to defend myself in case the situation ever presented itself," Mendoza says.

The first rule in Krav Maga is to be safe. The discipline teaches its students to pick out potential harmful situations and get away if

they can't be avoided all together. "Krav Maga was created by the Israeli military during World War II [and] is constantly revised to meet the changing needs of self-defense and fitness," explains Escher.

## Kung Fu Fitness

Katy is also home to Jade Mountain Martial Arts. Here, students can enjoy Chinese martial arts like Kung Fu and Tai Chi, as well as kickboxing, self-defense courses, and submission grappling. Jade Mountain is home to the Little Dragons and Kung Fu program for children 3 ½ to 6 years of age. "This is a great program to help young children get in touch with their bodies, learn to do their best, listen to their parents and teachers, and learn the most important mentality of fighting - 'I know how to fight, but I don't want to,'" explains Sifi Whit McClendon, owner and instructor of Jade Mountain. The studio also offers great classes for homeschooled children.

With martial arts in Katy booming in popularity, many kids are putting down the video games and discovering a new favorite hobby. "I love seeing kids being active and loving fitness," says Pollard. Most impressive of all, martial arts teaches Katy kids a positive way of life and gives them the discipline to succeed in all that they set out to accomplish. **KM**

*NATALIE COOK CLARK loves being a freelance journalist in her hometown of Katy. The Baylor alumna lives with her loving dog, Oscar, and her wonderful, supporting husband, Stephen. Clark is happy to announce that they are expecting their first child this summer.*



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With several different types of martial arts offered in Katy, kids can learn about a variety of cultures



Katy martial arts programs are growing in popularity



Classes like Tae Kwon Do are a great way for kids to make friends while discovering a new favorite hobby

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See ad on page 75

## American Kickboxing Academy

2004 S. Mason Rd.  
281-693-2269

## ATA Karate for Kids

23930 Westheimer Pkwy.  
281-347-1282

## Jade Mountain Martial Arts, Inc.

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