

Parker family all earns their yellow belts in karate together

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Steve Houte, left, Alexander Parker, Jennifer Parker, Josh Houte, Christopher Braun, Rhiannon Parker, front left, and Corvin Parker posing after the Parker family passed their yellow belt test at Braun's Karate and Martial Arts dojo.
Photo courtesy of Dean Shefchik

The Parker family: Jennifer Parker, Alexander Parker, 12-years-old, Corvin Parker, 9-years-old, and Rhiannon Parker, 6-years-old, all together earned their yellow belts in karate from Braun's Karate and Martial Arts dojo.

However, Jennifer said when they were testing, the instructors didn't think that Rhiannon, who was five at the time, would pass the test.

"They had a yellow-white belt because that's what they had prepared for her, and then she actually passed the test," Jennifer said. "They didn't expect her to do as well as she did."

Chris Braun, chief instructor, said him and the other instructors were "astonished" when Rhiannon passed the test. Due to how young she was, he said they had originally planned for her to do half of the test as they didn't want to exclude her from the rest of her family. "She went through all of it. We were all very proud," Braun said.

As her mom, Jennifer also said Rhiannon earning her yellow belt was "definitely a very proud moment." Jennifer said it took the four of them about an hour to pass their test. She said although it was nerve-wracking and mentally challenging, they all had the skills necessary to pass the test.

"I love doing it with the kids," Jennifer said. "I think it makes it more fun because we can practice at home and progress together. It's really rewarding to do it with them." Jennifer said she enjoys having an activity that her family can enjoy together. She said since her kids are all four years apart, they all have different interests. "Having one combined thing that we can do brings us together a little bit more," Jennifer said.

Braun said the best part about families taking martial arts classes together is "the support" and having someone else who understands the training that is required at their dojo. "When you have the family or at least one other sibling, you go home and you have somebody else that's there with you, so you have that support," Braun said. "You're also more apt to train during the weeks."

Now, Jennifer said the family has a goal to get their green belts by next summer. Corvin said he's "excited" to get his green belt. "For me, it's just the sense of accomplishment (that keeps her motivated). Every time you move up, it's that much more pride," Jennifer said.

Braun said the tests to get new belts includes the physical aspects like "kicks and punches," as well as history and anatomy. He said as the student gets older and more advanced, they get more education that goes along with their progress. "That's really the big thing- is getting them all prepared not just on the physical side, but on the mental side as well," Braun said.

The Parker family chose Braun's Karate and Martial Arts dojo because it allowed them to take classes together. Originally, Jennifer's kids started at a commercial dojo.

"If we were to stay at the commercial dojo, I couldn't have taken classes with them. I would have to take adult classes," Jennifer said. "The fact that you can take classes with your kids (at BKMA) is much more appealing."

At Braun's, Jennifer said the environment is a lot less competitive and her family doesn't feel much pressure there. She said she would "definitely recommend" other families going through this process and taking classes at BKMA together.

Braun described the dojo as a "club." He said if people want to join they can simply "show up." There is a \$15 a month fee, but Braun said if people can't afford that, there's other ways to make up for the fee, such as helping to clean the school or offering to drive other students. Braun said watching the Parker family continue in their martial arts progress has been "awesome." "Our school is very unique," Braun said. "We're always more of a family than we are a martial arts school."