



NWMAF May 2022 Newsletter

News for Our Members, Friends, and Supporters

"Empowering women and girls to achieve personal and collective strength, safety, and well being through martial arts, healing arts, and self-defense education"

From the Chair

By Lisette Delgado-Fitzgerald, NWMAF Board Chair

Rise, everyone! We're training in-person this August! [RISE registration is open!](#)

Hi, all. Are you excited for the NWMAF 2022 Conference? This year's theme is Rise – appropriate after two years of being apart. It is also reflective of the organization, as we launch into a new decade with new ideas, new Board Members, new programs, and an eye toward the future. There is so much to catch up on.

Welcoming Board Members

First, I'd like to introduce our new Board Members. Earlier this year, we officially expanded the Board to include more detailed and deliberate positions to support our push for growth. We still have some openings available if you are interested, but, right now, I want to take a moment to welcome our newly appointed members.

Firstly, we welcome Tina Mead, who accepted her position just a few months ago as Treasurer as Cheryl VanHoosen finished out her term. We are eternally grateful for Cheryl's dedication to the organization and the amazing work she did to update all of the systems required to successfully manage the organization's finances. We know that Tina will follow in her footsteps and take us to the next level.

Next, we are happy to announce the return of Lindsey Ross back in the Marketing Coordinator position—a new position created during the Board Expansion. Her experience in social media and viral marketing has already proven to be instrumental in growing our membership and awareness of the NWMAF. Now, with it being her sole focus, we are confident that she will take us to new heights.

For the first time ever, we have a Martial Arts Coordinator in Benita Comeau, an Inclusion and Equity Coordinator in Tasha Ina Church, a Digital Coordinator in Amy Eckert, and a Vice-Chair in Thuy Rocco. While the positions are new and have specific duties, it is these amazing volunteer Board members that will create and define these positions going into the next ten years. Let's give a round of applause to these amazing women!

We still have 3 positions open and in need of love. These are: Event Coordinator, as Natalie DeMaioribus steps down, Development Coordinator whose main goal is fundraising and sponsorships, and Healing Arts Coordinator. If you or someone you know are interested in any of these positions, please reach out to us as soon as possible. Your voice is a valuable resource in the shaping of the National Women's Martial Arts Federation's future.

Rise! 2022 NWMAF Conference

This year, we are happy to move back into in-person conferences. This year, we are headed to Daemen College in Buffalo, New York, from Aug 3rd-7th, and we hope to [see you all there](#).

We are planning a Youth Program for kids 13-17 years old, hosting the annual Self Defense Certification program on Wednesday the 3rd, and finishing the Conference at the end of Super Saturday with a spectacular Closing Ceremony. We are planning additional social and specific networking times so that we can all get to know each other a little better, have time to meet those we have not had the chance to meet, and spend some down time playing games, chatting, and catching up.

We understand that there is a concern about Covid-19 safety. Daemen College has asked us to make it a Vaccine-Required event, so do not forget your vaxx cards as we cannot allow entry without them. For those with medical or religious exemptions, we will need a copy of your exemption. As an organization, we will be observing all Covid Safety requirements from the CDC.

Also, you can express your level of comfort as far as contact during training, whether open and free to work with everyone, only with your safety bubble, solo practice, or anything in-between. You know, we get to set our boundaries.

We are very excited about the work being done for this conference. There are many surprises planned, so don't miss it.

Safe Sport Partnership

This year, as a part of our return to in-person conferences and the addition of the official Youth Program, we are partnering with Safe Sport to provide Conference Instructor Safe Sport Certification prior to the conference and provide in-person Safe Sport training for all interested conference attendees.

We are also working to partner with Safe Sport and Team USA so that we can offer Athlete, Coaching, and Instructor Trainings and potentially other benefits to our member body, on an individual and affiliated school level. As the details of this partnership are finalized, we will make these resources available to you all. The health, safety, and well-being of all of our members and conference participants is foremost in our minds, and we are working hard to constantly improve our offering to that end.

There is so much more to talk about, so many things to share, but only a limited space to share them in. However, you can always keep up to date on our social media channels, by attending the open sections of our Board Meetings (held once per month), or by joining the Board or volunteering for committees. We invite you to help us make sure that the NWMAF continues to be a safe sanctuary for us and all future generations.

In health,

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News: Uzbekistan Rises! With the NWMAF

This year, the NWMAF is partnering with FHI360 and the U.S. Department of State in their Sports Diplomacy program to sponsor 12 women from Uzbekistan to obtain NWMAF Self Defense Certification and further education at the Rise! Conference.

The US Sports Diplomacy program selects candidates from underserved countries and areas around the world to come to the United States and attend conferences, special trainings, and certification programs in sports related fields. These candidates can then return to their countries and implement their learnings, elevating their own sports programs in areas such as cutting-edge training methodologies, safety, athlete well-being, and anti-abuse policies.

The NWMAF Rise! Conference has been selected for this group of amazing women and the competition for the 12 spots is fierce. The US Embassy in Uzbekistan has received hundreds of applications to obtain self defense certification.

An article and study published in 2021 noted, not only the troubling percentage of male respondents that are not opposed to domestic violence, but also the prevailing attitude that women should not divorce due to abuse, as it is preferable to save the marriage. In fact 64.4% of participants expressed that it was “worth preserving a marriage in the interest of the children.”

We hope that this will be the first of many such collaborations with FHI360 and the Sports Diplomacy program with the State Department.

If you are interested in volunteering to help guide our Uzbekistani friends during the conference, please contact events@nwmaf.org. They will be attending with 4 interpreters and 2 FHI360 staff.

If you would like to help fund programs like these directly through the NWMAF, make a donation and earmark it for international/ domestic scholarship programs.

Healing Arts Poll: Results

Thanks so much to everyone who completed the survey about the status of Healing Arts as a pillar of the Federation. We had 70 responses, with **66% voting to retain Healing Arts** as a pillar, represented in our logo, messaging, and programming. If Healing Arts is important to you, please consider running for the open Healing Arts Coordinator Board position--either as a full Board member or as a Volunteer At Large.

Rise 2022 Spotlight Presentations

For this year's conference, we have invited two very special guests. One is our invited martial arts guest, Michelle Manu, and one is our featured member, Thuy Rocco. These are two amazing warriors, whose stories, art and instruction will captivate, fascinate and inspire. They are not to be missed! Please read on to get a conference preview, and if you have been putting off doing your registration, now is the time to act!

<https://www.nwmaf-conference.org/rise-registration/>

For those who have already registered and/or volunteered to help, thank you so much! Having good early registration numbers helps us to prepare, and without volunteers this event could not happen.

Thuy Rocco is this year's featured member. Mrs. Thuy Rocco is the author of *The Last Surviving Child: A Memoir*, which contains short stories and poems about surviving as a child refugee from the Vietnam War.

She has spent 20 years teaching and training in foreign languages, English, cultural and diversity training; and is currently a consultant in technology and workflow management. She has been a student of Kung fu, Muay Thai, Tai Chi, and now is a 5th Dan master in Taekwondo through the Kukkiwon and the World Taekwondo organization.



Thuy and her husband founded a nonprofit: Taekwondo Anywhere, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization utilizing Tae Kwon Do to promote health, fitness, and life skills to all socio-economic communities. She has been teaching and training in Taekwondo since 2006. You may learn more about Thuy at: <https://www.thuyrocco.com/>

This year's special invited martial arts guest is Kumu Michelle Manu. She is truly a martial legend and we are honored and thrilled to be hosting her virtually this year, and hopefully in-person in 2023! For those unfamiliar with Michelle, some of her accomplishments include:

- 10th degree black belt and Kumu (teacher) of the rarely seen ancient Hawaiian Combat Art, Lua
- The only woman thus far to be given the designation of "Knight Commander" of the Royal Order of Kamehameha I
- 2016 Martial Arts History Museum Hall of Fame inductee for altering the course of history of martial arts
- Expert wood weapons maker
- Professional Polynesian Hula dancer and choreographer
- Juris Doctorate from George Washington University
- Senior executive leadership credentials from Harvard Business School



- Master's in Metaphysical Science
- 2022 PhD Candidate

Michelle will be presenting her art, and participants will learn and move in both Ku (masculine/external/straight) and Hina (feminine/internal/waved) energies. This will include proper physical structure, and the cut off of and cooperation of one's upper and lower body. The Hawaiian Hula dance will be used to emulate animal and nature elements, which are converted into the battlefield martial and self-defense movements. Her class will prove that the "girls" activity of dance is actually an advantage as we accept our naturally nalu (wave) movements that are surreptitiously devastating when mastered.

You may read and watch more about Michelle at her website: <https://michellemanu.com/>

It is going to be an amazing time to re-connect and rise together, and I cannot wait to meet all of you in August!

Benita Comeau

NWMAF Interim Events Coordinator & Martial Arts Coordinator

Member Submission

Ranking Up

A poem by Lindsey Ross

White

The ultrasound of Gummy Bear, the baby I miscarried.

Yellow

Corn on the cob. I had braces and he cut the corn off the cob in front of his family. The man cared for me.

Orange

Madison's curly hair and those two-sizes-too-small shoes that lit up.

Green

Ireland, when he became the biggest man in the pub while defending me. He stood up to my brother and introduced me to the definition of a good man.

Purple

Margaritas we drank when we gave ourselves the permission to thrive in this life.

Blue

I sat on the toilet staring at that little blue cross. I was pregnant. I wanted that little blue cross to jump off the piss stick and choke the life out of me. How could I have let this happen? I wanted to die.

Brown

The door I slammed for the last time leaving my abuser.

Red

I have seen nothing but red before. Eyes glossing over and adrenaline taking control of my body and brain completely. Kill or be killed. Nothing but red. I fought him, enough to pin him down with my fist waiting in the air. Kill or be killed.

Black

The leather jacket I wore to remind myself that I will decide where my life will go from here.

Upcoming Board Meeting

The next NWMAF Board meeting is **June 5**. Board meetings typically take place on Sundays at 2 pm central time, via an online meeting site. If you are a member interested in attending, contact Liz at chair@nwmaf.org, and she will provide you with log-in instructions.

Call for Submissions

Have News and Information to Share with the NWMAF Community?

We welcome your submissions of news, opinion pieces, fiction, or other writing related to our practices of martial arts, healing arts, and self-defense. We also accept art, photos, and comics! Our editorial board reserves the right to edit for space or content considerations. The deadline for the next issue is **June 15**, and will be approximately every four to six weeks thereafter. Send contributions to secretary@nwmaf.org.