Martial arts event hosted by YMCA

Program showcases course that teaches self-defense to city kids

BY GREG CALDWELL Correspondent

Steve Kirby used lightning fast movement and a quick flick of his wrist and the top of the liquor bottle was left lying on the ground without a drop spilling on to the floor. This is one of many highlights at the second annual taekwondo exhibition at the Lancaster YMCA Saturday afternoon.

Kirby, a fifth-degree black belt and master of martial arts, who has been involved in the sport for more than 25 years, displayed a variety of amazing breaks to the crowd of more than 100 students and parents.

Lancaster mayor Rick Grav was also in attendance to witness the event. Taekwondo is characterized by fast, high spinning kicks. This was the early part of the show, which featured the extensive break tests that can be done in the sport. The afternoon session featured a taekwondo tournament, and involved many local children showing off moves and skills.

Some of the items Kirhy

feet included a baseball bat, two-by-four boards hanging from a harness, bricks and a set of six blocks piled on top of each other.

Kirby's son, a holder of a black belt himself, and others holding higher level belts, also performed a variety of breaks, often shattering held them in place.

done to highlight the Thursday night martial arts pro-City children by Kirby and his assistants as a way for fense and fly through life.

"Taekwondo gives people a chance to lift off the ground. The sport focuses on individual accomplishment and gives participants a better sense of confidence and selfesteem," Kirby said.

also offered by Kirby's staff be left to professionals. at other YMCA's throughout

means there is no long-term young white belt taekwondo commitment, Tom Baugh- students sitting on the floor in man, Associate Executive Director for the Lancaster Y, explained.

program inexpensive. We ran this show last year and it helped us increase our numbers for the program. The boards while someone else children and parents get to see how the masters do in This demonstration was the sport and it gives them a chance to dream of reaching that level themselves," gram offered to Lancaster Baughman said. "The program gives kids the confidence to use this knowledge them to learn about self-de- of the sport for self-defense someday in life."

Kirby laughed and joked as he attempted the variety of stunts, but did warn the crowd not to attempt any of them at home. When he broke the bottle, there was a jagged piece sticking up, one of the The Lancaster program is reasons why the stunts should

"These are very dangercentral Pennsylvania. The ous. I have 25 years of experiprogram costs \$5 a night per ence that give me the authorstudent, with a \$15 registra- ity to try these tricks for you

broke by using his hands and tion fee, but the weekly fee today," Baughman said to the front of him.

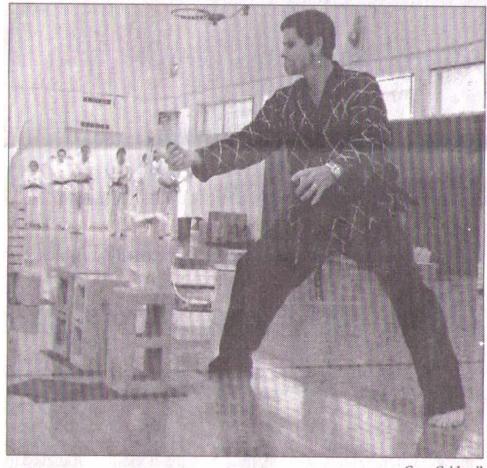
Kirby thanked Gray and Baughman for starting this "We wanted to keep this program and supporting his vision of teaching the children about self-defense in his Safe Kids campaign.

Kirby's staff spends much of the year distributing fliers in schools throughout the area about gun and weapon avoidance.

He also talked about his after-school program, where children ages five and older can come learn the sport and stay off the streets in the afternoons.

"This exhibition is a great way to bring the community together to celebrate the sport and the safe kids' initia-, tive," Kirby said.

Mayor Gray said the sport has an interesting level of discipline for people of all ages. "To say this demonstration was impressive is an understatement. It is very appropriate for Lancaster that Steve is teaching these kids



Steve Kirby demonstrates his martial arts expertise by separating the top from the rest of a bottle at the second annual taekwondo exhibition held at the Lancaster YMCA.

weapons."

The afternoon featured and Tyler Griffin. taekwondo students in a tourthe event were: Israeli Colon, Merally Santiago, Victor Guzman, Dave Hartman, Angelo Fuentes, Lisa Clement, Kenny Lesher and Bethany Hess.

Finishing second were: Juan Betancourt, Luis Santi-

about self-defense without ago, Briony Brundidge, Sammy Betancourt, Kyle LeFever

Third place went to Quinn nament. The local winners in Harvey, Rachel Freeman, Mark Freeman and Michael Heckman.

> Any child interested in joining the taekwondo program can show up Thursday night between 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.