

# Riverside

## Youth Judo Club

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**The Riverside Youth Judo Club (RYJC)** was created as part of the Foundation's Police Activities League (PAL) in June 2012. Riverside Police Chief Sergio Diaz and Detective Brian Money discussed the benefits of judo training, especially with the City's at-risk youth. The club began at the Riverside YMCA with only six students. Almost eight years, the club includes over 300 members.

### **The Mission**

*The Riverside Youth Judo Club is dedicated to teaching the traditional art of Kodokan Judo to our City's youth. The dojo will focus on respectful training and education in a nonprofit environment. Our club is not a business. Our goal is to make Kodokan Judo affordable for all our City's youth. We will strive to never turn away a student, despite their ability to pay or physical limitations. We will teach Jigoro Kano's philosophy of Judo. The goals of the practice of judo are to perfect oneself physically, morally and mentally, and then use those strengths for the good of society.*

From the beginning, RYJC was started as a way to reach out and help socially and economically at-risk kids, ages 5-17. "During the first year, we also began working with students with special needs. Our motto was adjusted to include all kids - regardless of physical or economic barriers," said Det. Money. "A third of our students have no physical or financial barriers. Another third of our students are socially or economically at risk and the final third are kids with special needs such as Autism, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Charge Syndrome, Tuberous Sclerosis, as well as other developmental disabilities. We encourage special needs and special development kids to join the club for the physical and social benefits."





Special needs judo students are supervised by Judo Instructors (Sensei's) as well as Chief Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) Pedro Villa. Several of these students are physically fragile so extra care is required when working with them. Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBT) are supervised by staff and provide any necessary help, guidance, or assistance to our Special Needs students.

#### **At-Risk Students**

At-risk students take part in what Detective Brian Money calls the "Village" Program (it takes a village to raise a child). These students are completely funded in the judo club. All tuition, fees, and equipment are paid for by the club. This helps reduce the "opportunity gap" between our at-risk students and those kids that have strong financial support. Students who have no significant challenges pay a small tuition at about \$35/month. Typical martial arts programs cost \$100-\$200/month. The modest funds collected go right back to help the kids purchase

uniforms, National judo memberships, scholarships, and competition fees. Paying students work together with at-risk and special needs students and develop compassion, understanding, and patience as a result. We work hard to include all underrepresented populations in the club.

#### **The Right Focus**

The Riverside Youth Judo Club is unique among traditional martial arts programs because they don't measure results based on trophies or medals. Det. Money says, "*Here at the Riverside Youth Judo Club we focus on making students better people and a better members of the community. We do very well as competitors, but the trophies and medals are secondary. Our students learn how to work side-by-side with fellow students that have physical and economic challenges. Our students do not look at a kid in a wheelchair or using a walker and consider him or her different or odd.*" It is clear that character development and emotional growth are just as important as physical growth at RYJC





and host the only special needs judo coaching clinic in the U.S. The clinic educates prospective coaches wanting to incorporate special needs judo athletes in their clubs.

With more space they hope to include a Senior Citizen class to our club. The class would provide more gentle and safe movements (Judo means “the gentle way” in Japanese) as well as basic self-defense and provide recreation and health benefits for our senior citizen community. *“We’ve only just begun,”* says Det. Money.

### Cheer Them On

*“We make certain our students understand giving back to the community that supports them is an important part of our mission.”* says Det. Money. One way RYJC accomplishes this with an Annual Charity Breast & Ovarian Cancer Judo Tournament. They host the largest all-female judo tournament in the world with over 200 competitors. 100% of the funds raised go to a community breast & ovarian cancer charity. Over the past four years this event raised over \$45,000.

The Riverside Youth Judo Club has been featured in the media and on TV including in a 4-part PBS documentary called *“Our Kids - Narrowing the Opportunity Gap.”* The Riverside Youth Judo Club Facebook page is very active with over 39,000 followers from all over the world. **If you would like to cheer on the RYJC, information and events can be found on the their website: [www.riversideyouthjudoclub.com](http://www.riversideyouthjudoclub.com). If you would like to contribute time, resources, or financially, please reach out to Detective Brian Money at [bmoney@riversideca.gov](mailto:bmoney@riversideca.gov).**

### Working in Partnership

In addition to being part of the Riverside Police Foundation (501c3) and the Riverside Police Activities League, we partner with the Riverside Police Officers Association. *“We could not do what we do without their support”* says Det. Money.

RYJC is chartered by the United States Judo Association (USJA) for membership and to keep the club and events properly insured and sanctioned. Based on current members it costs over \$10,000 a year. They rely on organizations like The Assistance League of Riverside help with that investment each year. RYJC is connected to ARC of Riverside (an advocacy program for persons with Developmental Disabilities) and are recognized on the ARC National Wall of Respect for their efforts and progress with total inclusion.

The greatest challenge facing the club now is space. They are fortunate to have access to a pre-existing Defensive Tactics room provided by the Riverside Police department. It is 2,000 square feet but is generally overwhelmed by four different classes of students. *“A larger room would be wonderful. We would be able to help many more kids, but without greater financial support, the cost is prohibitive,”* says Det. Money.

### Looking Forward

The RYJC continues to develop more programs and opportunities for our community. They have already created the only special needs Judo program and tournament in the United States. They also developed

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