

MODERN SAMURAI HERO

We nominate our Karate Sensei Karl-Heinz Griebenow as Local Hero. He connects traditional martial arts to the 21st century with the goal of strengthening the mind and body. Everybody should have a role-model in their life; Karl-Heinz Griebenow is our Sensei, leader, sometimes a fill-in father or brother, a HERO! Our Dojo is open to all who are interested in Karate, we would be very happy to introduce you to our hero and share our experience. Come in and join us!

We are the Shotokan Karate division of the sport club association "TV 1893 Seeheim e.V.", founded in 1993 by Karl-Heinz Griebenow. The association has said that they are very proud to have us as one of their most active divisions. The word Karate is Japanese for "empty hand" and is a martial art with physical and moral aspects. The physical side seeks to develop defensive and countering body movements, with emphasis on concentrating as much of the body's power as possible at the point and instant of impact. The mental and moral aspects target the overall improvement of the individual. Meditation is an important part of the training, helping to calm down and improve concentration. Just focusing on breathing puts the troubles and worries of the daily routine behind, opening up a new mental space for the training.

One of my favorite quotes is from Funakoshi Gichin: "The ultimate aim of Karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of character by its participants". Source: <https://www.themartialway.com.au/twenty-precepts-of-karate-niju-kun/> The following criteria will show how our leader has made a positive impact on our community in many ways, over a long time.

Karl-Heinz Griebenow, born on the 10th of October 1961 in Zwingenberg (Germany), has been practicing Karate for 43 years and is a true idol when it comes to motivating others to live an active life. Karl-Heinz has led multiple Dojos, successfully participated in many tournaments and achieved his seventh-level black belt in 2021. He continues his personal development by training in his own home-Dojo and through weekend seminars (always inviting club members to join). Karl-Heinz has read probably every book on Karate ever written; his cabinets overflowing with trophies is just one symbol of his successes.

Karl-Heinz's goal, to **strengthen the mind and body**, is effectively carried out without imposition of any limits or barriers to people of all age, origin, background, and ability. He is a teacher of self- defense and follows tradition, resembling a modern- day Samurai.

New members are actively recruited through posters and activities in local schools. Children who are members in the club, experience the benefit of being active in the Karate club and are inspired by Karl- Heinz, so they often bring new friends and family members.

Karate trainings are offered three times per week, for both beginners and advanced athletes, in separate schedules. Beginners on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 17:00 to 18:00. Many parents (even grandparents!) take advantage of this time to train with their children, it is a very successful model. With training only lasting one hour it is easy to make time and attend.

Our training grounds are at the Schuldorf Bergstraße, a conglomerate of primary and secondary state schools with an international division, counting over 2000 students and 200 teachers. People from many different backgrounds and cultures already congregate here.

Being a multi-cultural community, the training plays a huge part for the integration of members. As an example, training is conducted mainly in the Japanese language while discussions of training principles are done in the German language.

Depending on the exercise, participants train all together, alone, one- on-one or in small groups, and are encouraged to engage with others. Friendships often develop here.

I would like to share an anecdote as I think my experience is quite similar for many: After our warmup session, we delve into a Kata (a detailed choreographed pattern of martial arts movements). I start to become more focused, remembering the lessons learned in the last session two days ago. This time, I perform a KIZAME ZUKI movement perfectly and Karl-Heinz



notices. In walking by, he quietly murmurs “good job” and it fills me with pride, only to misstep the next movement. Karl-Heinz sees this too and makes a mental note. At the end of the Kata he calls everybody together and explains how that specific movement is to be made and why it is that way, never mentioning who made the mistake. Karl-Heinz is an inspiration for the whole group. Source: Brandon

Should Karl-Heinz win the prize, the monies would be used to promote the sport and Japanese culture, obtain new equipment and attend tournaments.



The Karate club is organized as a division of an official club association (e.V.). Members are insured in case of an accident during training. Membership fees are very low with 8.00€ per month for adults and 5.50€ per month for children under 18. To promote Karate as a family sport, fees are discounted when multiple family members participate. Membership fees are paid to the association, though any of the 15 sporting clubs can also be attended with this one fee. This reduces financial barriers and makes it easy for people to be active in the club. The advanced group trains Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 18:00 to 19:30. Advanced members are free to participate in the beginner group as well, as are beginners in the advanced group. Training takes place regularly, regardless of weather or school breaks (only public holidays are the exception). Multiple training halls are available and typically used to split into groups based on age and/or progress (belt color). Weather permitting, trainings may also be held outdoors.

Six licensed trainers are available to support the groups; training regiments are prepared and discussed in advance of each training. Karl-Heinz is licensed and recognized by the Deutsche Karate Verband e.V. (DKV) to administer examinations all the way up to the 6. DAN (sixth black-belt).

Trainings are always unique, addressing a particular topic and technique, exemplifying the creativity of Karl-Heinz and his trainers.

Training sessions begin with a formal greeting, followed by a light warm-up and stretching. The chosen topic is then practiced in group formation several times. Afterwards, some specifics of the techniques are worked out in small groups, one-on-one or alone- for instance a particular stance or movement. The group formation is often repeated in order to try the application of the newly developed technique.

Some interesting statistics about our membership include: 120 persons from 21 families; multiple family members training together; three generations from the same family is not unusual; nine pairs of siblings of all ages; seven "Best Ager" (60+ years young); eleven members in the age group 50-60 years. Barriers between generations become smaller and they enjoy practicing sports together as a group.

In addition, we are honored to include a member who has achieved the rank of First Kyu brown-belt (the next step is black- belt) although his medical condition considers him fully disabled. Further, we have Karatekas with various levels of

disabilities, for example: heart issues; synthetic hips, knees, and spinal discs; behavioral deficiencies such as ADHD and Autism.

Karate is a sport for individual self-improvement, as a group effort. In a group, the individual finds it easy to overcome their apathy and shyness.

Although the primary goals focus on improving one's concentration, coordination and discipline, some positive side-effects are also achieved. While most people start Karate to learn about self-defense, many feel that their experiences help guide them through life, giving them the necessary tools of motivation, self-empowerment, discipline, and respect to deal with life's daily challenges. Karate often turns into a long-term engagement and can be the first step for many to live a healthy and active life. Karl-Heinz commands his Karatekas with precision and patience. He finds enjoyment in observing the development and improvement of his pupils over time. Goals are given in small, achievable parts but continue to develop as time goes on. The attendance and growth of our membership is a token of his success. Karate is Japanese for "empty hand" and as implied, nothing else is needed to participate in trainings. Nonetheless, the club provides several devices to aid in the effectiveness of trainings, for example: jump ropes, balance pads, weights, heavy balls, stretch-bands, "sound Karate", kick shields, etc. In any case, moving your own weight is often strenuous enough.

The Club's communication network is extensive, promoting both the sport and the club in various ways.

Our training invitation is available as a poster in German, English, Ukrainian and Arabic. During the Syrian refugee crisis, parents and children from multiple families accepted our invitation and joined us in training. We also have two Ukrainian children currently in our group. Karate can be an important part of a successful integration in our culture, as we display openness and people can make new friendships without feeling awkward.

We also reach out externally through various other publications: newspaper articles, our website, Facebook, Instagram. In 2020 we published 15 articles in local newspapers, 13 in 2021, and 14 articles in the first half of 2022.

Our website <http://karate-seeheim.de> and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Karatedojoseeheim> are continuously updated with information on previous and upcoming events and publications. Our handle at Instagram is @karate.seeheim.

On one occasion, the television station ZDF did a recording for their program "Logo", which helped spark the interest for Karate in children. The recording is linked from the website:

<http://karate-seeheim.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Karate-Training-in-Corona-Zeiten-klein.mp4>



Outside of training, Karl-Heinz and the Karate Club do a lot to engage with the community. For example, we host a springtime event called Sakura (Japanese: "Cherry Blossom Festival") with traditional clothing and food, sport competitions, poetry, calligraphy and art. Christmas, Halloween and Carnival also present opportunities to train in costumes and come together for a nice party. The New Year's festival "Shogatsu" is also another important customary holiday which we celebrate in our Dojo.

We also actively participate in other local events, for example: on "Clean Environment Day" we pick up trash in the neighborhood; Participate in cycling events (winning 1st place in 2021); "Stars of Sports", an initiative of the Deutschen Olympischen Sportbundes e.V. (DOSB) brought us a 750€ prize; Most recently, help for Ukrainians was organized through collection and donation of useful items, then transported to Ivanichy.

One item worth mentioning in particular, is the dedication to continue the sport under all conditions. With the official permission of the state Ministry as requested by Karl-Heinz Griebenow, Karate training was allowed to continue during the Corona pandemic. There were certain stipulations to adhere to, and a creative concept required. For example, Karl-Heinz had an idea to enable one-on-one training at a distance by putting boxing gloves on a two-meter bamboo stick. Trainings were held outdoors for the entire duration, in every weather. We trained in rain, snow and ice. This proved to be important, as it helped people at a time where nearly every other type of sport was closed to the public; a one-hour escape to the "old normal" provided a physical and mental health benefit. In this time, we gained 45 new members. Practicing Karate is meant to be a lifelong journey of improving oneself. Karl-Heinz Griebenow is consistently dedicated to perfecting himself. He openly shares his experience and motivates his Karatekas in his lessons. He is a person to be adored and respected.

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