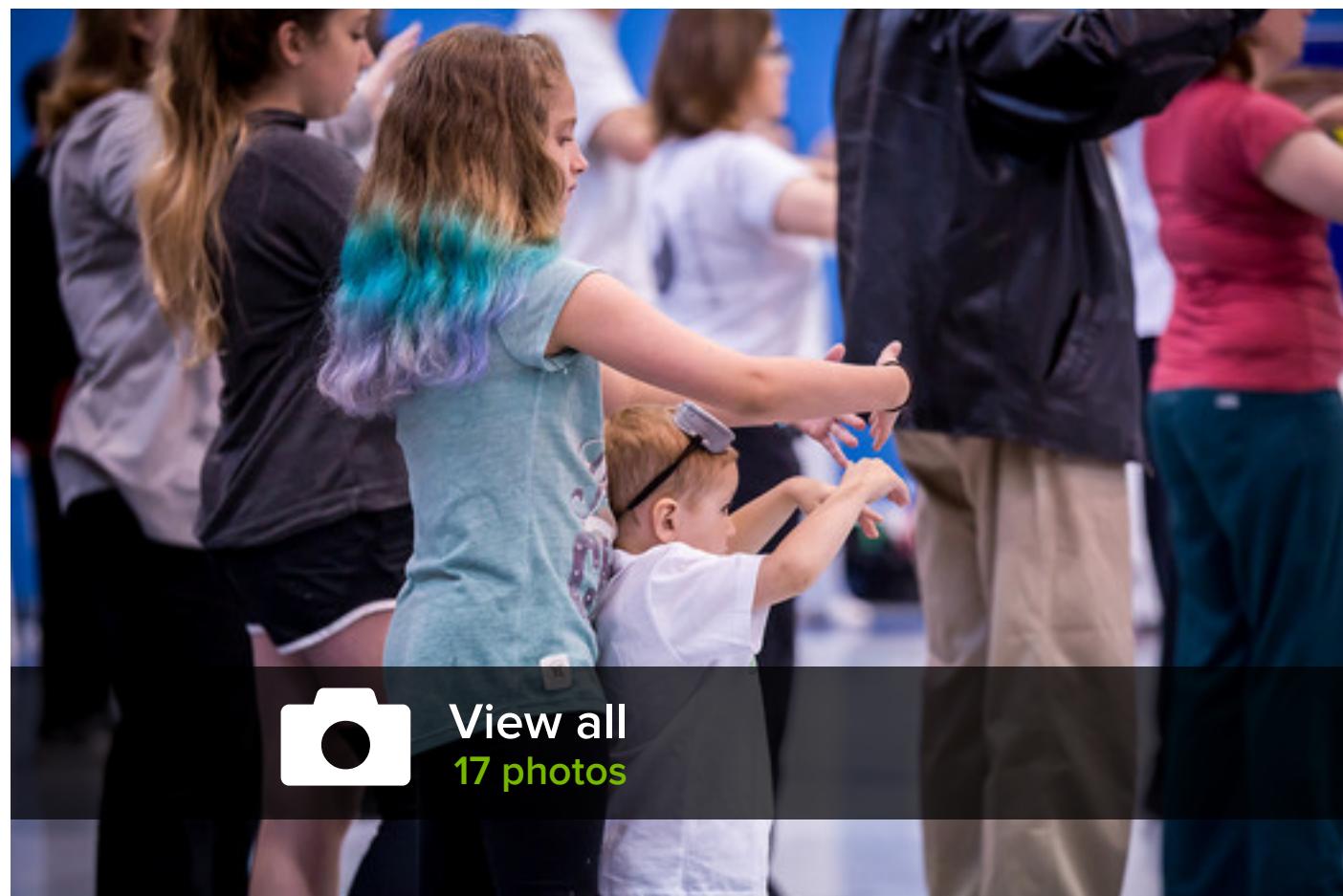


Tai Chi practitioners celebrated World Tai Chi & Qigong Day with enthusiasm

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Highlights of 2016 St. Louis World Tai Chi & Qigong Day celebration

Zhi Lu

Before 9 a.m. on April 30, people gathered inside a large gym at the Lutheran Church of the Atonement in North Florissant. Some were busy setting up the place for the event and others were stretching their arms and legs to get ready for the performance. A group of seniors from Friendship Village of Chesterfield arrived in a bus around 9:30 a.m. visibly excited to participate the demonstrations. Around 10 a.m., Kris Thompson of the Atonement Church welcomed participants and their family and friends to the 2016 World Tai Chi (Taiji) & Qigong Day celebration. Immediately afterwards, a performance by all groups kicked off the event under the theme of "One World, One Breath." Fifteen local Tai Chi/Qigong groups simultaneously practiced various Tai Chi and Qigong forms and generated a euphoric moment of joy and harmony. 98-year-old Eileen did Tai Chi Chih standing with perfect movements and received a round of warm applause from the attendees.



Zhi Lu

Qigong is an ancient Chinese healing art with a philosophic root from [The Book of Changes \(or Yi Jing\)](#), which formulates the way to keep the universe balanced. It is documented that Qigong was first practiced 5,000 years ago. Tai Chi Chuan, a branch of Qigong, is also a martial art. There are different Qigong and Tai Chi styles. Bill Douglas of Kansas City founded the World Tai Chi & Qigong Day in 1999, which has been celebrated by more than 80 countries and thousands of cities around the world on the last Saturday of April each year. With the coordination effort of Jan Koch, Kris Thompson, and Barb Stoneburner, more than 140 Tai Chi enthusiasts participated in the event and performed a variety of forms of Tai Chi and Qigong.

Kris Thompson, Laurie Beavers, John Wilkerson, students of the Atonement Church, Godfrey Tai Chi Class, and the St. Charles YMCA demonstrated Sun Style Tai Chi for Arthritis, which was created by Dr. Paul Lam to benefit patients with arthritis. The gentle Sun Style Tai Chi movements maintain high stances with little knee bending and relatively small arm movements.

Tome Pasley and members of St. Louis Qigong exhibited Fire Dragon Meridian Qigong to open up the major meridian channels and invigorate the body. Some audience members voluntarily followed them and tried the easy relaxing movements.

Jia Li Xie, Violet Li, Paul Reed, Qin Zeng, Yan Xie, as well as students from Friendship Village, the Chinese Language School, the West County YMCA, and the Wildwood YMCA performed standing and sitting Ba Duan Jin, an 800-hundred-year old Qigong exercise.

Qin, Violet, and the students from the West County YMCA demonstrated the standard Tai Chi 24 Form.

Yan, Paul, Violet, and students from St. Louis Chinese Language School and the Wildwood YMCA presented three different forms of the Chen Style Tai Chi, namely *Bai Si Fang*, the Chen Style 18 Form for Health, and segments of Chen Style Old Frame Routine One (or *Lao Jia Yi Lu*). The Chen Style movements are extended large movements, a mixture of high, medium, and low stances and fluctuate in regard to pace.

Due to a time constraint, Violet, Jiali, and Qin showcased segments of Chen Style New Frame Routine One (or *Xin Jia Yi Lu*), which has extensive spiraling (or Silk Reeling) maneuvering as well as body folding techniques. They also performed Chen Style Tai Chi single sword.

Linda Gatson from UMSL Tai Chi Group led a Qigong exercise with audience participation. This gave spectators an opportunity to try out the gentle exercise. Cutely, a couple of kids participated in the workout.

Led by Larry Adams, the Wu Hsing Chuang Five Animal Academy did a Yang Style Tai Chi form with grace and a Yang Style sword form with strength. Yang Style Tai Chi is expansive and combines high and mid-stances throughout the routines. Yang Style Sword includes challenging postures and is beautiful to watch.

Herb Parran and students of the Chinese Tai Chi Association performed Hung Yuan Chen Style Tai Chi and Tai Chi stick. Tai Chi stick is a great Tai Chi/Qigong exercise and can improve the vitality and strength in practitioners. Some people in the audience tried to imitate the stick movements even though they had no stick in hands.

LeRoy Alsup, Niko Alsup, and their Tai Chi school performed a Yang Style hand form as well as Push Hands. Push Hands is a two-person sensitivity training regimen. It teaches practitioners how to sense an opponent's energy and center of gravity and tip or throw the opponent off without applying brute force. Their demonstration inspired a few to try it out.

Subo Liao and members of Chinese Tai Chi Association presented the Fu Style 24 Form and the Yang Style 32 Sword Form. Fu Style Wudang Tai Chi is relatively young and approximately 70 years old. The audience appreciated the opportunity to learn the Fu Style 24 Form, which looks similar to the Yang Style Tai Chi with subtle differences.

Qin and members of Monsanto Tai Chi Group offered the standard Tai Chi 42 Form and a Kung Fu Fan routine. Kung Fu Fan is not Tai Chi Chuan, but highly enjoyable to watch. Its exciting music and movements brought extra energy and fun to the audience.

Currently, the Yang Style is still the most prevalent Tai Chi in St. Louis. Its slow moments can be mesmerizing. Arthur Du performed a Yang form at an extremely slow pace and captivated the audience.

The Atonement event was a great success. All participants witnessed the diversity of Qigong and Tai Chi. They cherished the moments in which they reunited with old friends and made new ones. This event helped to galvanize the St. Louis Tai Chi and Qigong community. Unanimously, all participants urged Jan, Kris, and Barb to continue their effort and host another event in 2017. (Edited by Doc Luecke)

Disclosure: I participated in this event.

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Violet Li

St. Louis Tai Chi Examiner