

# Tournament honours a friend of martial arts

By SEAN MEYER  
The Londoner

John Lemieux was a member of the London Seikido - Forest City Tae Kwon Do Club until his death from meningitis in October, 2002.

After discussing what could be done to remember their friend, students at the club suggested a tournament in his honour.

Co-founders of the club, Zivorad (Zeke) Pekovic and Doug Gagel agreed it was the perfect solution.

"John definitely represented our beliefs - integrity, perseverance, strength of spirit - so to remember him through a tournament seemed like a natural," Zeke says. "John's family helps so much with the tournament. John's wife has said we were like a substitute for a part of John's life too and that feels really nice."

The second annual tournament is set for this Saturday, May 1, at the University of Western Ontario's Alumni Hall and is expected to draw about 165 competitors from across the city and as far away as Toronto and Detroit.

Doug also says a memorial tournament is the perfect way to remember John, adding that last year's inaugural event was a very rewarding experience.

"There's a tremendous amount of work involved in putting on a tournament and I'm just so amazed with the work done by our volunteers. I know I'm really humbled by the work they do."

The tournament awards trophies in sparring and patterns but, more importantly perhaps, it gives every competitor the chance to win and go home with something.

"Have you ever seen someone's face



SEAN MEYER PHOTO

Co-founder and senior instructor of the London Seikido - Forest City Tae Kwon Do Club, Zivorad (Zeke) Pekovic, helps 11-year-old Theo Karawzas prepare for the second annual John Lemieux Memorial Tournament this Saturday, May 1, at Alumni Hall.

after they win a trophy? They're just like, wow, and their faces light up. That's what's important to us, that everyone has a chance to win a trophy," Doug says. "Safety is, of course, paramount. I think we had one cut nose all of last year - I've had worse playing hockey and soccer - and besides, what we really want is for everyone to have fun."

And that fun will be had from six-year-olds up to third degree black belts.

"We wanted divisions for everyone so people at the same skill level, at the same age, could compete against each other," Doug says.

"We have little guys, the six-year-olds,

all the way up to the executive level. That used to be called the senior division, but executive sounds a little better. And we have about four or six people in each so everyone has a chance."

At a relatively inexpensive cost of \$35, plus a \$5 admission fee, the tournament is not designed to be a huge financial wind-fall. However, the money that is raised will be directed to very specific goals.

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to community charities while the club will also benefit.

Money raised at the tournament will be used to purchase equipment and targets for the club, but to also to fund scholar-

ships for young people who might not be able to afford joining.

"We send people out to seminars, tournaments, but we also fund scholarships for people who might not be able to afford it," Doug says. "That's my biggest fear. I don't want to have some kid say they can't afford to learn. That would be terrible."

## WANT MORE INFO?

■ For more information about London Seikido - Forest City Tae Kwon Do Club or the John Lemieux Memorial Tournament visit [www.worldseikido.com](http://www.worldseikido.com).