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SENSEI'S BLOGS:

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2008

Another great year draws to a close and I find myself reflecting on what has occurred (a bit like Ground Hog Day really). The big one in 2008 has been the re-branding and the separation to some degree within what was, for 17 years, the **Aikido Institute**. We launched in July as **The Compass Institute Inc** within which sits the **AMAI Traditional Martial Arts** and the **Compass Education & Training Services**.

For the AMAI it is a new beginning as we expand our charter to provide a national umbrella and support to other groups around Australia. This has been a long held goal for me and now it is underway, I'm excited by the prospect of building new friendships and supporting the growth and development of Budo culture in more communities around our country. We all take the benefits of this culture for granted, yet when I see it struggling to survive in many communities, I know that the bottom line is that young people, adults and families are unable to access and benefit from the many advantages of having this way of life open to them.

The AMAI has a strong instructor base to support this expansion while continuing to develop here on the Sunshine Coast also. We will be going on a membership drive in 2009 that will energise our training anew. The Armidale Dojo continues to go from strength to strength under the leadership of Jonathan Smith Sensei who achieved his Shodan this year. Also Stuart MacAdam Sensei continues to make Aikido available to people at the northern end of the Coast with his Dojo in Cooroy.

This year we will have promoted 3 people to Shodan - Jonathon Smith, Shane Gehlert and Amy Suttor. As many of you know, Amy has diligently fulfilled the role of uchi deshi for the past 2 years and in that role has served the Dojo faithfully. The Shodan can now be added to her Nidan in Shinto Muso Ryu – not a bad collection for a person not yet 19. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the students, Junior and Adult, and my fellow instructors, for your dedication to training and for all the many and various ways in which you have helped out at the Dojo – be it sweeping floors, cleaning tatamis, leading warm-ups or assisting other students – Thank you!

We have also updated our website presence very considerably and plan to make this a really useful resource to members over the coming years. Whether it's looking at the Latest News to check on classes or events, or researching through the newsletter or articles archives, we hope it will make your lives easier and help students to deepen their understanding of the art we all love. There is also now a separate website for Compass – www.compassinc.org.au so go there to have a look at what we do when we're not on the mat!





Regards our Off-the-Mat extensions - The **Compass Education & Training Service** continues to break new ground. In May we were officially audited and accredited under a new state-wide framework. Across 10 service standards and 42 indicators we received only 2 minor non-conformities – a testament to the dedication and the professionalism of the Coordinator, Jan Thompson and the team leaders and support trainers. The real evidence of success however is in the extraordinarily positive feedback we receive from the young people we support and their families on a near daily basis. Our local Councillor and Patron, Jenny McKay, commented recently at our X'mas Market just how much we do as an organisation with so few resources available to us. 2009 will see us employing around 20 staff and supporting 40 young people in two centres. I am proud of our achievements, but I am even more proud of 'the way' we achieve them.

To all the volunteers & supporters, trainees and past & present students, Mums, Dads & family members; to all the teachers and staff Please accept my gratitude for your efforts and my very best wishes for the Holiday Season and New Year! May your dreams come true...

David

