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For the kids

Local man teaches boxing to keep our youth from trouble

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ST. GEORGE - The Youth Crisis Center provides alternative activities for youth to help keep them out of trouble, and one of these activities is boxing.

Alii Alo, known as Bear, an outreach counselor for the Youth Crisis Center, teaches the teens boxing techniques. He said 15 people participate in the activity but not all at the same time.

The most Bear has in one class is two or three.

"This helps keep them out of trouble, you know," he said.

One of the people Bear trains is 15-year-old Joanna Madina.

Madina has been coming to boxing for about four months. She said she heard about it through her cousins.

"I wanted to do it because it seemed fun and I wanted to learn to fight better," she said. "It keeps me out of trouble, keeps me busy and keeps my mind off other stuff."

Because Madina is the only girl, she has no one to spar with at practice.

"It's weird practicing with guys because they go hard," she said. "More girls should come and at least try it."

Taylor Burton, 14, first heard about boxing two months ago after he was arrested for running away.

"I like it because it gets out a lot of aggression and clears your mind," he said. "I like it because it's a fun thing to do."

Danny Brown, 19, has been training with Bear for about three weeks.

"I've always liked different sports," he said. "I played football, I wrestled and people told me I should take it to the next level, and boxing was the way to do it. I started training with Bear and I've loved it ever since."

Brown said what he learned when he started boxing was it's not how you see it in the movies.

"You know your moves, but you also have to be able to read your opponent," he said.

Brown added that he wants to box for as long as he can.

"I plan to take it as far as I can, to infinity," he said.

Bear said the youth he works with all have talent.

"It gives them self-esteem," he said.

Bear added a youth can come box whether or not they've been in trouble.

"We have kids from all walks, it doesn't have to be kids who have been in trouble," he said.

When Bear is finished training a youth, he sends them to New Beginnings Academy to continue their training.

Paki Tiatia, president of New Beginnings Academy, is a registered and certified trainer with USA Amateur Boxing.

"Bear teaches them the basics of boxing. When he feels that they're ready to take it to another level, he sends them to me," Tiatia said.

He said about a dozen youth have come from Bear's training.

"Some just come to learn the skill of boxing and some to compete," Tiatia said.

With Tiatia, the youth get the chance to compete against other teams in the state.

"A lot of these kids come off the street and they have a lot of time on their hands," Tiatia said. "Boxing and fitness training is an alternative to drugs, gangs and getting into trouble."

He added the lessons the teens learn in boxing are life lessons.

"It teaches them respect, self-discipline and hard work," Tiatia said.

He said if the teens decide not to box anymore they can take the lessons they've learned and apply them to other aspects in their lives.

