# Worth more than words can say

I am 25 years old with cerebral palsy, and scoliosis.

When I was born, my parents were told that I would be in a wheelchair all my life and unable to complete the most basic of tasks without great mobile difficulty, if at all. After 16 years of painful physical therapy and taking pain medication daily just to get through the day, I had given up hope that my mobility and pain would get any better than where it was despite encouragement from family and doctors. Sometimes I need a cane to get around the house, and on occasion the nerves in my spine cause severe, and usually immobilizing pain; often lasting anywhere between 8 and 10 hours.

About a month ago, I found the website for the White Lions of Shaolin. I was glad to see that the founder of the White Lions - Sifu George Giatrakis - is a student of Grandmaster Doc Fai Wong, head of the Plum Blossom International Federation. After talking with Sifu Giatrakis briefly about my situation I signed up for the Tai Chi class with the hope of only mildly improving my range of motion and flexibility, and possibly alleviating some pain. Not only has this class helped my cerebral palsy in ways that years of doctors, medications, and therapy couldn't manage; but my balance is better than it has ever been, and my body is just functioning better in general.

After only one month of Tai Chi, my range of motion and flexibility have dramatically increased, I don't need my cane to get around, I've stopped taking pain medication, my hands and feet no longer go numb at random times from bad circulation, I'm able to climb three flights of stairs without overexerting myself (when before I couldn't even climb one without extreme pain in my knees, hips and back), and the last time I had the nerve damage pains in my spine it only lasted about 1.5 hours. Plus the pain was nowhere near as bad compared to previous times. When I started this class, I had expected these kinds of results to manifest YEARS from now...if at all. Certainly not after one month!

However, what really makes the White Lions of Shaolin dear to me and worth every moment, are not the improved health benefits – but the people. From the moment I started classes here, Sifu Giatrakis and everyone at this school have shown to be some of the most kind, patient, and compassionate people that I have met in a long time. Not only does Sifu spend time with each individual student and work with us each on a personal level, but he's willing to answer any questions his students have and help us when we need it. Likewise, the other

students of White Lions of Shaolin often assist each other in learning. Whether a beginner, or an advanced student – the level of respect everyone shows to each other, and just general feeling of camaraderie at this school is astounding.

Since the first class, I have felt welcomed and like I was a part of this school, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I fully intend to continue for many years to come. This school, the people, the classes ... all of it; are truly wonderful.  If you've ever wanted to take Tai Chi or Kung Fu but are still hesitating...come visit the White Lions of Shaolin and try it! You won't regret it, and you might even be surprised by the results. I know I was!

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