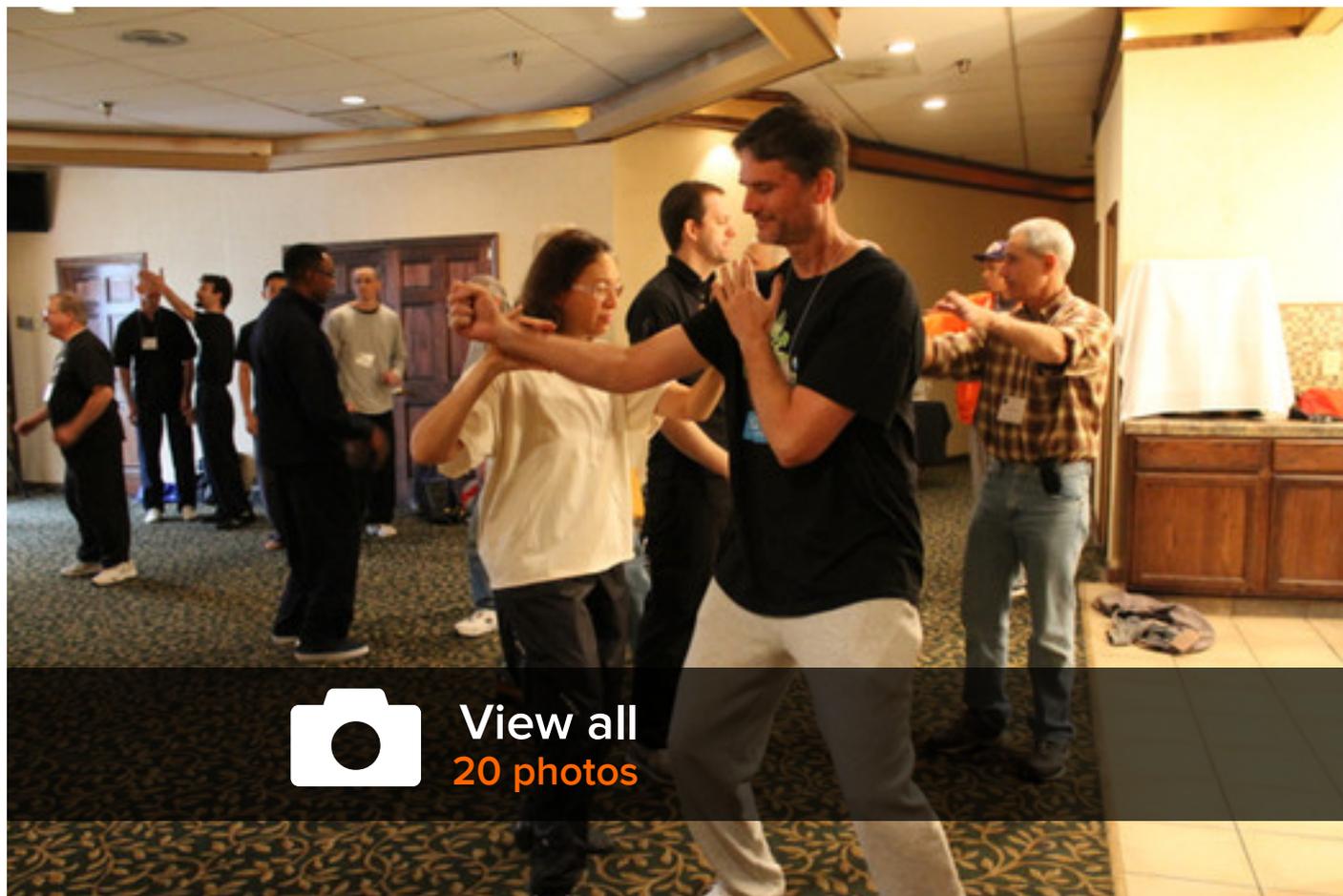


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## 2012 Tai Chi Gala was a magnet for internal martial artists

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Highlights from 2012 Tai Chi Gala

*Violet Li*

This year's [Tai Chi](#) Gala was held at the Best Western in Albany, New York. When I arrived the Gala on Friday 6/1, it was almost midnight. The hallway was quiet. In the hotel bar, a few people lounged around and stared at a TV set, which was playing an old-time [Kung Fu](#) movie. I passed the lounge and saw Dr. John Painter, Sifus Richard Clear and Dale Dugas and another person standing in a corner. From their body movements, it seemed like they were discussing Chin Na or Push Hands, but I did not want to interrupt them so I bid them a good night.



Violet Li

Early next morning, Sifu Loretta Wollering was giving her presentation on “Secrets of [Qigong](#) Sounds and Mantras”. Since it was an early session, only about 30 chairs were set up and half were taken when I entered the room. More people arrived. Ten minutes later, there were almost 50 people.

Grandmaster Jou Tsung Hwa founded the *Zhang San Feng Festival* in his private estate Tai Chi Farm in mid 1980’s. The annual Zhang San Feng Festival was free for all Tai Chi and internal martial artists to join. Everyone was allowed to share his/her knowledge and form with others. Grandmaster Jou even allowed his critics to attend the event. Sifu David Richard put together a DVD named *The Tao of Tai Chi Farm* from an old taping, which was available during the Gala. One attendee wore a T-shirt from 1997’s Zhang San Feng Festival. Sifu Loretta Wollering was Jou’s senior disciple and was responsible for the Festival management in the 90’s.

The Zhang San Feng Festival underwent some changes after Jou’s death. Sifu Wollering revived it and has been hosting the Gala to inherit the tradition and also to memorize Jou. With ever-improving programs, the Tai Chi Gala continued to grow. This year the attendance was up 15% from last year. The attendees came from different parts of the country, Canada and a couple even came up from Colombia. The majority of them were past participants and many were instructors, e.g. Barry from Texas and Ken from Boston. The program has continued to enhance itself to meet the newer needs with higher-level teachings. Of course, there were also a few introductory classes suitable for beginners. There were first-timers, one example was a couple of Sifu Richard Clear’s online students that wanted to learn from him in person.

The workshops were hosted by masters, many of whom are lineage holders, like Sifu Ken Lo of Wu Mei

Pai Kung Fu, Dr. John Painter of Li Family Baguazhang, and Sifu Ren Gang Wang of Da Chen Chuan. However, when they were not teaching, almost all of them attended other's workshops to learn something different or to help the fellow instructors out. They opened their mind and heart and freely exchanged knowledge and shared skills. This type of attitude won respect from the workshop students.

Actually, some of the workshop students were senior instructors themselves, like Sifus Lorraine Novel and Marta Banks of Asian Arts Group of Albany, New York. They went there to support the art and the Gala. They also wanted to explore different internal [martial arts](#) to expand their horizons.

Among the 23 workshops hosted by thirteen masters on June 2-3, there was a general consensus that in internal martial arts, the soft techniques are more potent than the hard ones regardless of the style. This year's Gala had nine workshops focused on combat skills with Sifu Richard Clear's "Internal Push Hands for Combat and Qi Development", Sifu William Phillips' "Yang Tai Chi Neutralizations", Sifu and Dr. John Painter's "Neutralizing Force from Tibetan Blue Heron Boxing," Sifu Dale Douglas' "Applied Self-Defense Using Circles", Sifu Ken Lo's "Dragon Movements of Wu Mei Pai Kung Fu", Dr. Painter's "The Wedge: Master Key to Defense Skills", Sifu Sharif Bey's "Secrets of Hung Gar's Tendon Development", Sifu Ren Gang Wang's "Da Cheng Quan's Push Hands" and Sifu Phillips' "Neutralizations of Sneaky Elbow Techniques". Overall, each of these workshops attracted large numbers of attendees, both men and women. Women have grown more interested in the martial aspect of the arts. It is commendable that the Gala has continued to bring the internal martial arts in their authentic forms covering a considerable breadth and depth of the arts.

In addition to the aforementioned workshops, Sifus Douglas Wong, Wollering, Jianguy Jiang, Angel Chan, Yuzhi Lu and David Ritchie provided valuable teachings on Qigong forms and internal sword forms. The House of Representatives of Massachusetts issued a proclamation to congratulate Sifu Loretta Wollering for her continued success. It was signed by Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo and State Representative Donald Wong.

See a slide show on the left for the event highlights or click the link

[http://2012taichigala.shutterfly.com/#%26emid%3dsite\\_sitecreated%26cid%3...](http://2012taichigala.shutterfly.com/#%26emid%3dsite_sitecreated%26cid%3...) here for all event photos.

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➤ **St. Louis Tai Chi community premiered "Tai Chi 24"**

- Chen Style New Frame Routine One and Two now in English
- Ken Sancier: a visionary of Qigong research
- WTCQD dedicates this year's event to Dr. Effie Chow
- Yi Jin Jing: a source of Shaolin kung fu prowess



**Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner