

# AGELESS



Aikido student Ida Ansell (right) takes down Aviv Goldsmith, her instructor, at the Rowser Building in Stafford. Photos by AMY FLOWERS UMBLE / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

## STAFFORD SENIORS LEARN MARTIAL ARTS

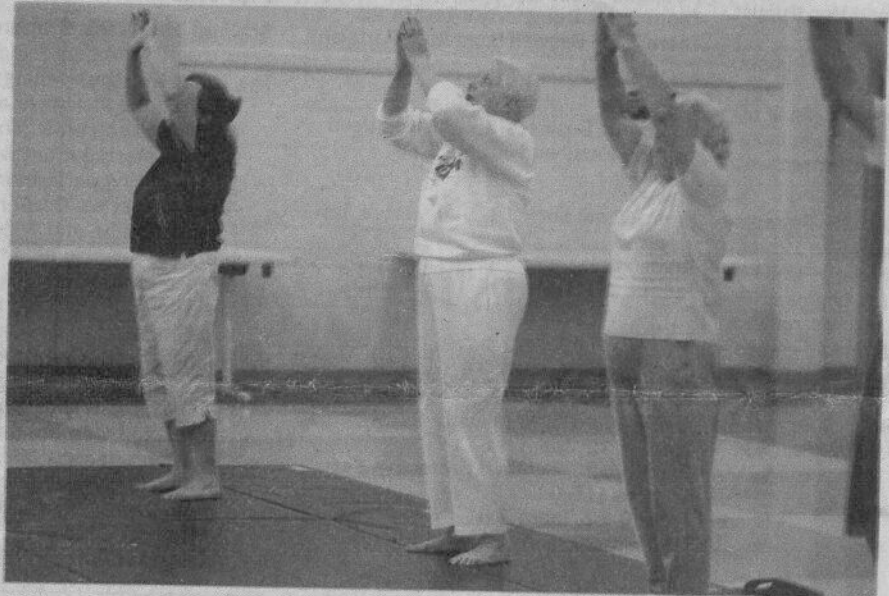
By JODI BIZAR  
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When most people think of martial artists, they usually visualize someone young, someone who looks like Bruce Lee.

But those who've taken a trip to the Rowser Building on U.S. 1 in Stafford County might conceptualize a different-looking martial artist, because they might have seen the senior citizens doing aikido.

Aikido is a Japanese martial art that dates back a little over 50 years.

Ida Ansell, 82, who lives in Park



After class, Kate Logan (from left), Ida Ansell and Christine Doughty perform stretching exercises.

## **IDA:** *Stafford seniors enjoy martial arts in aikido classes*

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Ridge, heard the classes were being offered, and has been taking them once a week for four months.

Two other seniors are in the class, as well.

The instructor, Aviv Goldsmith, says aikido is a relatively new martial art. He said it is a self-defense technique that focuses on defending oneself but not hurting others.

"It focuses on compassion, even of the attacker," Goldsmith said.

He said the county's Parks and Recreation Department started offering the class in January, and many seniors have tried it.

Goldsmith said the only alteration they've made to the class to accommodate the seniors is to reduce lessons in which participants might fall.

"We don't want to risk anybody falling and injuring themselves," he said.

But the participants practice aikido forms and even learn some Japanese.

"It's great," Ansell said. "[The instructors] never get impatient with us. Its ultimate goal is to improve mental and physical power, and produce fluid functional movements that help coordination and reflexes."

As with other martial arts, there are levels in aikido, but Ansell isn't too optimistic about how far she'll advance. Goldsmith thinks otherwise. "Oh, she's quite strong, and she can defend herself," he said.

Keeping fit is not new for Ansell. She does water aerobics regularly.

"I like to keep busy," she said.

Ansell has lived in Stafford for about 25 years, and for the past 15 years has been volunteering regularly for the county. Usually she works the front desk in the administration building, answering phones and questions.

"I just go wherever they need me," she said.

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