

Florence Senda Lifetime Service Award to Gordon Okamura - March 2012



Gord has had extensive volunteer involvement in the provincial organization Judo Alberta, in Judo in Alberta generally, and in his community. Gord has been a volunteer for Judo in Alberta since 1976 and in his community since 1983. In that time, Gord has dedicated himself to promoting Judo in Alberta, and has taken an active role in working for and improving his Community Association in Edmonton. The following is a summary of Gord's volunteer record.

Activities for Judo Alberta

- Gord has been, and remains, a leader in the provincial sport organization of Judo Alberta. He's been involved with the Board of Directors since the late 70's, with multiple terms as Vice President (Finance), Vice President (Administration), Treasurer, and interim President. In these roles, Gord has been heavily involved in all Judo Alberta matters. He was especially instrumental in all reporting by Judo Alberta to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation and to Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission for Judo Alberta's casino obligations. This has greatly assisted in creating and maintaining Judo Alberta's good standing and reputation with these government organizations (the source of a large part of Judo Alberta funding);
- Another instrumental role was helping to establish the financial reporting system used by the Judo Alberta Treasurer for banking, casinos and government reporting. This system provides accurate information to all executive members and government departments, and allows someone new to the Treasurer role to step in and take over with a minimum of upset;
- Gord continues to act as an NCCP course conductor and evaluator.

Activities for Judo in Alberta

Gord's contributions to Judo are not limited to acting on the Provincial Executive. Gord has been continuously involved for many years in every facet of Judo in Alberta:

- Gord has excelled in Judo in several areas: he is an International Referee, has Level Three NCCP certification; and is a multiple Canadian Kata Champion who has also consistently placed in the top 10 in the IJF World Kata Championships. Gord has

taken these tremendous assets and used them to assist others by acting as an instructor at numerous Refereeing, NCCP and Kata clinics throughout Alberta;

- Gord has attended and made videos of numerous other clinics and competitions in Alberta and Canada. He then donated copies of these to Judo Alberta, and these are now part of Judo Alberta's Video library;
- he has assisted in organizing and running all the major tournaments in Edmonton for many years (U of A, Edmonton International Judo Championships at West Edmonton Mall, Provincials, Junior and Senior Nationals) in every capacity – from sitting on organizing and planning committees, to making arrangements for facilities and volunteers and to moving mats before and after events;
- Gord has volunteered as a referee regularly at all tournaments in Alberta (including smaller children's tournaments as well as every major Judo event), Canada, the United States and internationally;
- Gord helped to start, run and instruct at the Seidokan Judo Club in Edmonton, which operated from 1979 to 1995;
- Gord was the Black Belt sponsor for the High Prairie Judo club for several years until they had their own black belt instructor. He visited often for gradings and clinics. He also put on demonstrations in several other northern communities, and supported their local tournaments by holding score keeping and time keeping clinics, as well as refereeing at the competition;
- Gord was involved with the University of Alberta Judo Club from his arrival in Edmonton in 1976. Gord gradually became an assistant Sensei to Ron Senda, and eventually helped to teach almost every beginner and advanced class until Ron's retirement in 2010. Since then, Gord has been a head Sensei at the U of A;

One of Gord's strengths continues to be his desire to mentor and teach younger referees and Kata students throughout Alberta. He is involved in every facet of Judo - anything from organizing a tournament, compiling comprehensive reports for Government funding, moving mats, driving carloads of athletes, lending his vehicles, to working casinos and bingos.

Community Involvement

Gord's extensive contributions are not limited to Judo - they also extend well into his community. Gord's volunteer work outside of Judo includes an active involvement for over 28 years in the Lendrum Community Association - his neighbourhood's Community league. During this time Gord:

- Sat on the Community Association executive as a member in a number of executive roles;
- Ran the local elementary school's casino, both while his children attended the school and for some years after they graduated. Gord still volunteers at these casinos;
- Ran for many years (and still runs) the Community Association's casino;

- Coached several Community soccer teams, both indoor and outdoor;
- Helped build 3 different playgrounds in the area;
- Attends and volunteers at community activities, such as neighbourhood clean ups, BBQs, camping trips, races, etc;
- Volunteered every summer for many years as an official for the Edmonton Touch Football Association.

Gord worked for the Provincial Government for 30 years prior to his retirement in 2010. While working with the Province, Gord truly believed in health and fitness and was instrumental in organizing and running numerous volunteer staff events, and was a willing participant in the annual City of Edmonton Corporate Challenge. The accolades Gord received from his co-workers on retirement demonstrated how much he was appreciated beyond his actual work duties.

Latest Volunteer Activities

Gord was diagnosed with cancer in late 2010. Despite undergoing chemotherapy, radiation treatment and surgery, Gord continued during these treatments to volunteer and be involved in Judo and Community activities. These activities included:

- Continuing to instruct Judo beginner and advanced classes at the University of Alberta, sometimes from a chair at the side;
- Examining the U of A beginner class for their yellow belts, and students in the advanced class for higher belt levels;
- Helping to run a Judo Alberta Kime no Kata clinic in Lethbridge;
- Acting as a Kata Judge at the 2011 WEM Tournament, and helping to run a Kata clinic at the same tournament. This was two weeks after surgery;
- Acting as a volunteer and advisor for the 2011 Senior National Championships in Edmonton. Gord was scheduled to be a Kata Judge at these National Championships but was forced to cancel due to an emergency return to the hospital;
- Acting as an ongoing resource for Judo Alberta and the U of A club while his treatment continues;
- For his Community Association, Gord learned how to operate their golf-course riding mower to help keep the sports fields properly mowed. He has also spent many hours helping to water and care for the newly planted grass and sod.