

Rod taught by
o'sensi. its mission is



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Rod is a family man with a sense of community involvement; he owns and operates a very successful martial arts school at Soquel community. His son Shawn who has 22 years experience in the business is the manager while his daughter teaches and also works in the office. His wife teaches police tactics and Suzie the office manager has the huge task of holding the school together. Their students usually aged 4 years old and above are taught four types of martial arts; shorinji-ryu karate, ancient weaponry, aihi jutsu, and tai chi chuan. The school also has a program suitable to families who wish to train together. Rod's philosophy of teaching is based on respect which involve treating other peoples with dignity and respect. Rod's idea is to teach children character development and ethical behavior because parents are usually busy with work; he therefore feels his school is taking the role of helping students in benefitting the society by teaching manners, respect and character development.

He has a staff of 8 instructors who teaches the students on a range of topics which include; school safety, street safety, self defense and character development. The lessons are very organized and professional which has made his school very popular among the children and the public in general. When speaking with Rod, he said martial art is not so much about the fighting but keeping away from confrontation by not fighting. His advice is " don't lash out if you get angry, pull your fists back". To him martial arts skills are necessary because they impart valuable skills such as confidence, self discipline and self control. Perhaps, it is because of these values that have made Sanford to erect the five Japanese characters within the school which represents respect, courtesy, honesty, morality and self lessons. These are

the constant themes being taught in the “ dojo” which he constantly reminds the students.

So where did it all start? Rod Sanford started his training in Judo in Watsonville where his family grew avocado trees and raised cattle. He then started training with Richard Kim and in 1967 he started teaching martial arts at Santa Cruz Parks. At the time he was a Sergeant with the Police department which is a tie that he still keeps to this day by occasionally teaching police tactics.

It is during that time that Rod finally realized that his heart was not so much on being the sheriff he was and instead wanted to teach more and the idea of a martial arts school was borne. In 2001 shortly after Kim's death, Sanford joined hands with some of Kim O'Sensi former students in order to continue the work that O'Sensi had started through a non-governmental body. The foundation was named Zen Bei Butoku which had the mandate to teach and preserve the martial arts ideals that was originally taught by O'Sensi. Its mission is to advance the study of traditional karate and thereby make the world a better place through teaching of martial arts values and principles.

When I ask him what are the biggest challenges that he faces in martial arts, Rod says its lack of professionalism, adequate funds and society attitude towards martial arts. In 2010, Rod and his martial arts school were honored by an award; the Community All-Star Hero award was given in his appreciation to his contribution towards the society. He tells me that his future plans are now starting up self defense seminars that are open to the general public and not only the children. In a world full of evil greed and

selfishness it's often hard to find someone to crown as a hero but it definitely is not impossible to tell that Rod Stanford is one such man. When I asked him at the end of the interview if he was finally content in teaching martial arts, he pauses with a distant gaze and tells me this is " where his heart is".