

# The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award



## Yoshitaka Kinjo

Lethbridge, Alberta

Lethbridge resident Yoshitaka Kinjo has dedicated his life to the discipline of karate, instilling a love for it in countless of his fellow citizens. In his many years as a teacher, volunteer and leader, he has achieved world-class status, holding a 9<sup>th</sup> degree black belt, a skill he delights in passing on to his students.



Yoshitaka teaches karate as an art form, encompassing much more than the physical demands of punching, blocking and perfecting katas. "The martial aspect can be taught and learned by most individuals, but rarely is the art form passed down to those who sometimes need it the most," says Margaret Takahashi, who nominated Yoshitaka for the Caring Canadian Award. "Yoshitaka's technique emphasizes respect, tolerance and awareness of body and mind."

Important as this is, Yoshitaka does more than just teach karate. He uses it as well to help people, especially those with disabilities, improve their lives, placing a high importance on the non-physical attributes of the art such as endurance and concentration. One of his most significant contributions has been his ability to help those suffering from debilitating illness. He has changed the quality of life for individuals suffering from fibromyalgia, asthma, diabetes, stroke, depression and even acute paralysis, by improving flexibility and strengthening mind and body. "One young man who was paralyzed is now able to walk with a walker and drive and has returned to his studies at college," says Ms. Takahashi.

Yoshitaka is also strongly committed to creating cross cultural awareness and friendship between Canadians and Japanese, using karate as a bridge to give people from both countries the chance to experience each other's culture. Born in Okinawa, Japan, Yoshitaka came to Canada in 1971 as part of a cultural exchange program. Through karate, he has helped establish a student exchange program and has taken his students to Japan to stay at the head dojo in Naha City, Okinawa. He has worked hard to create a

'Friendship City' relationship between Lethbridge, Alberta and Haebura, Okinawa, and has arranged tours for karate students and teachers and business people from Japan.

***"Yoshitaka is a humble man of honesty and integrity, a man of simple means, and a man with a deep desire to help his fellow man."***

**Margaret Takahashi, nominator**

In recognition of his leadership and dedication, Yoshitaka received the Alberta Centennial Medal from the Government of Alberta in 2005 and an Honourary Doctorate from the University of Lethbridge in 2004.

"Yoshitaka is a humble man of honesty and integrity, a man of simple means, and a man with a deep desire to help his fellow man," adds Ms. Takahashi. "He is a teacher of karate, a teacher of cultures and a role model to many in building relationships to enhance our community, our province and our country."



The Caring Canadian Award was presented to Yoshitaka Kinjo on April 17, 2012, at Rideau Hall. Sgt Ronald Duchesne 2012 © Rideau Hall