

Taekwondo brought couple together

By Sharon Corcoran

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If it hadn't been for taekwondo, they might never have become a family, and now taekwondo is their family activity.

Lowell and Larissa Coon said they met when she started taking the taekwondo classes he taught in Manhattan. Now they and their children are in classes taught by one of Mr. Coon's former students, Wayne Luckert.

After growing up in California, she said, she was in the Army, stationed at Fort Riley starting in December 1995, and wanted a way to exercise year-round despite the cold winters. Someone recommended taekwondo.

Mr. Coon said he had graduated from Kansas State University in 1993 with a bachelor's degree in biology and then worked on a farm near Goodland. He taught taekwondo in Colby the summer of '94 before returning to Manhattan that fall to open a taekwondo school.

The person who was teaching in Colby couldn't stay until the person who bought the school took over, he said, so he filled in for just that time. That is when he taught Luckert.

Mr. Coon, a 1989 Goodland High School graduate, had learned taekwondo in Colby, taking it for a physical education credit while a freshman at Colby Community College in 1990. His teacher had bought the schools in Goodland and Colby from a woman who had then bought schools in Salina and Manhattan, and Mr. Coon bought the school in Manhattan from her.

Mrs. Coon said she graduated from the University of Southern California in 1994 with a degree in occupational therapy and in 2006 got a master's degree from Boston University after studying on-line.

She was originally from Phoenix but had grown up in a small town an hour's drive north of San Francisco. She said she joined the Army to get some work experience and have adventures.

"I wanted to go places my friends never would," she said. "They wouldn't even go to San Francisco because it was the big city, too scary, too dangerous. I wasn't going to die in the same town."

Her adventures came quickly. "When they sent me to Fort Riley," she said, "I didn't even know where Kansas was on the map."

Her friends made her some ruby slippers, and she was off to see the Wizard — by way of Texas.



Wayne Luckert, taekwondo instructor, put a blue belt on Larissa Coon at her belt promotion Friday, Jan. 11, at the Goodland Activities Center. Coon's daughter Amanda, 8, got her orange belt the same night.
Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

She said she had training in San Antonio. The day she left for Kansas, it was 85 degrees in Texas, and she was wearing shorts. She was not prepared for the temperature change.

"By the time I reached Topeka on the same day," she said, "it was 14 degrees and a blizzard. I didn't even own a coat. I was ready to go home."

But the next day, the Sunflower State redeemed itself.

"I walked in and saw Treasures of the Czar," Larissa said. "The exhibit was on an around-the-world tour, and Topeka was the only place it would be in the United States."

"There were people there who bought tickets six months in advance, and I just went in thinking,

'Maybe I'll do this.' It made me think Kansas wasn't so bad."

She had been looking for a way to exercise regularly and started taking taekwondo in April. Lowell was the instructor. Larissa said she was in the classes for awhile before they started to date.

They married in June 1997 and moved to Denver in '98. They moved to Goodland two years ago. She is an occupational therapist at Goodland Regional Medical Center, and he teaches biology at his alma mater, Colby Community College.

"Since her job is year-around," Mr. Coon said, "we decided to live in Goodland so she wouldn't have to drive."

They and their daughter Amanda,

8, and son Trent, 6, started taking taekwondo classes under Luckert at the Goodland Activities Center. It's an instructor instructing an instructor, Luckert said with a smile.

The teacher and his old master "group teach" now, Mrs. Coon said, doing an impression of her husband and Luckert asking each other for advice on how to do the moves.

The kids were eager to take taekwondo, she said, since they'd been watching Mommy and Daddy and wanted to play.

Mrs. Coon said she had taken a break from taekwondo while in Denver, so advancing from purple belt to blue belt was a long time coming, but Luckert put the new belt on her Friday, Jan. 11. Amanda

Goodland woman to serve in Iraq

By Sharon Corcoran

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Occupational therapist Larissa Coon has been called up to serve in Iraq with the Colorado Army Reserves. She left Monday for training in Colorado through Jan. 28, then will go to California for more training before going to Iraq on March 24.

A major in the Army Reserves, Coon says her unit does combat stress control.

"We go to the guys who've seen the worst of the combat," Coon said, "to give psychiatric care, to combat post-traumatic stress."

The Goodland American Legion Post is planning a ceremony before the boys basketball game Friday, Feb. 8, to welcome back some National Guard members who served in Iraq and give a send off for some who are going.

Sgt. Lonny Guyton and Specialists Aaron McClelland, Kody Sanchez, Richard Sturtevant and Ian Donovan, who returned from Iraq in August, will be honored along with soldiers scheduled to return shortly before the ceremony, said Staff Sgt. Mark Reasoner of the Goodland Armory.

Specialists Amanda Bonner, Drew Edwards, Ryan Nichols, Kelly Simmonds and Randy Lee are scheduled to be back, Reasoner said, and will be invited. They may not want to break away from family, though, he said, so they may not all attend.

The armory will provide a color guard, Reasoner said, and someone will introduce the soldiers.

advanced from white to orange the same night. Trent also has his orange belt, and Mr. Coon is a third level black belt.

Mrs. Coon said she chose occupational therapy because it was one of the few careers that would allow her to do all the things she enjoys.

"When I was in high school," she said, "I did a lot of activities — sports, band, arts and crafts, community activities and Camp Fire U.S.A. (an organization for girls), where I was the junior representative to our whole county."

"I was never one to sit down. I volunteered at the hospital, where I found myself drawn to the neurology and orthopedics department."

Her career works well with her diverse interests, she said. From one job to another, she said, it's the same field, but it can be totally different. For example, she said, you can work in orthopedics, pediatrics, geriatrics, even specialize on hands.

"The Army has spent a lot of time training me as a hand specialist," she said, "which is what I do here, specialize in arm and hand injuries."

Occupational therapy looks at everything you do that fills your time, Mrs. Coon said, and is not only about how to get rid of a problem but

also how to prevent it from coming back. It involves doing exercises to aid healing, she said, and changing how you do things to prevent it from coming back.

And occupational therapy isn't just about physical injuries. After suffering a mental trauma, she said, treatment can affect how you look at what you do, prioritizing and organizing your time to help you deal with everything.

Mrs. Coon said she did her internship at the Garden, a transitional work program at a west Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital. She worked with veterans who were in the psychiatry program and were growing produce they could use or sell, so they were paid and were learning a skill to help them get back in the workforce.

In the Army, it is her job to make sure soldiers are fit mentally and physically to return to duty. She serves as close as she safely can to where the unit stationed to avoid taking them away from it. The unit is their family, their friends,

she said, adding that when dealing with those who need her help, they provide a safe place for the soldiers, away from bombings and traumatic events, to help them recover.

County to use earmarked \$40,000 to make repairs at Good Samaritan Center

By Tom Betz

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Repairs at the Sherman County Good Samaritan center ordered by a state fire inspector could cost more than \$40,000 this year, and county commissioners agreed to use \$40,000 in two funds earmarked for the building.

Dorinda Krueger, Good Samaritan director in Goodland, and Randy Fitzgerald, regional manager for the society, were at a commission meeting on Jan. 9 to talk about an inspection last fall by a state fire marshal and to see what the county could help pay for.

Krueger said the health inspector came in September and the society received his report, with a list of items that need to be fixed, within the next year.

She said major changes are needed in the whirlpool room and hall 3, cabinets in the kitchen and dining room, a new stove, replacement of five beds, a geriatric bed and replacement of the south sidewalk.

She said the flooring and cabinets are the problem in the whirlpool room, and that there is no ventilation in the room. She said the health inspector said the cabinets showed signs of wear, and the flooring in the whirlpool room was showing signs of deterioration.

She said another of the recommendations was to replace all the hand and foot rails in the whole building.

Krueger asked what the county could pay besides the \$20,000 in the home maintenance fund.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said the estimated price of \$17,000 to \$20,000 for the hand and foot rails seemed like a lot. Krueger said the bid was for the materials, and the center staff would install the rails.

Krueger asked if the county had a list of contractors that could be contacted. Commissioner Chuck Thomas said the best was to put it out for bids.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said there is \$20,000 set aside in the county home maintenance fund, and another \$20,000 for Good Samaritan in the special county medical services sales tax fund.

Rasure asked how full the home is and how the staffing level was holding up. Krueger said the count is 58, with two openings, and the staffing

is in good shape.

Rasure made a motion to approve the additional \$20,000 for projects that pertain to the building itself. Thomas said doing that would deplete the fund.

Rumpel said that was the total of what the county has authority for

this year. She said there could be a little more, but if it was all spent there would be no carryover.

Tiede seconded the motion and asked Fitzgerald if the projects would get the building in good shape.

Fitzgerald said it would unless a major system went wrong.

The commissioners unanimously approved the motion, and Tiede said he hoped they could get work done for \$40,000.

Thomas suggested they give local contractors a shot at some of the work, and Krueger said they would work with local firms as much as possible.

corrections

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Sherman County will receive sealed bids for the ROAD IMPROVEMENT-COUNTY ROAD 16-2008 project at the office of the Sherman County Clerk, 813 Broadway, Goodland, KS, 67735 until 9:00 AM (Mountain Time) on Thursday, February 28, 2008. Bids received after this time will not be accepted. Bids will be publicly opened and read aloud immediately after the specified closing time.
Major items of work include: 13015 cubic yards of Common Excavation, 532 square yards of Concrete Pavement (8" Uniform) (AE) (NRDJ), 17023 square yards of Manipulation (Subgrade Modification), 5475 tons of BM-2, Entrance and Cross Road Pipes, Seeding, and Traffic Control.
The CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be examined at the following locations: Sherman County Public Works Department, 1004 West 8th, Goodland, Kansas 67735, or Penco Engineering, P.A., 711 NW 3rd St., Plainville, Kansas 67663.
Copies of the CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be obtained at the office of PENCO ENGINEERING, P.A., P.O. Box 392, 711 N.W. 3rd Street, Plainville, Kansas 67663, upon payment of \$75.00 for each set. Document holders of record returning the documents in good condition within 30 days after the opening of bids will be refunded \$25.00 per set.
Sherman County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any or all technicalities.
Date: January 18, 2008
Jerol J. DeBoer, Consultant