

# Going with the flow

Students tout the benefits  
of slow, controlled movements

By **BUCK DOPP**

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Many Lake Havasu City seniors are discovering that the ancient Chinese exercise of Tai Chi (TIE-chee) is a great way to increase balance, flexibility and relaxation.

The slow, meditative movements used in the routines are particularly suited for older practitioners who want to stay fit without risking injury.

One of those seniors, Kathy Anderson, said, "Tai Chi is moving meditation. You're moving the whole body instead of jumping in the air. After doing it for a while, you can feel the energy."

Another student, Kim Massey, noted, "The core

## Healthy Living



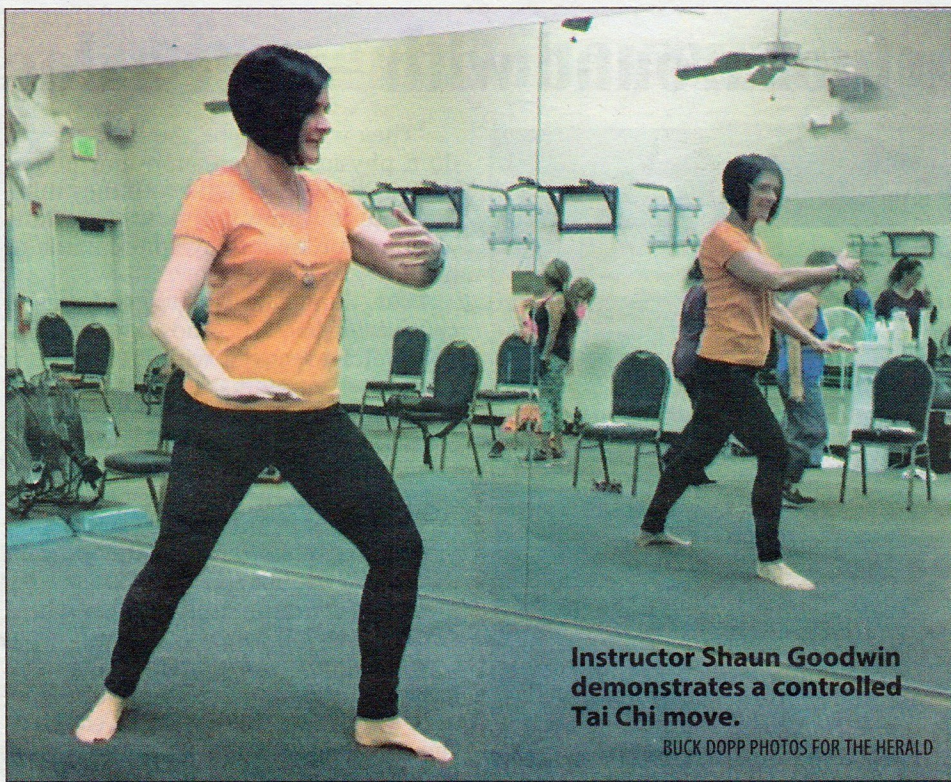
**Lake Havasu City Tai Chi students demonstrate "The Rooster."**

strength and balance are what I enjoy. Building our core is important as we get older. Tai Chi is very slow. It's easy, really. You can even do it in a chair."

For Patty Barnhart, it's "a great way to start the day by giving yourself the gift of gentle stretching."

Tai Chi (Taiji) is short for Tai Chi Chuan (Taijiquan), which literally means "supreme ultimate fist (boxing)." Originating in China several centuries ago as a form of meditation and a soft martial art for self-defense, most current practitioners embrace Tai





**Instructor Shaun Goodwin demonstrates a controlled Tai Chi move.**

BUCK DOPP PHOTOS FOR THE HERALD

Chi for its health benefits.

Shaun Goodwin, teacher of the “Taji Fit Flow” class at Titan Fitness is the pied piper, coach and number one cheerleader for her students, softly purring words of encouragement— “perfect,” “nice,” “you’re looking so good.” Class members respond with smiles that glow in the dimly lit studio as the tranquil tones of a lone Chinese flute provide a soundtrack of serenity.

“I took my first Tai Chi class years ago at the Aquatic Center because I thought it would be interesting,” Goodwin explained. “It was an extremely powerful experience. We did the class outside and I felt wonderful.”

She began practicing on her own in the morning and evening. Each time she “played Tai Chi,” it was a fresh, new experience very different from her cardio routine and weight training.

Goodwin is a certified Tajifit instructor and has taught yoga as well. She says the two are similar in that they develop relaxation responses to counter the “fight or flight” tendency that causes stress. She added that both are restorative and help lower blood pressure while increasing awareness of body movement and its connection to our breathing.

“I have found Tai Chi to be a bit more accessible than yoga because it can be done standing and requires no special equipment,” Goodwin said. “After Tai Chi, I feel calm, happy and empowered to move forward through my day in a positive manner. It’s an anti-stress practice for me.”

According to the Mayo Clinic website, preliminary evidence suggests that practicing Tai Chi has numerous health benefits besides stress reduction which includes reducing falls, improving sleep quality, lowering blood pressure and relieving chronic pain.

Angela Decker says practicing Tai Chi helps “my arthritis, balance and breathing, and takes me on a journey through nature.”

Tajifit Flow reduces or eliminates traditional Tai Chi footwork and repeats exercises with the goal of achieving a “flow state,” where movements are generated by a union of mind and body, and produce a continuous, smooth and pleasant flow of action.

Mari Crooker, the newest student in the Taiji Fit Flow class, said, “I love it. It’s given me so much more peace and balance. I wish we could do it every day.” Her husband Don goes to class too and she says it relaxes his body and soul before he goes golfing.

Goodwin sums up her Tajifit Flow class this way, “Tajifit is a fantastic introduction to Tai Chi and the ‘flow experience.’ You don’t have to remember anything. No prior experience is required.”

## LEARN MORE

Attend a Tajifit Flow Class”, 7 a.m.-7:45 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Titan Fitness Gym, 3325 Maricopa Ave. For details, call 928-680-6767 or email [Mytitanfitness@gmail.com](mailto:Mytitanfitness@gmail.com).