

Chung student achieves black belt, becomes youngest to do so

By JULIE SNYDER
C & G Staff Writer

Tae kwon do, or taekwondo, is a Korean martial art and combat sport. It is also the national sport of South Korea, and in terms of the number of individuals who practice the sport, it is the most popular form of martial art in the world.

So it may come as a surprise to learn that of the thousands of students who have passed through the doors of Tiger Chung's Tae Kwon Do school in St. Clair Shores since 1971, one of his stu-

dents has realized an accomplishment at the youngest age yet.

Andrew Sorgeloos, 8, recently earned his black belt — an achievement usually reached by older students.

Grand Master Ho Yung "Tiger" Chung founded Tiger Chung Institute of Tae Kwon Do in 1970 in Incheon, Korea.

The school came to the United States in 1971, where it opened in Detroit. Chung later opened schools in Port Huron and on Harper Avenue in St. Clair Shores.

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Left: St. Clair Shores resident Andrew Sorgeloos, 8, demonstrates his tae kwon do skills at Tiger Chung's Tae Kwon Do school last week. Sorgeloos was recently awarded a black belt, making him the youngest student to achieve such status.

Right: Sorgeloos stands with Grand Master Ho Yung "Tiger" Chung at Chung's Harper Avenue school last week.

Photos by Randy Wilcox



Sorgeloos

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Master Thornton Kelly is an instructor at Tiger Chung's Tae Kwon Do school on Harper in St. Clair Shores.

Kelly said the training helps younger students focus energy elsewhere.

"A lot of the students end up doing better in school and get better grades," he said. "In tae kwon do, you're competing with yourself more than others."

Andrew said he was found enjoyment in the program on the first day.

"I pretty much like everything about it," said Andrew, who was only 5 when he began practicing the martial art, and who admires "the respect we learn, and the discipline and focus."

In addition to Chung and Kelly, Jeong Hampton and Master Sean Sweet have also been instrumental in Andrew's achievements over the past three years.

Through the Lil' Dragon Program, children benefit both physically and mentally from the training of tae kwon do with increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

"The Little Dragon Program is paced slower and the classes are shorter," said Sweet, who runs True Balance Martial Arts Academy, located on Dodge Park between 16 Mile and 17 Mile in Sterling Heights. "The students move forward when they are ready. They all go at their own pace."

Black Belts are also broken in to two categories — Black Belt Poom is the designated level for children through the age of 15, and Black Belt Don is the designated level for adults age 16 and older.

Chung supervises instruction and administers rank testing. Necessary paperwork to achieve the level of black belt is sent to Korea.

Chung began his training in tae kwon do in 1952. Today, he is one of the highest-ranked, most respected martial artists in the world.

An International Master Instructor, Chung is founder and

president of the U.S. Tae Kwon Do Ji Do Kwan Association, and member of the Board of Directors of the Michigan Tae Kwon Do Committee. He was also director of Team Canada to the 1973 World Tae Kwon Do Championships in Seoul, Korea.

Chung is also the World Record holder for breaking 17 2-inch cement blocks in 1981. He was head instructor of the U.S. Army 202 Division in Incheon, Korea, and was the 1960 Kong Soo Do Heavy Weight Champion, and Grand Master Instructor of the U.S. Tae Kwon Do Union.

Classes at Chung's school are separated by age and level of experience, and each structured class is lead by a Kukkiwon certified instructor.

Beginning students learn stretching exercises and basic principles of tae kwon do, such as kicks, punches and blocks, while

intermediate classes practice combinations of defensive and offensive movements that require greater concentration.

Advanced students continue to refine their technique, emphasizing control, power and accuracy. Their training also focuses more on self-defense movements.

The children's programs are designed to develop and strengthen a child by building character, confidence and self-control.

Through physical, mental and philosophical exercise, tae kwon do training helps to develop a healthier cardiovascular system, greater strength, conditioning, increased flexibility, and of course, the ability to defend oneself in dangerous situations.

The feeling of accomplishment each student receives helps him or her gain a self-confidence that carries over into everyday life.

The program is designed to

help men and women release stress, anxiety, tension; lose weight; develop self-confidence and self-control; and discover inner strength and inner peace.

A child's attitude changes and their self-discipline improves through tae kwon do training, Kelly said.

Mike and Jackie Sorgeloos said their son's attitude toward school and home changed once he began schooling at Tiger Chung's at the age of 5.

"It helps a lot with his school work because he has more concentration now," said Jackie Sorgeloos. "His teacher in kindergarten said he was hyperactive. His whole demeanor changed when he started taking tae kwon do."

Mike Sorgeloos plans to begin training in tae kwon do as well.

Andrew, a third-grader at Ardmore Elementary School, attends Tiger Chung's school one to two

hours a day, six days a week.

He traditionally competes in two competitions a year, which means travel around the state and Canada. Andrew has won numerous trophies.

Sweet said the achievement means Andrew will be starting his training all over again.

"You start to mature when you get your black belt," he said. "You never stop learning."

And what does Andrew think of his black belt?

"I think it's nice," he said.

Chung said Andrew worked hard to earn the achievement.

"He's really a good guy," he said. "A strong guy."

Tiger Chung's Tae Kwon Do is located at 28905 Harper. For more information, call (586) 778-1505 or go to www.tigerchung.com

You can reach Staff Writer Julie Snyder at jnsnyder@candnews.com or at (586) 498-1039.