

# Karate culture alive and kicking in Georgetown

By **Nelia Raposo**  
Special to the IFP

Gripping his water bottle, he holds the rear car door open with his free hand until an older girl gets out. With a strong push that catapults his body forward, he slams the white Mercedes door shut. The little red-headed boy runs trying to catch up.

She is already inside pulling her orange Karate belt tighter around her small waist. Sensei Tony Rampulla is holding court with parents as their kids prepare for class. This is the white to orange belt session for kids ages 5 to 8 at Rampulla's Martial Arts in Georgetown. It's a Tuesday evening.

The school, located on Main St., is in a former church. It's fitting that there is a reverent quality to the interactions between students and teachers. Just as one bows to the cross before entering and exiting mass, everyone bows when coming into and out of the dojo. The respect among everyone is palpable.

For Rampulla, being here in

this place, at this time, is divine.

"It wasn't a goal of mine to own a karate school," he says, sitting at his office desk in the basement of what used to be a Baptist church. "It was calling me."

He describes how karate has been a passion of his since adolescence.

"I started Martial arts when I was 15 years old. I was an overweight child. I needed something to give me a kick start (back to health). I was 180 lbs when I was 14. I weighed more than I do now. I was a beast," he says.

"I had to travel on the subway to Yonge and Bloor from Scarborough. I'd go straight after school every day. Within six months I'd lost 15 lbs and I could keep up with the kids in gym class. After a year, you would never know I was overweight. I also started to grow a bit too. I did it steadily until I was 23, then I took a break and got back into it in my thirties."

It's a passion he introduced to his two sons when they were 4 and 5. Today, Dylan Rampulla, 23, and Christian Rampulla, 25, are both



**Gavin MacIver-Wright of Rampulla's Martial Arts in Georgetown pictured at a recent practice at the Main St. facility.**

*Photo by Nelia Raposo*

black belts and instructors at the school. His wife, Brenda, is also a black belt.

Today, there are 120 students registered with ages ranging from 5 to 76-years-old. Adults and kids learn the same curriculum and families with kids 9 and up, may train together.

Geoff Hogan, 37, is one such

parent. He, his wife, son Eddie, 8, and daughter Abbey, 10, all train at Rampulla's.

"Eddie started at five years old. We were at a different club and decided to switch in 2010. This club is a better fit for us. This is a better family environment," Hogan says.

Hogan and his wife are brown belts, Eddie is a yellow and Abbey is a purple belt.

To give a sense of what the 10 belt levels mean, here is a list from least experience to most experience: white, yellow, orange, purple, green, blue, red, brown, brown-black stripe, brown-black, and black belt.

Back in his office, Rampulla says, "Adults are easier to teach than kids but kids are our foundation. Those are the ones that we would love to get in here but I guess we are less convenient than the daycare pick up/drop off service offered by some martial arts schools in the area."

Walking upstairs to the dojo to observe the children's class, Rampulla explains that self-defence is a product of karate but keeping

people fit and healthy is the goal.

At the dojo, Rampulla bows before entering. Inside, the sun shining through large glass windows casts a serene glow and warms the mats the dozen children are practising on. There are lots of smiles and encouraging words.

Sensei Dylan Rampulla is at the front of the group calling out positions, "that was so fast I didn't see anything, he says teasing his young students. "Front, snap, kick... I want to see you guys curl your toes back when you kick... coming up, pivot, extend, and bring it back..."

Sensei Tony approaches another student, "point your toes at the mirror." He is walking around, encouraging them, telling them to keep trying.

"We don't race kids through their belts. Some kids we hold back because of comments from their elementary school teachers. I tell them until you straighten things out at school there will be no grading here."

"Karate aims to build character, it doesn't guarantee it," he says.

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**Q:** Is thumb sucking bad?

**A:** Yes and no. First, it must be understood that thumb sucking is a "natural reflex". An ultrasound test on a developing baby will often show him or her sucking a thumb. When this habit goes on for too long, however, orthodontic problems can often occur. By the age of six or seven, the child's permanent teeth are just beginning to arrive. Before then, thumb sucking will cause few problems. After permanent teeth arrive, abnormal pressure from the thumb can cause the front upper teeth to become "bucked". The bottom front teeth then become crowded backward. A misalignment of the teeth occurs. So, how do you stop thumb sucking for your four or five year old? Some have found gloving the hand, dipping the thumb in vinegar and increased attention to the child help. In the end, though, treatment depends on how long and often the thumb sucking occurs. To avoid any permanent damage, don't delay your attempts to stop this habit.



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**Q:** What kind of lease agreement is there for a retirement residence? What happens if I eventually move out?

**A:** As a retirement resident, you have the same rights and obligations as any other tenant in Ontario, with a few important exceptions.

One notable exception is that you are not constrained by a long-term lease. However, if you plan to move out, you must give the management 30 days written notice. Notice can be given at any time, not just at the end of the month.

In a retirement residence your rent is comprised of two parts--service and accommodation. Should you choose to move prior to the 30 days, you are responsible for only 10 days of the service portion and 30 days of the accommodation. If, after you have moved out, the suite is rented within this time you are entitled to a rebate for the days that the room has been re-rented.

You also have the right to receive a Care Home Information Package (CHIP) at the time of move-in that clearly outlines what you have agreed to purchase, related costs, condition to the agreement and so on. Until you have received the CHIP, you can withhold payment.