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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Martial Arts is a True Art Form at Harding Fine Arts Academy Students to Compete in Italy at the World Championships

Oklahoma City- What might be a typical martial arts class in any number of private dojos is, perhaps, not so typical for an Oklahoma City public high school. Oklahoma City's Harding Fine Arts Academy's mission is to prepare high school students for college in an academically challenging, arts integrated environment. The martial arts program is no exception!

All of Harding Fine Arts Academy's elective classes are either fine or performing arts-oriented, including the martial arts elective.

Teacher Jennifer Allman, who is a black belt in karate, has taught martial arts at Harding Fine Arts Academy, an Oklahoma City charter school, since 2010. Students are enrolled in two karate classes; one for beginning to intermediate students, and one for intermediate to advanced students. The program has so far produced 3 black belts and 15 brown belts and numerous under belts.

"Some schools offer martial arts as an after-school activity, but to my knowledge we stand alone in making it available for arts credit," Allman said.

Since there are no other high school teams, Allman said, the Harding martial arts team competes against private clubs in tournaments across the state and region. "The Oklahoma Karate Association hosts ten to fourteen tournaments a year and we also go to tournaments hosted throughout the region, including an annual tournament in Missouri."

The HFAA team, whose ages range from 14 to 18, competes in a wide variety of martial arts divisions including Weapons where a kata is performed using a weapon, Sparring, CMX (Creative, Musical and eXtreme) and the Forms division which is a kata with a choreographed set of moves that are performed.



Since the program began in 2010, the students have won a total of 11 Grand Champion Trophies, 437 1st Place trophies, 308 2nd place trophies, 243 3rd place trophies and 47 OKA State Champions and runner ups.

This past July the team traveled to Orlando Florida for the 2016 International Sports Karate Association (ISKA) U.S. Open Tournament. The U.S. Open is the best-known, largest, and most prestigious open martial arts championships in the world. Over 70 teams of competitors from over 40 countries and 6 continents attended.

During this 2016 U.S. Open tournament, HFAA earned two Grand Champions awards. HFAA Sophomore, Vien Schmelzenbach won this honor in the Beginning Forms and Beginning Weapons events. First place awards went to HFAA students Emilee Harmon (Intermediate Musical), Denazia Jeffers (Intermediate Forms and Weapons), Emily Alvarez-Hamilton (Beginning Sparring), Vien Schmelzenbach (Beginning Weapons and Beginning Musical), Autumn Sutton (Beginning Forms and Beginning Class Sparring), Aye Hla (Advanced Boys Class Sparring) and Sierra Wilkinson (Advanced Girls MMA). The team also earned eight 2nd places and thirteen 3rd places at the Florida tournament. Teacher, Jennifer Allman placed second in the 18+Womens Weapons division.

Fourteen of the HFAA team members qualified to compete at the Unified World Championships in Italy, October 25th- 30th. In order to qualify for these students had to place in the top 3 in their division at the US Open.

Harding Fine Arts Academy will be hosting a "Firehawks to Italy Fundraiser Tournament" on Saturday, September 17 from 10 AM - 2 PM. Funds raised will help with their expenses. We will be giving out trophies and medals to 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners! Cost will be \$30 for competitors and \$2 for spectators. Harding Fine Arts Academy is located at 3333 N. Shartel Avenue in Oklahoma City. For more information on the tournament or if you wish to donate, please contact Jennifer Allman at jallman@hfaaokc.org.

Harding Fine Arts Academy is an Oklahoma City charter school that prepares high school students for college in an academically challenging, arts-integrated environment and has recently been named a 2015 Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

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