

# Young karate students earn gold at nationals

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STAFF WRITER

Jeff Kohn just keeps on producing winners.

The latest triumph for the 38-year-old patriarch of the North Shore Martial Arts Academy in Morton Grove involves two of his younger charges — a Skokie girl and a Morton Grove boy who both won two gold medals at the U.S. Karate Federation National Tournament, which took place in New Orleans Aug. 2-4. All told, Kohn's school won five gold medals, nine silver and two bronze medals at the competition.

Kohn's skill in karate — and just as importantly his patience in working with and developing karate champions of all ages, sizes and abilities — is well known in martial arts circles around the country. But the athletes themselves also deserve a lot of the credit. These are incredibly focused young people with powers of concentration and a self-confidence that belies their years.

Gold medal winner Tanya Nudelman, 10, of Skokie, spent her summer training in Kohn's academy at 5644 Dempster St., as did fellow gold medal winner Dan Borek, 7, of Morton Grove.

"They had the desire," Kohn said of Tanya's and Dan's success. "They worked harder. They made more sacrifices this summer."

Kohn maintains that anyone can learn karate. What sets the achievers apart from the non-achievers in this sport is the desire

to improve, and keep on improving.

## Concentration

Tanya says she has been practicing karate for the past three years not only because it's fun, but because it has helped her become a better student.

"It helps me concentrate," she says.

Tanya's sister, Ilana, who is one step away from earning a black belt, agrees with her sister that karate has helped her concentrate in school. But, she adds, "it gives you more spirit to do things."

These words are music to the ears of parents, who spend countless hours over the years sitting on the wooden benches in Kohn's studio.

Dena Nudelman, Tanya's and Ilana's mother, says karate has made her children more confident.

"They're not scared to speak up in front of anybody," she says.

Dan, a soft-spoken child whose big brown eyes seem to fill his face, says "I like it because you can learn more things." Like his brother Randy, Dan is small for his age. But size never stopped Randy, and it isn't going to hold back Dan either, he says.

At age 10, Randy became the youngest student ever to earn a black belt in Kohn's school. At the rate he's progressing now, Dan probably will earn that lofty distinction as well by the time he reaches 10.

Dan's mom, Helen, says the lessons her

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Gold medalist Tanya Nudelman (left) of Skokie and Dan Borek of Morton Grove show their stuff during workouts with teacher Jeff Kohn at the North Shore Martial Arts Academy. Dan recently won gold in a national tournament.