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Gen X and Y say *Taoist Tai Chi*™ arts make fitness a meaningful challenge

TORONTO, Aug. 5 – They have little interest in running the streets alone nor in battling a treadmill with headphones over their ears. To them “health” goes beyond maintaining six-pack abs and agonizing over their body mass index. A recent focus group of young enthusiasts of the *Taoist Tai Chi*™ internal arts of health revealed that they value the “meaningful fitness” integral to their practice.

A sampling of members of the International Taoist Tai Chi Society in their 20s and 30s, from many of the 26 countries where the Society is active, were interviewed at the end of July 2010. The focus group took place at the Society’s international centre in Orangeville, Ont., where members from around the world are converging to celebrate the Society’s 40th anniversary.

A challenging yet accessible workout, for body, mind and spirit

The main reasons cited by Gen X and Y aficionados for joining the Society and keeping up their practice are found in the nature of these arts and of the charitable organization that makes them available to the public:

- **Young adults appreciate the *Taoist Tai Chi*™ arts as a challenging yet accessible form of exercise.** “It is a full, rich and complex form of physical activity,” says Joanna Sztobryn, aged 24, from Warsaw. Keenan Churchill, 20, of Florida, envies the stamina of some older long-time members with whom he practises. Veronika Smejdova of Prague found it to be a form of exercise that she, who was in good health when she joined, could practice with her husband, who was ill.
- **They value the resulting physical fitness but also the stress management.** Jesper Thomassen, 32, from Copenhagen, remembers how even as a beginner his tight shoulders began relaxing. Marilena Cojocar, of Montreal says she feels more stable – “these arts are good for physical and mental health”, she says. For Camilla Burggraaf, 35, of Amsterdam it is only as she started learning the *Taoist Tai Chi*™ arts that she noticed how unbalanced, stressed and stiff she had been for years. Marie Germain, 22, of Sherbrooke, Canada, says these arts correct her weaknesses, whether physical or mental, to make her stronger.
- **The *Taoist Tai Chi Society*™ community approach, its meaningful social mission and its international scope are major factor of the decision to keep at it.** For Tim Bevitt, 30, of Australia, this is about the bigger picture of practicing together towards better health. Steffi Breiholz, 32, of Germany says: “The Society

is all over the world; wherever I go or can go, I can take it with me and keep going.”

Karine Cyr, 26, of Montreal, sums it all up. “Many people of my generation are attracted by the humanist, multi-generational and non-competitive approach of the Society to health improvement. And many young people find good models in the dedicated instructors of the Society. The fact that these arts are anchored in Chinese culture, and are related to martial arts, is also a factor of interest. Another one is the spiritual connection of the Society – while not all Boomers are seeking this as part of their physical practice, for many young people it makes a positive difference when choosing between the Society and conventional fitness studios or even other forms of Tai Chi or Yoga.”

Celebrating 40 years around the world

Founded in Toronto in 1970 by the late Master Moy Lin-shin, a Taoist monk who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong, the International Taoist Tai Chi Society is the world’s largest nonprofit Tai Chi organization

To celebrate its 40th anniversary, members around the world -- including in many cities in Canada -- will simultaneously complete the 108 moves of the Society’s Tai Chi set on August 14, at 2 p.m. Greenwich Mean Time (10 a.m. EDT).

- Visit www.taoist.org for more information about the International Taoist Tai Chi Society, its locations, and the 40th anniversary celebrations.
- Go to www.taoist.org/files/pdf/40thKeydates.pdf for key dates in the Society’s development.
- Go to the blog at www.thetigersmouth.org for the most current event and community information.
- For specific information about the worldwide demonstration on August 14, 2010, contact 416-656-2110.

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