

STUDENT PROFILE: MICHAEL AND ANDREW LUTZ

By WTS Staff

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The martial arts journey of Michael and Andrew Lutz, father and son, actually began with another member of the family, Melanie, who is Michael's daughter and Andrew's older sister. She was in fifth grade when she was diagnosed with attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It was 2003. Michael tells us that they were very determined to stay away from the pharmaceutical path. Research took them to the martial arts and within a year they selected the Integrated Martial Arts Institute and the instruction of Sikung Kasey Cheung, with whom we now share real estate at 2030 Route 112.

Michael describes the changes that took place: "She did struggle at first, but her efforts kicked in about a year into the program — she just began to accelerate not only in the dojo, but in school academics as well." He cited the improvement of her GPA as an example. Before IMAI, it was a 2.0-3.0 average. After IMAI, it was a 3.0-4.0.

Melanie, now 24, is attending Suffolk Community College in their Emergency Medical Care Program with a plan to continue at Stony Brook in their Paramedic Program. Michael says she's not taking any classes in the arts for now, but is looking forward to the day when she has the available time to train again.

Michael joined his daughter on the mat at IMAI early in 2008. Melanie pushed him in that direction by giving him a gift certificate for Christmas. Their joint training continued for two years, but familial responsibilities and other programs caused them to step back from training in 2010.

As Andrew drew close to high school graduation, Michael began thinking that the martial arts might also be of benefit for his son. Andrew was diagnosed with autism when he was three. Michael tells us that Andrew has always succeeded scholastically, but has been challenged socially.

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**Melanie Lutz,
Michael's daughter
and Andrew's sister,
began the family's
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IMAI.**

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Michael made the calls. He says that when informed of Andrew's diagnosis some instructors were hesitant and some actually refused. McElroy Laoshi did neither and the two were on the mat at Water Tiger for the first time in November 2014.

Andrew tells us that he greatly enjoys his time on the mat, as well as his practice at home. He said there were challenges at first with concentration, but that his concentration strengthened as he gained more confidence. He says he's also seen his concentration at work improve. Andrew is currently interning at the Medford Multicare Center through a BOCES program, Project Search, which will give him training in various aspects of hospital / healthcare operation. He's presently working in recreation and interacts with the residents in exercise, crafts, transport, and mail and paper delivery.

Michael believes the focus Andrew has developed with Water Tiger is serving him well: "When we teach ourselves to focus, we open up the channels for greater inner growth. Kind of once the ball starts rolling it keeps on rolling and gaining momentum."

As for himself, Michael admits that he didn't realize how tense he was until he stepped onto our mat. He also discovered an issue with his shoulder that had previously gone unnoticed and is now being treated. He feels that letting go remains a work-in-progress and that he's learned to replace "will try" with "will achieve".

Both of the "Lutz boys" — as McElroy Laoshi calls them — are very busy off the mat. Michael actually holds down two jobs that add up to 80 hours a week! He's a maintenance supervisor for USPS and a senior design engineer for American Technical Ceramics in Huntington. He also is a certified coach with Special Olympics and coaches both bowling and golf. We're not sure if it's a direct result of his father's coaching, but Andrew has accumulated 15 gold, six silver, and two bronze medals for Special Olympics golf and bowling!



Father and son time on the mat with Michael (R in white) and Andrew (L in black).

