

Karate teaches respect

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The tests are normally held every three to four months.

There are 10 different degrees a black belt can earn, and it can take a number of years to satisfy each one.

Reagan did not take to Tang Soo Do as quickly as Declan did. She watched Declan at the classes for three months and then decided it was her turn.

"It was something that all the kids want to do," Reagan says. "They just don't know it until they try it. It's amazing when you come in here to work and know that you've done a good job."

Reagan and Declan are both home-schooled. However, they do spend time away from the house doing many other activities. Reagan sings in a chorus at a public school and aspires to work with animals as soon as she can. Declan on the other hand, would like to continue working hard and set new goals for himself.

"This was my main goal. But now I have my belt that might not be good enough," Declan says. "There is always a new goal."

That doesn't mean Reagan doesn't want to be around the sport.

Both Declan and Reagan

help out at the classes, teaching and giving tips to the other, sometimes older, participants. They have both found that it is sometimes more difficult to work with someone whose age varies so much from their own.

"I'm content where I am," Reagan says. "My new goal here is probably just to help other kids get their black belts."

Declan isn't completely sold on the teaching aspect of the sport. He says he certainly likes learning more because people sometimes do not listen to him.

So, there has to be some kind of turmoil in a house of four black belts, soon to be six. You would have to imagine that sparring is the norm throughout the house. Reagan and Declan differ in opinions as to who could take down whom.

Each of them say that in the Miller household, they don't have "sissy" fights, but real kicks.

"We'd both end up dead on the floor," Declan adds.

For both Declan and Reagan, karate is not something to be taken lightly. However, each will agree that the sport brings out one thing — respect.

For Reagan, it means a lot to her to be respected and have self respect. Along with respect, the sport has also taught her to be confident.

"It's respect," Reagan says. "Being able to be respected makes you feel better about yourself and once you get a black belt, it shows us self-confidence."

Declan likes to be humble about his experiences with Tang Soo Do. As someone who wants to grow up and be a blacksmith, the younger black belt is guarded about the fact that he has achieved such a high honor.

"I don't really like putting myself out there saying I have a black belt," he says. "It's something I like to keep to myself."

Reagan and Declan will continue to grow in the sport of karate. Whether they continue to move forward with their black belts is still up in the air. But with the two youngest Millers coming along, you'd have to think that once every Miller is a black belt, there will be some stiff competition in their home.

For the time being, black is certainly the most popular color in the Miller household. But this type of black is around the waist.



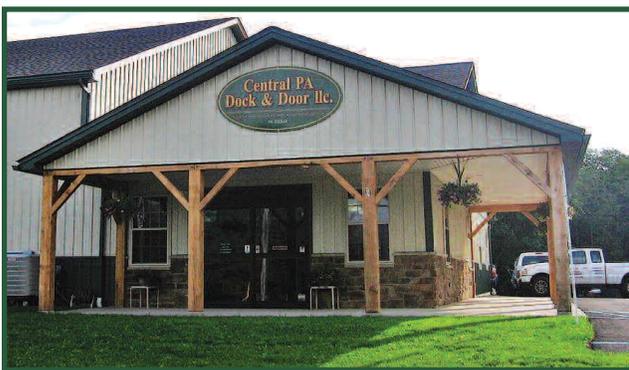
Above — Reagan Miller, right, works with a student at the Jezewski Martial Arts school.

Below — Declan Miller, right, spars at the martial arts school.

Sentinel photos by NICK WAGNER



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