

‘Getting a Kick’ Out of Tae Kwon Do



What began as an alternative to the family TV and video games has turned into an experience that has carried me through 16 years of **Getting a KICK out of tae kwon do**.

When my journey began sixteen years ago, in 1998, my son, Greg, had just turned six. I was a 44-year-old father who didn't want to see my son grow up glued to the TV and

video games. I wanted to find an activity that we could both do together. We had tried Parks & Rec Soccer- Greg as the soccer player and me as the coach- but it

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The “Indianola Branch”
a.k.a. Indianola Parks and Rec.



Mr. Bryan Sievers
and Mr. Roger
Netsch after one of
many sessions
preparing for their 5th
Dan test.

My “home branch” Indianola

My ‘home branch’ is in Indianola, Iowa. For the past 6 years, we have trained in the Indianola Parks & Recreation Building- Activity Center. Prior to that time, Master Samuelson and others worked in an elementary school gymnasium as well as an elementary school cafeteria. Our classes meet Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Beginners meet at 6 pm on Mondays and Thursdays, while advanced students meet on Mondays and Thursdays at 7 pm and Wednesdays at 6 pm. Our beginner classes typically have between 10 and 20 students (adults & children) and the advanced classes between 25 and 30 students.

If you’ve trained in tae kwon do for very long, you know that the location doesn’t make the branch. It’s the people – instructors and students – who make a branch what it is. I feel very fortunate to be involved not only in the Indianola Branch but also Two Rivers Martial Arts and Jung’s Tae Kwon Do Academy as a whole. While all three entities are successful in their own right, the three entities together work to make a unique opportunity for people to learn and grow together. With Grand Master Jung’s and the TRMA’s senior belts’ leadership, we offer a fantastic opportunity for people to learn tae kwon do.

What’s the deal with colored belts?

When I first started to train in tae kwon do, I wondered why there was so much emphasis placed on colored belts. I quickly came learn that the color belt you wore was like a badge for you to show all around you what your skill level was. The colored belts really just scratch the surface of what you can learn in tae kwon do. By learning the basics as colored belts, they become the foundation of all that is to follow once you achieve a black belt level.

When you line up by belt rank, the responsibility of the higher-ranking colored/black belts becomes even more evident. You are not only an example or model for the lower belts to follow, you also learn that by sharing what you have learned is what helps you progress in ability and true mastery of the techniques you’re teaching. By advancing in colored belts and dan rankings, you are showing the lower belts that you have achieved mastery of techniques at that level and have knowledge that can help them progress as well. They just need to follow your instructions and your example.



The Rewards and Challenges of Teaching Tae Kwon Do

Teaching tae kwon do and helping others to learn this discipline can be very rewarding. It can also be very challenging. While helping others learn and grow in this martial art, as an instructor, you can also learn and grow.

So, what makes teaching tae kwon do rewarding? Well to begin with, I have personally found that by helping others learn and grow, this has helped me learn and grow both as a martial artist and also as person. There can be many rewards as a “senior belt” but, for me, none greater than seeing a student being successful in something you have helped them master. Whether it is a form, board break, or other facet of tae kwon do, I have learned that from your student’s successes, you are also successful.

Now, for the challenging part of teaching tae kwon do. One facet of teaching tae kwon do that I find challenging is working with students who, despite their best efforts, struggle to learn a technique or form. Seeing students who give genuine effort but, for a number of reasons, not progress is as frustrating for me as it probably is for them. This has been, and will continue to be one of the aspects of being an instructor that I struggle with the most. When faced with this type of challenge, I look to the examples in front of me of Grand Master Jung and the other senior belts from my school. As always, the tenets are always there to show me the way. Sometimes you just have to open your eyes.

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just didn't click for Greg to have his dad telling him what to do in front of his friends. It turned out, Dad didn't particularly like it either. Instead of having one child to be responsible for, I now had 15 or more to try to coach.

I began to look for alternatives and noticed in the Indianola Parks & Rec activity catalog that they offered tae kwon do and that to participate; you only had to be six years of age or above. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were all the rage at the time for younglings so that was the bait I used to convince Greg that tae kwon do might be something fun to do together. The time commitment wasn't too great- just two or three nights a week- and we didn't have to buy expensive shoes to participate. With visions of throwing stars, swords, and pizza, we enthusiastically signed up.

Looking back now, I can see how naïve I was. Tae kwon do is so much more than throwing stars, swords, and pizza. Well, to be truthful, pizza and chocolate cake do occasionally appear in our dojang after class is over and the flags are folded away.

Tae kwon do is really much more than merely forms or board breaks and self defense.

As Grand Master Jung has talked about, it is more about family, supporting one another, learning and growing. It is about the tenets- courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit. It is about respect and supporting one another as you grow and learn. It is about family. Your tae kwon do family.

So Greg and I started our tae kwon do journey on September 10, 1998. We trained in Indianola through the Indianola Branch of Two Rivers Martial Arts. Master Marvin Samuelson was our instructor. We worked our way through the colored belt ranks, really working hard and learned loads through Mr. Samuelson's leadership. Unfortunately for Greg, adolescence intervened and he dropped out after getting to his second permanent gup brown belt. Believe it or not, he went back to soccer, this time without his father as his coach. The lessons he learned while in tae kwon do, I believe, have helped him in other areas as he has moved forward in his life.

As for me, by the time I got into the brown belt levels, I was the one who was hooked on tae kwon do. As an educator by profession, I really enjoyed helping the lower colored

belts learn the forms, techniques and board breaks. It was and still is the main attraction for me personally to continue in tae kwon do.

Grand Master Jung, Master Judith Clinton, Master Brett McBroom, Master Bruce Hammer, Master Steven Gonzalez, Master Dewayne Ferguson, and the other Two Rivers senior black belts and, of course, Master Samuelson, all continued to talk throughout their classes about the importance of family and supporting one another. Since I've become a black belt, I've really come to understand what they had always talked to us about in their classes. It's something I now talk about to my students in my classes.

While tae kwon do is quite an individual sport, you can't do it alone. We have all developed close kinships to fellow students, and our instructors, as we develop as martial artists. As colored belts, we all became friends with our fellow classmates and learned and grew together. We became family through the common goals we all shared- that next belt level. We became friends and there were always our "parents" – the black belts in our school who were there to

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guide us along the way.

In my branch of Two Rivers in Indianola, Iowa, we have and are going through somewhat of a transition. Master Samuelson has gotten older (as we all have and will) and, due to health issues, has had to step back from his responsibilities as main instructor at our branch. Fortunately, I have been able to step in and carry on where he left off. Now I find myself standing in front of our classes in Indianola and find myself saying some of the same things that I have heard as a fledgling colored belt coming up through the ranks.

As I have continued to learn and grow in tae kwon do, I have learned to relax and let things come to me more. While I still get anxious when I'm getting ready to lead a class (or test for my 5th Dan), I have learned how the tenets of tae kwon do can help you to grow as a martial artist. Additionally, I have noticed that the tenets have made a difference in other areas of my life.

As you can see, there is much I've learned as I've continued to progress in tae kwon do. I look forward to what lies ahead, especially on those Friday nights at the Hub during those brown/black belt classes as I continue to 'Get a kick' out of tae kwon do

Where there's fire...

One of the really great things about becoming a black belt is you get to face new challenges - many of which you had never dreamed you would be doing. As I've become more proficient with breaking techniques, I have developed what, I guess, you would consider non-traditional breaks. Whether you are breaking boards, concrete, burning boards or ice, I really enjoy the mental and physical challenge involved. Getting your mind and body to achieve such goals together is truly fulfilling.

**Family Support Is Required To Be Successful In Tae Kwon Do.**

While I've mentioned family quite frequently throughout this paper, I would be remiss without mentioning my personal family. My wife, Susan, and my son, Greg, have and continue to be the quiet supporters of my tae kwon do life. Their love and support have carried me through the 'dips' we all encounter

in our lives. They probably both have wondered at times why I spend so much time going to teach tae kwon do or attending TRMA board meetings or serving our school in various ways. I can't thank them enough for sharing me with my tae kwon do family. Their unwavering support allows me to pursue my 'next objective' in taekwondo and in life.