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They say Rutherford help keep sport alive in Illinois

Martial artists fight for treasurer candidate

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BY ADAM TESTA THE SOUTHERN | Posted: Wednesday, December 2, 2009 4:00 am | No Comments Posted

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TOURNAMENT EVENTS

Trainers Steve and Kim Aldus, a husband and wife team from Peoria, will present a self-defense and bo staff seminar from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday. Registration is \$20, and spectator fee is \$10.

State Sen. and treasurer candidate Dan Rutherford will be available for a meet-and-greet event from 9 to 10 a.m. Saturday. He will also be around for the early part of the tournament.

The third annual 'Just for Fun' tournament, featuring Tae Kwon-Do, breaking, weapons, point and Olympic-style sparring, soft swords and special athletes, will begin at 10:15 a.m. Saturday. Spectator fees are \$3 with children age 6 and younger being admitted free.

All events will be at Black's Martial Arts Academy in Bowen Gym at 880 W. High St. in Carbondale.

CARBONDALE - A Republican candidate for state treasurer will be the beneficiary of an amateur martial arts tournament this weekend.

Thomas Black, owner and trainer at Black's Martial Arts Academy, said he normally avoids politics, but when legislators enacted a new law limiting the abilities of training facilities and promoters earlier this year, he found himself involved and discovered an ally in state Sen. Dan Rutherford of Pontiac.

"There was no way that we could hold tournaments, host seminars, do anything" Black said, in reference to a change in laws that placed amateur martial arts under the same regulations as boxing and mixed martial arts. "It would have eventually shut down every martial arts school in the state."

One part of the regulations Alliance, a national group promoting martial arts, found to be exceptionally unrealistic was the requirement of having a medical doctor present at each event, said Black, vice president of Alliance. Youth martial arts programs do not involve the same physicality and risk of injury as the other events it was being lumped in with, advocates said.

Black, Rutherford, other members of Alliance and outside sources, including the national Black Belt

Magazine, tackled the issue and fought for change to the law, which had gone into effect in January.

Rutherford sponsored a house bill that would remove the restrictions from martial arts and prohibit further events from being canceled and organizers fined, Black said. The bill passed both houses of state government and was signed by Gov. Pat Quinn in August.

As a thank you for Rutherford's work on passing the legislation, Black and others agreed to host three tournaments as fundraisers for the senator's treasurer campaign in each 2009 and 2010. The Carbondale event marks the final one for this year, following events in Chicago and Peoria.

"This guy really did all martial artists and everyone involved a tremendous service," Black said. "He helped everybody."

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