

TUNZ CONGRATULATES JOSS INGRAM



The Taekwondo Union of New Zealand has its first taekwondo master who is legally blind - Master Joss Ingram

Many people in the taekwondo community (especially in the South Island) know who Joss Ingram is.

19 years ago, Joss was sitting at her desk at work when half her world suddenly disappeared. Fearing the worst and with a one year old baby to look after, she was referred to a specialist who told her she had developed Leber Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON), a rare hereditary form of blindness.

LHON affects the nerves at the back of the eyes damaging the central vision. Joss describes it as like having scrunched up glad wrap in front of her eyes. Unable to see anything directly in front of her, Joss relies on her peripheral vision.

With help from the Blind Foundation, Joss bravely faced her sight loss and found new strength to achieve amazing things. "I thought that I could either let my blindness defeat me, or I could overcome it. So I decided to fight." And fight she did.

Losing your eyesight doesn't mean losing your independence. In 2008 she began taekwondo after joining in a parent's night at her children's taekwondo club. Joss admits it was a battle for her to master the sport, but after five years of rigorous training she achieved her 1st Dan black belt. Two weeks prior to her 1st Dan grading Joss broke a toe and she said that at her grading "some of the kicks hurt a bit".

Joss loves competing in poomsae, and has had much success. But she has to ask the judges to give verbal instructions as she cannot see the hand signals. However, there is an upside to being blind, "I can't see the judges or the crowd and this keeps the nerves away".

Joss is not completely blind and she is able to do most things, but it takes a bit longer. She is able to read a book or watch a DVD with the aid of a magnifying monitor.

Achieving 1st Dan wasn't enough. Joss continued her taekwondo journey and in December 2020 she successfully graded to 4th Dan making her TUNZ's first blind Master. Not only that, some people who attended the grading struggled to believe they were watching a woman who is 50 years old, as her performance was of such a high standard.

So where to from here? Joss has always wanted to judge poomsae, and now with new technology becoming available this may actually be possible. Watch this space!

Congratulations Master Joss Ingram, you are an inspiration to us all.

Joss is also a TUNZ Poomsae Director.



Joss Ingram at the end of her 4th dan grading with her son Jak who was her grading partner.