

## Club Profile: Suffolk County PAL Judo Club Smithtown, NY

This is a pretty old club, or a really new one, depending on how you look at it.



“We tend to be old school,” said George G. Krivosta, head sensei of Suffolk County PAL Judo Club. This is not a ‘belt factory,’ he said. “We are ‘the way’ and plan to stay ‘the way.’ Promotions are simple. Instructors track progress and when a new belt is presented, everyone else gets to throw the promoted judoka. “Kids especially like to engage in a drum roll as the head instructor throws last, sending uke into double crash mats from five to six feet up.”

Really, only the name has changed. The original club was known as the Smithtown YMCA Judo Club, founded in 1963 by John Brisbois. Classes were held at the Smithtown YMCA.

In 1991, the club almost shut down for lack of participation, but the ‘Y’ named Krivosta a volunteer program director. A couple of years later, the founder Brisbois retired, leaving Krivosta in the driver’s seat.

“That was the same year Krivosta’s daughter, Anastasia, placed at her first of many Junior National Championships. She went on to train at the US Olympic Training Center, competed at the Olympic trials and eventually became a sandan, third-degree black belt.

Just when things were looking up, the rug was pulled from under the local Y, which also was the dojo’s home. The school district athletic director “came to our rescue,” letting the club use a gymnasium for workouts. The YMCA of Long Island became a sponsor of the club but that, too, came to an end and the club was again in search of support.

Krivosta has worked with the Suffolk County Police Department for decades and last year the department became the dojo’s sponsor “and we are now the Suffolk County PAL Judo Club.” Under PAL, club dues are just \$15 a year and rent for the school is free.

We have an all-volunteer staff: George G. Krivosta, Yodan (Head Instructor) and Assistant Instructors: Anastasia M, Krivosta (Sandan), Kim Gabrielsen (Nidan), Paul J. Krivosta (Nidan). The club operates Mondays and Thursdays and has a playing space of fifty tatami.

“The only bad part is we have to put-down & pick-up our mats for each class. We have a very devoted group of parents who keep that chore workable,” said Krivosta.

