



## Perris News

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### Shozen Karate Kids Win National Championships



Perris City Councilman Al Landers presents certificates to students from the Shozen Martial Arts Academy. Students standing behind him are (left to right) Dana Cole Jr., Anthony Jackson, Timothy Focht and Ronald Jackson. Team supporter Regina Morales and Sensei Maria Evans are on the right.

The students from Shozen Martial Arts Academy in Perris didn't expect to win top prize when they traveled to a national karate competition recently.

They surprised themselves.

Four students, ranging in age from 9 to 14, were honored Tuesday by the Perris City Council this week after returning from Albuquerque, New Mexico, with national championships in Okinawan "Shuri-Ryu" style karate.

The four, Anthony and Ronald Jackson, Dana Cole Jr. and Timothy Focht, received certificates of appreciation from Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilman Al Landers. The certificates praised the young masters for their "outstanding accomplishments and commitment to training, dedication and hard work in the comprehensive karate system of martial arts."

Instructor Maria Evans beamed as she accepted her own accolades from the Council dais. She called the students in Perris some of the best she's worked with in 45 years as a karate "sensei" or master instructor.

"These youngsters are learning to perform under pressure," Evans said. "When they grow up you are going to find them working as police officers or firefighters or sitting on the City Council. You know they are doing the right thing."

Many of her students come from underprivileged families but that doesn't prevent them from spending up to two hours a day working on their moves and form at home or in their studio at Palms Elementary School.

They work on their fighting skills, although the idea behind martial arts isn't to pulverize people but to gain inner strength, coordination and discipline. And they work to master their techniques with weapons like nunchuks and staffs, which is essential if they are to advance and improve their martial arts skills. All three disciplines were part of the competition in Albuquerque, which drew 500 students from all over the U.S.

"It's a great honor to be a national championship and I am very proud," said Ronald Jackson, 9, who attends Nan Sanders Elementary School. "I've learned to defend myself and I know that hard work pays off. I feel really, really happy."

Timothy, 14, who attends Heritage High School, said preparing for the national competition was "one of the hardest things I've ever done."

"This shows I am a person who can accomplish things," he said. "I know I've made my family proud. It's a big deal."



Instructor Maria Evans thanks the City for its support of her students.