

INDEPENDENT/
FREE PRESS

Health and Fitness



Instructor Tessie Smith leads the T'ai Chi program Wednesday mornings at the Georgetown Seniors Centre.

Seniors keeping fit — T'ai Chi is ideal

T'ai Chi is ideal for seniors, and many enjoy the classes offered in Georgetown and Acton at the seniors centres.

"Seniors are a real pleasure to work with, since they tend to notice the benefits more," said Tessie Smith, the instructor in Georgetown. "We as younger people don't have as many limits, so we don't notice the improvement as much."

She usually teaches two sessions at the Georgetown Seniors Centre, but because many of her students are snowbirds and have gone south for the

winter, there's only one class right now. But, there's still room for more students in the class, which takes place Wednesday mornings, Smith said. In Acton T'ai Chi is taught by George Lee on Tuesday mornings, and there is still room for more students to sign up for this class as well.

T'ai Chi originated in 11th century China, when a Taoist sage noticed that the monks were physically deteriorating because of their long hours of study and meditation, Smith said. He developed some exercises to keep them in shape. It's a soft martial art based not on

strength and power, like karate, but reflexive movements combined with the internal energy as a driving force. T'ai Chi is a prescribed pattern of slow turning motions which loosen the joints and spine and relax areas of tension. It is particularly good for people suffering from degenerative conditions like arthritis and osteoporosis.

It's excellent for stress relief, since the classes always begin with a relaxation exercise and the breathing helps people who suffer from asthma.

For info call the seniors centres: 877-6444 in Georgetown, 853-5951 in Acton.

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