

From Back Adjustments to Social Adjustment

Breathe in...exhale...cr-r-rack! I watched on, deceived by my ears as I witnessed a patient's frown due to pain slowly eased into a smile of relief as he received chiropractic treatment from the gentle hands of Dr. Dat Lu. Today, Dr. Lu is at his new clinic, Balance Chiropractic Center, where he patiently explained to his patient the importance of a healthy back. In the weekend, he volunteers as a martial arts instructor at a community center where he promotes healthy life choices among youths in the Seattle area.

Dr. Lu teaches karate for the past six years at Helping Link, a Vietnamese grassroots, community based organization. I asked Dr. Lu why he spends so much time teaching, he responded "Through martial arts, I hope to teach young adults about exercise, self-discipline, respect, and accountability. I think it is important to encourage young people to be involved in the community and be productive, but first they have to learn how to stay healthy and have positive attitudes." Dr. Lu is very committed to his students, not only in class but also at his clinic, where he welcomes them to stop in and discuss what's on their mind. Whether it is during a push-up or over lunch, Dr. Lu is consistently there for his students to provide encouragements and alternative outlets and steer them away from negative influences such as gangs, drugs, and violence.

As an established and successful doctor, Dr. Lu is a role model for his students. His students are inspired by his success because like them, he came to this country twenty five years ago as a refugee who had to learn a new language and adjust to a new culture.

Dr. Lu recalls, "I know how hard it is for these kids to try and adjust to a country with a different language and culture and without any social support." He added jokingly, "I wish programs such as Helping Link existed when I was a kid. It might have gotten me out of some troubles then."

As a busy chiropractor who is also studying the healing powers of acupuncture, Dr. Lu feels that it is important to give back to the community. He realizes the values of his contributions and the impact it has on his student when one day a mother came to his clinic and thanked him "She told me before joining Helping Link and my martial arts program, her son was so timid and shy that he refuses to go out. Now he has the confidence to speak in public and he wants to go to college." Dr. Lu told this story with a big smile "That's what this is all about!"

Dr. Lu told me that he is proud to see many of his students grow into responsible and accomplished adults. Dr. Lu said his philosophy in life is like his practice in martial arts – "It is a continual journey of growth and learning."

Written by Thanh Tran