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Hall of Fame martial artist blends body and dental skills

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Dr. Harvey Levy, a Keedysville resident who practices dentistry in Frederick, has just been inducted into the U.S. Martial Arts Hall of Fame.

courtesyPhoto

Dr. Harvey Levy doesn't wear a martial arts outfit to his dental office.

But Levy, who has just been inducted into the U.S. Martial Arts Hall of Fame, used the skilled body mechanics to help dentists and patients.

Levy, who lives in Keedysville with his wife, Lena, will travel the country teaching the technique to new dentists. The technique shows dentists how to use their whole body, not just the wrist, in extracting teeth. It takes the pressure off the dentist's wrist and prevents broken roots or other problems for patients.

"As dentists we are taught to use the wrist," Levy said. "But a 100-pound woman can throw a 200-pound man across the room if she used her whole body."

Levy is nationally known for his service to nontraditional patients. On a typical Monday, when he is at Frederick Memorial Hospital, he treats patients with Alzheimer's disease, mentally disabled children and others.

"I love working with them," Levy said. He also works with poor children in an annual program that offers free checkups and education.

"Some people pay with a check or credit card. Some pay with a kiss and a hug. I don't have to share the latter with the IRS," Levy joked.

"The credit card will nurture the financial part. The hugs nurture something else. It is the yin and yang, you need both to be complete."

Levy grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., and said he was always picked on because he was short.

"I never got picked for team sports; they always chose the bigger guys. Then one day I saw the captain of the football team talking with a small guy. As this tiny guy stood up, the football captain backed off. I wondered what was going on and found out the tiny guy knew martial arts."

That was the beginning. He took classes at the age of 15 and hasn't stopped. At 61, Levy trains twice a week and teaches at his school, HarLen Martial Arts Club in Keedysville.

The school has been open for three years, but Levy, known as a sensei or instructor, has taught for years, including rape defense at Frederick Community College from 1980 to 1987. He also made sure his daughters, Becca and Ariel, attained black belt status.

His philosophy is that in life one must try and try again. "I tried to set the world record for breaking ice. I failed twice, but the third time I did it. The lesson is that if you don't try again, you are guaranteed to fail. If you try again, there is no guarantee, but you have the opportunity to

succeed."

In high school, Levy said he was interested in science, the psychology of working with people and working with his hands. He saw dentistry as the one career that combined all three.

"One without the other would be incomplete," he said.

He continues to love music and playing the drums, fine arts and martial arts. "I knew none of those would provide a career, but they are still my passions. It is the difference between vocation and avocation."

Levy's accomplishments in the dental field fill page after page on the website of his practice on Thomas Johnson Drive, as well as his black belt achievements, including that as an instructor for combat hapkido.

Levy is also well-versed in American Sign Language, as well as German, Hebrew, Spanish and Yiddish.

His achievements include a second Lifelong Learning and Service Award and Humanitarian Award by the Academy of General Dentistry, Good Samaritan Award by Frederick Memorial Hospital, was a torch runner for the 2002 Winter Olympics, Doctor of the Year by the Governor's Commission on Employment of the Handicapped and Outstanding Professional of the Year by the Associated of Retarded Citizens of Maryland.

Levy has an extensive list of publications and courses, both traditional and online, and has served as president of the Maryland Academy of Dentistry and a delegate to the national academy's conference for many years.