

## CURRENT VWMA / HAVPS INSTRUCTORS:

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**Janet Aalfs** / Head Instructor: Modern Arnis, Karate, Self-defense, Internal Arts. Leaders Council.

Sensei Janet Aalfs, head instructor and director of VWMA / HAVPS since 1982, is a 7th degree black belt in Shuri-ryu Okinawan Karate, a 5<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Filipino Modern Arnis, a nationally certified self-defense teacher, and an instructor of Jian Mei Internal Martial Arts. Janet is a founding member, former Chair and Secretary, founder and current member of the NWMAF Anti-Racism Council, and leader since 1979 within the National Women's Martial Arts Federation. An accomplished poet, Janet is the former Poet Laureate of Northampton, MA. Her writing has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. She has had several books of poems published, her most recent entitled *Bird of a Thousand Eyes* (Levellers Press, 2010). A community-builder and feminist social justice activist, Janet teaches and performs weavings of poetry and martial arts dance locally, nationally, and internationally.



**Cynthia Bleil** / Beginner & up Karate, Self-Defense.

In January of 1993 Cynthia bowed in to her first martial arts class as a white belt at VWMA. She was 31 years old. As of May 1, 2010, she is the proud bearer of a Black Belt in Shuri Ryu karate. She also trains in and teaches Modern Arnis and Self-defense. She holds a Masters Degree in Education and had a long career nurturing and teaching young children and their families. Currently she works full time for a non-profit builder of affordable zero net energy homes and part time in an antiquarian and scholarly used book store. Cynthia enjoys folding origami cranes in all sizes and colors and stringing them with pearls



**Meg Brown** / Beginner & up Karate, Self-Defense and Modern Arnis

Sensei / Gura Meg Brown started her martial arts career in 2001. She had brought her daughter to class at VWMA because she had difficulty speaking clearly and she didn't want her to be teased at school. The instructors invited her to join in and Meg had so much fun that she's here to stay. Women have a lot of different roles in their lives - Mom, wife, career work, volunteer- but at the dojo, Meg can be 100% Meg. She has disciplined herself to grow at a consistent rate through small bits of learning and dedicated practice. She received her black belt in Shuri-ryu Okinawan Karate and also Filipino Modern Arnis November 20, 2010. Meg's favorite thing about training is that she can keep on learning, and her favorite thing about teaching is her ability to simplify techniques and relay them to her students. Meg is a nationally certified dental assistant. She also volunteers her time teaching people how to get out of debt financially -- believe it or not, in a fun and exciting way. She plays golf with her patient husband, and they make their home with their two martial arts daughters and shih tzu dog.



**Erinn Ervin** / Beginner & up Karate, Self-Defense. Leaders Council.

Erinn Ervin was a carpenter and cook for 25 years. She is now a high school math teacher for youth at risk in Western Massachusetts. She has been training in Shuri Ryu Karate for 13 years, and got her black belt for her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. She is now a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Black Belt.



**Rochelle Friedman** / Beginner & up Karate, Self-defense

Rochelle Sensei is a second degree Black Belt who is passionate about martial arts training because it gives us an opportunity to move, have fun, connect with others, stay healthy, and honor tradition. An accomplished choral singer, weaver and storyteller, she loves stories of the ancient ones. She lights up when she talks about teaching, noting that it allows her to review, relive, and reinforce skills. "It does my heart good to share with others how to overcome obstacles." Rochelle is Nurse who loves being there for the kids in her work. Training is a Friedman family affair, as she is joined at VWMA/HAVPS by husband Harvey and daughter Tera.



**Dorian Gregory** / Elements of Partner Play

Dorian practices and teaches the Yang Style Full Traditional Curriculum with a strong focus on core principles, form and partner work and the thirteen powers/postures. A member of VWMA / HAVPS since 1989, Dorian has a master's degree in philosophy, her CPA, and advanced-degree black belts in Shuri Ryu Karate and Modern Arnis. Dorian is also a certified self-defense instructor through the National Women's Martial Arts Federation. Whatever style of martial arts you practice, her goal is to share some of the principles and wonders of the martial arts. Elements of Partner Play includes solo work and partner exercises, all designed to deepen comfort and improve skillful response. Dorian is also at her Tai Chi studio in Sunderland, where she offers on-going Tai Chi classes, regular seminars and is available for private lessons. For more information visit [www.taichidorian.com](http://www.taichidorian.com).

**Jillian Hanson** / Intermediate Karate, Self Defense

Jillian began training at VWMA in 1997 (with her one-year old daughter in tow) and was promoted to Shodan (1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt) in May of 2007 and her Ni Dan (2<sup>nd</sup> degree) in June 2011. Jillian loves that, even after 14 years, her training continues to challenge her on a variety of different levels - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. As a teacher, she loves sharing insight and growing with her students. Jillian is a professional life coach specializing in creativity and wellness coaching for transformational change. She also loves to run, hike, meditate, write and hang out with her now 15 year old (purple-belt) daughter. You can read more about her coaching practice at [www.jilliankhanson.com](http://www.jilliankhanson.com)



**Janis Totty** Power Girls, Fitness Friday, Karate, Modern Arnis, Self-defense. Leaders Council.

Janis Totty began training in martial arts in 1983. She holds a 6<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Shuri-Ryu Okinawan karate from Sensei Beth Holt, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belt in Filipino Modern Arnis from the late Grandmaster Remy A. Presas. She studied Theatre at Smith College as an Ada Comstock Scholar, and Movement Science at Westfield State College. She has a background in the non-profit sector as a violence prevention educator and has taught self-protection skills to women, teens and children in settings throughout Western Massachusetts. She has taught at both national and international women's martial arts conferences. She is currently the physical education teacher at Jackson Street Elementary School in Northampton, MA, and is working on her M.Ed in Adventure Education. Her interests include adventure and play-based curriculums; peace practice and integrative martial arts with children; poetry, memoir and essay;

Irish culture; and silent practice as witness and discipline.

sustaining, fun, manageable ways to make martial arts part of their lives.



**Sally Johnson Van Wright** / Power Girls, Modern Arnis, Fitness Friday, Karate, Self-Defense. Leaders Council.

A 5<sup>th</sup> degree Black Belt in Shuri Ryu Karate, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree Black Belt in Modern Arnis, and Certified Self-Defense Instructor, Sally has trained and taught consistently since 1987. She is also a former Chair and leader within the National Women's Martial Arts Federation. She currently co-chair's the NWMAF Anti-Racism Council. Sally loves powerful, creative movement and pursuit of enlightenment. She has practiced and trained for many years in Buddhist meditation and maintains a daily Yin Yoga practice. At her full time job, she works with incarcerated women and holds licenses in clinical social work and addictions counseling.



**Pamela Westgate** / Fitness Friday, Karate & Self-Defense. Leaders Council.

Pamela Westgate has been a member of the VWMA / HAVPS since 1992. She holds a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree Black Belt in Shuri Ryu Karate and loves teaching, partner work and kata. A scientist with advanced degrees in Biology and Engineering, and a mountain biker, she is fascinated with the physics and mechanics of power and flow. Pam is busy with a career as an environmental engineer and raising two daughters, but makes the time to be involved with this vibrant and supportive community of women and girl martial artists. She is interested in helping other busy Mom's discover