

2014 California State Open Taekwondo Championship

Essay Contest

My Taekwondo Story

Category: A Name; Max Park-Beach Age: 9 Redondo Beach, CA J Lee Taekwondo Center

My name is Max Park-Beach, and this is my Taekwondo story. I love Taekwondo. Taekwondo is great because it helps me build character, learn self-defense, improve my concentration, and learn about my Korean culture.

I love Taekwondo for many reasons, but most of all, I love how it brings me closer to my family in different ways. My mom is Korean, and learning Taekwondo has taught me more about our Korean culture and language. Now I can count to ten in Korean very well. I can also say all the names of the movements and positions in Korean. This makes my mom and grandparents (halmoni and harabeoji) very happy and proud. Even though my dad is not Korean, he is the one who takes me to Taekwondo class and helps me practice at home. My dad is also very happy and proud of me. He is a PE teacher, so he really likes how Taekwondo is great exercise for me. He even wears his hat that says "Taekwondo Dad+everyday."

I first decided I wanted to learn Taekwondo when I found out my good friend, Chaeha who lives in Korea became a black belt. It was very neat to see how she could make high jump kicks, strong punches, and other amazing moves! Now that I have been in Taekwondo for over two years, I am getting closer to earning my black belt. During the summer, my family and I went to visit our relatives in Denver, Colorado. I showed my Taekwondo moves to my aunts, uncles, and cousins. Everyone was very impressed, and my two girl cousins have decided that they want to learn Taekwondo too. They are not Korean like me. Their mom is white, like my dad, and their dad is African American, but they chose to take Taekwondo because they wanted to be like me. It makes me feel very proud that my cousins want to learn Taekwondo too.

My number one goal in Taekwondo is to earn my black belt. After I get my black belt, I will continue to do Taekwondo so I can earn higher degrees. I don't want to stop doing Taekwondo. Someday I want to be a Grand Master. Even though Taekwondo is fun, it also takes a lot of work and discipline. I also have to be patient because it takes time to earn each belt.

Taekwondo will help me with my life goal to be a videogame designer. I know that I will have to study hard, get excellent grades in school, and never give up when things are difficult. The Taekwondo Jung Shin that we recite in every class teaches us to have courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit. Grand Master Lee and Master Park teach us to live our lives like Taekwondo kids. This means that I use the teachings of the Taekwondo way in my everyday life. We also say "The Taekwondo Students Creed" at the end of every class. This reminds me to build true confidence through knowledge of the mind, honesty of the heart, and strength in the body. It is also a promise for me to keep friendships and build a strong and happy community. We promise to never fight to achieve selfish ends, but we are training to develop the might for right. All of these things will help me achieve my goals in life because I will be a person who has a strong mind, strong heart, and strong body. Perseverance means to never give up, even when times are challenging. I know that I will face many challenges in life, but Taekwondo will help me to overcome them.

One of my greatest challenges is that I have a very hard time paying attention. Taekwondo has helped me focus much better. In Taekwondo class I have to keep a strong focus and follow the master's instructions right away. I also have to pay attention to what the master says or I might not understand what he is teaching. I have to have quick body movements, and I also have to have a quick mind. Now I do a great job at keeping my focus in Taekwondo, and it is helping me get better at paying attention in school. I can also focus better at home when I have to do my homework or listen to my parents' directions.

I have noticed that many people who know Taekwondo are very successful and are great role models. One example is my godfather, Uncle Stan. He began learning Taekwondo when he was young. He was able to achieve his goal to become a police officer. Uncle Stan is strong and smart, and he is a great police officer. My godfather is also very generous and caring. He always remembers my birthday and gives me gifts for special occasions. Best of all, Uncle Stan and his family even come to my belt tests. I think Taekwondo helped make my godfather a great person.

My friend, Chaeha, from Korea who is a black belt is also a good person. She gets good grades at school, and she sends me letters and cards. Even though she is a black belt, she keeps going to Taekwondo to earn higher degrees.

My grandfather, Harabeoji, is also a black belt in Taekwondo. He is very short, but Taekwondo taught him how to defend himself from others. He is also very strong even though he is seventy-four years old. My harabeoji is so tough!

There are so many ways that Taekwondo helps me in my life. I am getting better at Taekwondo each day because my focus is good. Then it helps me with my school work and homework. I love going to Taekwondo class to earn my stripes so I can get to the next belt. I am improving each day in my life so much. I am thankful for being a Taekwondo kid. Now you know my Taekwondo story.

My Taekwondo Story

Category: B Name: Roy Ahn Age: 13 Arcadia, CA SK Taekwondo Center (Temple City)

WOW! That was the first thing I heard when I stepped in the studio. When a person is a small five-year old, this is pretty loud and overwhelming. It was like a battlefield, not of guns and swords, but the extreme power of the students' determination and confidence. It was like an epic energy boost, not only for the body, but also for the mind as well. My nervousness disappeared like a rabbit from a magician's hat, just like that.

I stepped in the office with my mom and stared at the black belt tied around the master's waist. The whole time, the only thing I thought of was that black belt. For the first time in my young life, I knew what it felt like to have a goal. I knew what I needed to do and I knew how much hard work it would take. Taekwondo helped me achieve my goals while in the process training me with hard work, achieved new friends, and teaching me respect.

When my first day of class finally came, I was bursting with excitement, ready to start my path to the honor-bound black belt. As soon as I saw the mat filled with students bigger than me, I got butterflies in my stomach. All of a sudden, I did not want to go in. I stood in the corner outside of the mat with my mom. She of course, noticing my evasive maneuvers and tried to push me toward the mat. One of the masters came over to me and started talking to me gently. He finally persuaded me to walk onto the mat, and he gave me a little private one on one lesson. When class was over, that was all I did, but I felt a little more confident. The next day was the same thing and so was the next. Finally, at yellow belt, I actually took the real class (after crying my heart out for about ten minutes). When I got my purple belt though, I realized that taking class consistently without skipping was important if I were to get better at Taekwondo. Therefore, afterwards, I worked hard constantly, and it paid off.

Soon, after much determination and practice, I finally achieved my goal of black belt. However, I did not stop there; I wanted to go beyond. I wanted to help others achieve what I achieved. So, I tested for my 2nd degree black belt, and I received it. I could not just teach right away, so I had to take the instructor's course. I graduated and I achieved my Instructor's License, making me qualified to help my masters in teaching the lower belt students. This taught me to be helpful and give back and not only in Taekwondo, but also in my own outside life. Taekwondo taught me to be outgoing and willing to try new things, even though they might not seem fun.

Beyond the studio, Taekwondo brought me into trying other things, like playing tennis, piano, and the viola. I played all of these and I worked hard until I played them well. For example, I played in USAT for tennis in an official team. For piano, I went out to contests to measure up my skills against other people's. And for the viola, I got into the most elite orchestra in my school and consistently played in concerts. I have played at Disneyland, at universities, and at high schools with my symphony orchestra. Taekwondo gave me the character to try new things and succeed in them.

After my many years of Taekwondo, I made friends that would be friends for more than ten years. The reason I made these friends were mainly because of the Taekwondo teams I joined in. I have been in the SK Taekwondo Sparring team, and the Demo Team. I have stopped being in Demo Team, because I wanted to solely concentrate my mind and body more on sparring. So, the main team I was in and still am in is the SK Taekwondo Sparring team. I made my friends in these teams, and although some of my friends have moved on, I still have the memory of training with them and having fun with them. Even though I don't have them anymore, I can still see my other friends/team members whenever I come to Taekwondo. Also, because of my Sparring Team, I am constantly on the move. I train hard with my team on a weekly basis, and we go out to multiple tournaments like ATU, CTU, GSO, Aguila's Invitational, Camarillo's Mayor Cup, and so many more. In these, we cheer on our team and our school. We try our best to be there for every person. We stay until the end of the tournament just to cheer on one person. We learned teamwork and we all knew what it feels like to be on a team that will support you all the way.

I respect and look up to every single one of my masters and elders. If I see a person doing well, I watch them and admire them. I dream of becoming just like the people that are better than me, or possibly better than them. From the day I started my path of Taekwondo to today, I have always had a goal. Whether it is a big goal like becoming a grand master, or a small goal like conquering a skill, I know I will succeed because my Taekwondo School taught me how. Not only is Taekwondo my school and hobby, but it is also my family. I grew up with Taekwondo, and everyone at the studio helped me. This is what a family is. This is my Taekwondo life, and I am proud of my school, my teammates, my masters, and myself. Through Taekwondo, I learned what it felt to be really passionate about something, and through Taekwondo I learned how to live a better life.