

# Bernards woman masters health technique

## Former Olympian hosts weekly demonstrations of Seimei, a spiritual Japanese healing art

By **MICHELLE REGAN**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A growing number of local residents believe that Nicola Bertolo of Bernards Township has the magic touch. However, Bertolo would disagree as she practices Seimei (pronounced "say may"), a non-touch Japanese healing art.

Bertolo, one of about 15 Seimei masters in the world and the only one outside of Japan, has the ability to relieve pain without ever having to lay a finger on a person.

"It's an amazing healing technique that really can take away pain and stress," Bertolo explained. "It's a healing art because we're taking away pain without touching you, so it's able to transcend physical laws of time, space and mass."

Considered to be a contemporary form of Buddhism, practitioners move energy around a person's body by moving their hands along the person's side about 15 to 20 inches from the body. They move their hands to an area of the body where pain originates, and then they will feel certain sensations in their hands when the work in that area has been completed. If a person still has pain, the practitioner will search more until the pain has been alleviated.

"Every Monday night, myself and a number of Seimei practitioners meet at the Basking Ridge Community Center on Maple Av-

enue from 7 to 8 o'clock and we give demonstrations," said Bertolo. "What we really want to do is, anyone who has pain, we want them to come in and show them we can give them relief. The results can be instantaneous. A demonstration can last from a few seconds to 10 minutes and it will offer relief from pain."

"The pain may come back or it may not, depending on where it's coming from," said Bertolo. "With a bruise, recent injury or something fresh, the pain usually goes away forever. With chronic pain, the demonstration can make it go away and stay away for minutes or days, but it can come back. For that type of pain, we recommend a Seimei session during which the practitioner looks for the area where the pain is coming from. They identify that area and work on it. Most of the practitioners do sessions out of their homes."

### 'Spiritual Aspect'

"One of the amazing things about doing Seimei is that while I am working on someone else, it simultaneously takes away any physical pain I have in my body as well," said Bertolo. "It has a real spiritual aspect to it."

Toshihisa Hiraki founded Seimei about 25 years ago. Bertolo said he used the vital life force that exists within every human being.

"He was able to use it from birth and couldn't understand how no one else was using it. He

began a search to find out why, and in doing so, he began the practice. He spent his life developing a curriculum on how people can become aware of this whole other world. He started off by taking away people's pain and they became so interested that they asked him to teach them. That's how it all started."

Today, there are an estimated 20,000 practitioners in Japan. That number has grown as the people who seek out practitioners chose to become practitioners themselves as a result of their experiences. That proved to be the case for Bertolo.

Bertolo left her native New Zealand for Japan at 17 as an exchange student. Being fluent in Japanese and English, she worked as an interpreter in Japan and trained in the sport of judo after finishing school. She went on to become an international judo player who participated in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, and placed 11th in the world.

While training for the Olympics, Bertolo had injured her back during the intensive training but continued to train 10 hours a day every day despite the pain. Following the Olympics



**NICOLA BERTOLO**

and spurred on by her personal quest to overcome her back pain, Bertolo hoped to pursue a career in Japanese acupuncture.

"A friend took me to a Seimei demonstration and one of the practitioners took away my back pain without ever touching me," said Bertolo. "She was a student. She was probably only 17 and she took away my pain. It was truly amazing and I was blown away. After I came back from the Olympics, I decided I wanted to do this with my life."

Because of her proficiency in English, Bertolo was able to train at the main temple in Saga, Japan.

"They paid a lot of attention to me and I was able to quickly go up the ranks," said Bertolo. "It was pretty intensive training but I loved it and I was used to training hard from judo. I've been doing Seimei now for 15 years. I still go back to Japan four times a year for training. Now I'm teaching people here and I take some of them with me to Japan for training too."

There are about 85 Seimei practitioners in the United States right now, all of which have been and continue to be trained by Bertolo. She began the U.S. movement by giving Seimei demonstrations in Pompton Lakes in sessions in her home. For the past year, Bertolo has been holding demonstrations in Bernards Township in addition to Pompton Lakes.

One of the practitioners who

Bertolo trained has left New Jersey to bring the art to Santa Fe, N.M. Bertolo now spends time in Santa Fe as well.

Anyone can benefit from Seimei, according to Bertolo. Because of the non-contact nature of the art, it can be done to newborn babies in discomfort, pregnant women to relieve back pain and swelling of the feet, the elderly for arthritis, cancer patients for pain, and even animals.

"I have two black labs and one put his hip out and couldn't walk," said Bertolo. "I gave him three sessions and he's walking around just fine."

Bertolo founded the Seimei Spiritual Foundation, a non-profit organization devoted to spreading Seimei around the world.

"As practitioners and members of the Spiritual Foundation, we give free demonstrations everywhere we can go," said Bertolo. "Then we hope people will come to one of our Seimei nights in Basking Ridge or Pompton Lakes. If people want, they can then arrange a session with one of the practitioners. We just want to spread the word. Once people know about it and try it, they're generally hooked."

Richard Rodman, an investment advisor from Westfield, did just that and now he is a Seimei practitioner.

"About four or five years ago, I was under a lot of stress and had difficulty sleeping and had chronic back and right hip problems," Rodman began. "The med-

ical profession labeled it arthritis and treated me with drugs, which I knew I didn't want to spend the rest of my life taking. I met Nicola and right out of the box the sleep problems went away and the back and hip pain was reduced. Although it flares up from time to time, the urgency and intensity are I would say, 80 percent gone."

Rodman received Seimei healings from Bertolo for about a year before deciding to take the Seimei courses, which Bertolo gives three times a year, to become a practitioner.

"Working with Nicola is great," said Rodman. "This is a discipline which you don't need to have talent for; you just need to know how to do it. Nicola is a great teacher, although a bit of a taskmaster."

Like Bertolo, Rodman believes that because of the immediate results, once people experience it, they will embrace it.

"Bring your pain and everything you know with pain, and just show up," said Bertolo. "It's as easy as that and I know you'll come back."

Seimei demonstrations on Monday nights at the Bernards Township Community Center in Basking Ridge are free, but donations are accepted. Individual session costs vary depending on the practitioner.

For further information, visit the Seimei Spiritual Foundation's Web site at [www.saymay.org](http://www.saymay.org).