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Arvada’s Own Martial Archery

If your son or daughter, or maybe you or your spouse, have been inspired to take up a bow and quiver due to the recent popularity of archery in the media, you’re in luck. Arvada and Wheat Ridge residents have a unique opportunity that doesn’t exist anywhere else in the Denver metro area. **Golden Archery**, just west of Kipling and I-70, offers a unique blend of athletic disciplines that allow students to not only learn to shoot with speed and accuracy, but to supplement shooting with a whole range of athletic conditioning, weaponry and survival skills.*Martial archery,* developed by **Golden Archery** founder Zach Johnson, draws on the discipline, focus and conditioning of martial to make the student both a better archer and a better martial artist. While a few instructors in other parts of the state have picked up Zach Johnson’s techniques, you will not find martial archery being taught anywhere else in the Denver metro area.

“There is a measure of conditioning in martial arts that most archers don’t achieve,” explains Johnson, who has trained in everything from Chinese Kung Fu, to Tai Chi, Taekwondo and Karate, Jujitsu and wrestling. “We want to pursue excellence by enhancing the focus and intensity of one skill with the other.”

While athletes can learn to shoot and compete with a team or league at a number of ranges around the city, **Golden Archery** differs from the typical range in the way they de-emphasize competition and approach both the sport and the athlete holistically. Zach encourages athletes to consider their sport as a life-long *practice.* They achieve the same satisfaction of participating in a sport and being part of a team or community of athletesbut the product isn’t necessarily a score or a medal. The *practice is* the product.

That’s not to say that students don’t have the opportunity to advance and compete. Golden Archery holds regular in-house tournaments and competes annually at the national Hanmadang tournament, where they took gold medals in every age division and the men and women’s overall trophies in 2016. Students start formal training with shooting from stillness and increase complexity by introducing movement, balance, obstacles and additional combat skills. As they move up in rank they can add on classes in hand-to-hand combat and multiple kinds of weaponry (short sticks, staff fighting, knife throwing, and traditional Japanese Aikido sword skills), bush craft (shelter-building, fire-starting, edible plants, survival skills…), and conditioning. Golden Archery has recently added the Throwing Club class, where athletes can throw knives, spears and axes in a safe, supervised and instructive environment. That’s right people! Where else can you learn to throw an ax?

Levi Weatherall, a junior at Arvada West High School, can be found at Golden Archery several days of the week. “Martial Archery is like an extreme sport in how it lets you become the characters you read about in books: Legolas (Lord of the Rings), Will Treaty (The Ranger’s Apprentice series), or even Rambo,” exudes Weatherall. “It’s the idea of the ultimate soldier. It’s not someone who just shoots arrows into a target but someone who is an all-around athlete and can survive and fight with a whole range of knowledge, skills and weapons.”

In addition to their regular weekly class schedule, Golden Archery hosts a variety of individual workshops, and this summer for the first time will offer a selection of **single or multiple-day summer camps**. Find more information or register at martialarchery.com.