

Five years ago, for the first time in Seido history, [Kaicho T. Nakamura](#) and [Nidaime A. Nakamura](#) promoted five senior women karateka to the rank of Sei Shihan (6th Dan).



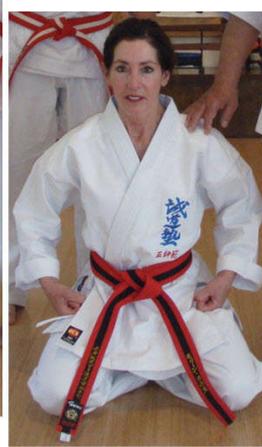
Sei Shihan Sandi



Sei Shihan Michelle



Sei Shihan Judy



Sei Shihan Maureen



Sei Shihan Nancy

In honor of Women's History Month, we are putting a spotlight on those incredible women who helped paved the way for future Seido female karatekas.

Each week in March you can read about one of these females, where they began, and their incredible karate journey thus far.

Meet Sei Shihan Michelle Cuttino. She ran the Central Queens YMCA branch and sadly passed away in 2015.

Sei Shihan Eric, her dear friend and colleague, has written some words on her behalf:

Sei Shihan Michelle Cuttino was one of our fearless woman warriors, a true Karateka with a non-quitting spirit. In 1976, Sei Shihan Michelle was studying judo at the Central Queens YMCA. She stopped to watch our karate class one evening. She liked what she saw, and joined the next session. She became a black belt in 1979. Her strong skills made her the perfect candidate to represent the women of the Seido Karate Organization.

As a teacher she always taught five principles to surviving in the streets. These were the five "A"s--be Aware, be Alert, have Attitude to let people know you are the wrong person to mess with, Avoid a confrontation if you can, and Attack if you can't!

Sei Shihan Michelle was always an advocate for women's rights. If she could pass on a message today she would say "Let your voice be heard." You would hear her voice when she walked into the dojo with a loud OSU! There would be no mistaking she was there. This command she had with her voice was not just used for loud kiais and osu! It was to say, be empowered, especially as a woman and fight, fight, fight, for all that must be fought for. In today's world, with the continued injustice to women in the work place, Sei Shihan Michelle would have been first in line to support and be a voice for every woman in the ME TOO movement, and would also be in the fight for equal pay. She is an inspiration for all women to find your voice and keep changing your world to one that stands for equality and justice for ALL!

