

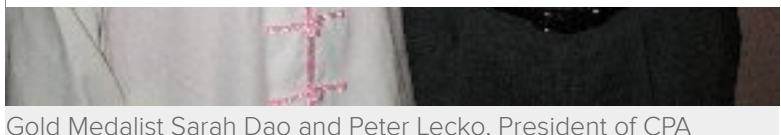
Amazing Sarah

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Sarah Dao and Mrs. Dao



To promote workforce diversity, some employees of Chinese

Gold Medalist Sarah Dao and Peter Lecko, President of CPA

heritage or just an interest in Chinese culture formed the Chinese Professional Association (CPA) as an employee interest organization. Each year, [Share Image](#) a Chinese New Year luncheon for employees, which has been a success. This year, the CPA invited Dr. Harold Law as a keynote speaker to talk about the history of Chinese immigrants in this country and also invited Sarah Dao to do a [Taichi](#) performance.

Sarah Dao, a 17-year old senior at Lafayette High School, looks younger than her age. Nevertheless, she surprised all CPA luncheon participants with her impressive Taichi skills and composure.

Ever since early childhood, Sarah has been fascinated by Jet Li's kung fu movies. Eight years ago, when Shifu (teacher) Ming Busalaki started to teach Taichi at [the St. Louis Chinese Language School](#), Sarah jumped at the opportunity to learn the Chinese [martial arts](#). Unlike most children who need to be reminded, Sarah practices Taichi every day on her own. Soon she became the darling of the St. Louis Taichi community. She was invited to demonstrate Taichi at numerous cultural events. She also volunteers her time to perform at senior homes, Family with Children from China (FCC), and various charitable organizations. When [Shifu Justin Meeham](#) saw her show, he nicknamed her a little phoenix for the [energy](#) and beauty she possessed while performing.

Sarah's appetite for learning Taichi is insatiable. At the age of 12, she persuaded her parents to send her to Shanghai, China, by herself. With the introduction of Mrs. Busalaki, Sarah was able to learn from Master Zhang Ling-Xian. She stayed with Shifu Busalaki's sister in Shanghai. Sarah is extremely independent. Every morning, she got up at 5 am, took an hour-long bus ride to a park where she learned and practiced Taichi for four hours.

Two years later, when she was 14, she went to China again. This time she participated in an International Taichi Competition, held in Hanzhou, China. It was a major Taichi tournament with 8,000 contestants from all over the world. Sarah won gold medals in the categories of [Chen Style](#) Competition Form and Broad Sword for her age group. But Sarah does not stop her learning with these accomplishments. She continues to study Taichi from Shifu Busalaki and visit Master Zhang Ling-Xian in China.

Sarah is very generous and shares her knowledge with other Taichi practitioners, most of which are adults. She helps Shifu Busalaki teach at the Center of Clayton and senior homes when Shifu is unavailable. She also backs up other Taichi instructors if they need a substitute.

Both Sarah's parents are Chinese descendents from Vietnam. Sarah is a native St. Louisian and shares the same interests and sensibilities as the normal American teenager in many ways. But her interests in the traditional Chinese culture are deep. Besides studying Taichi, she has learned hard-style Chinese martial arts, painting, calligraphy, and musical instruments – like the 5,000-year old [Gujin](#) and 2,200-year old [Pipa](#). Amazingly, she



Sarah Dao posts Nimble Dragon Descend



Sarah played Pipa in Chinese Culture Day, May 2009

has demonstrated that she has talents in those areas as well. She is extremely grateful for her parents' strong support for her diverse interests. They find good teachers for her and chauffeur her around town for classes and activities.

Two years ago, Sarah joined **the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC)** at school. She thinks that JROTC provides good lessons in life skills and good information about the aerospace industry, which she is also interested in. She has two dreams- one is acting in a Kung Fu movie with Jet Li and the other is to become an aerospace engineer. She also commented that the JROTC boot camp makes her stronger both physically and mentally.

Like a little phoenix, Sarah never stops. With busy schoolwork, ROTC training courses, extra-curricular activities, Sarah also works 10 hours a week at a restaurant during school days. Like other teenage girls, Sarah goes to movies, concerts, and parties with her friends. If asked how she has so much energy, she would tell you that Taichi helps.

Sarah Dao at AT&T



Violet Li

St. Louis Tai Chi Examiner

