

# OUR TOWN

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SOUTH MILWAUKEE VOICE GRAPHIC

JULY 29, 2004

*“He has wanted this from when he was little, on.  
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**Peter Sorce**

on his son Peter's  
early interest in martial art

## Getting his kicks

Electrical engineer's love of martial arts led him to open new studio

**By Matt Hronick**

*Staff Writer*

Peter Sorce is not exaggerating when he says opening his own martial arts facility is a lifelong dream.

Sorce, 28, was 6 years old when he saw the martial arts demonstration at Summerfest that would change his life.

“I saw it and thought it was the coolest thing ever, and I wanted to do it,” Sorce said.

His parents, Peter and Colina, signed him up for tae kwon do. Asthma had prevented him from participating in sports up to that time in his life, but martial arts changed that.

“For me, I enjoyed it right away and started sharing it with other people at a young age,” he said. “I’d show it at show and tell. It helped my life so much.”

Sorce started teaching martial arts 15 years ago, and taught the South Milwaukee Recreation Department classes for the past eight years. At Saturday’s Heritage Days Parade, he celebrated the grand opening of Sorce Martial Arts at 926 Milwaukee Avenue.

“This has been his dream, and I hope it works for him,” his father said. “He has wanted this from when he was little, on. He used to draw pictures of his dojo and what it was going to look.”

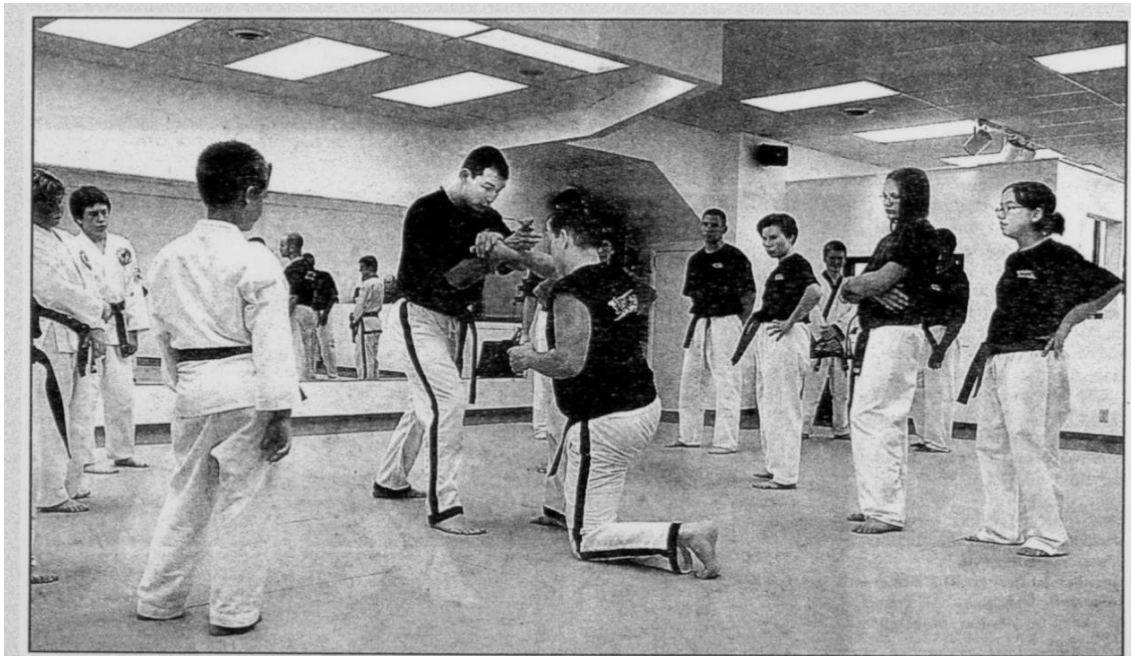
The younger Sorce is visibly excited when he talks about the benefits of martial arts.

“I feel it’s a responsibility to not only teach the physical skills but also the other things that impact their lives, he said. “It changes your life; it changes you in so many ways. There’s the respect and the discipline and the relationships you develop, and there’s the physical challenge.”

### Energy spills over for students

Gary Uphill is a student in Sorce’s adult escrima class, a martial art that teaches techniques with the open hand and various weapons. He said he appreciates Sorce’s teaching style.

“He’s fantastic. I’ve never seen anybody so enthusiastic in my life. He bubbles,” Uphill said. “He is very knowledgeable, which is exactly what you need.”



COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS PHOTO BY CHARLES AJER  
Pete Sorce demonstrates a move that can be used to escape an attacker during a class in his new martial arts academy in South Milwaukee on July 21.

Sorce is a fourth-degree black belt in tae kwon do and is certified to teach escrima. He also employs four other instructors with black belts and a certified yoga instructor. His classes range from basic self-defense methods to tae kwon do and escrima, and from “Lil’ Dragons” classes for young children to classes for teenagers and adults.

“I really think every person should do martial arts,” Sorce said. “It clears your mind, and afterwards, you feel better. It’s more mentally challenging than other forms of exercise.”

Sorce said escrima is gaining popularity with both novice and experienced martial artists.

“It’s a very practical art. You don’t have to be as strong or as limber. They call it ‘the old man’s art,’” he said.

Sorce said he continues to learn more about martial arts all the time, and looks forward to immersing himself even more completely in instruction.

“There’s so much to learn that you can never get bored. It’s very dynamic — no class is different,” he said. “I’ve been doing this 22 years, and the more you learn, the more you realize there’s more out there.”

Sorce prides himself on his ability to make modifications to teach to a student’s ability. He said beginners should not feel intimidated by the prospect of entering his classroom.

“We take them on the side and spend whatever amount of time they need to get them up to speed. Then, after they’re comfortable, we introduce them to the rest of the class,” he said.

Uphill said he felt welcomed from the start when he first entered one of Sorce’s classes.

“Everybody is just so dog-gone nice. They’re all just there to help you and to teach you,” he said.

### **Built-up recreation program**

Sorce began working as an instructor at the South Milwaukee Recreation Department eight years ago, and the self-defense and tae kwon do courses blossomed.

“He was an outstanding teacher for us,” Recreation Department Director Stan Dorff said. “He was really good with the kids and taught them not only the lessons of how to deal with the sport, but also how to respect people.”

Dorff said the Recreation Department will continue to offer its own program, but that he is happy for Sorce.

“We knew it was going to happen — it was his dream he said,” he said. “We wish Pete all the success in the world.”

Sorce is realistic about how the perils of starting a new business, but is confident in his work ethic. He works as an electrical engineer, but hopes to eventually make the martial arts school his primary job.

“I care so much — I do this because this is what I want to do,” he said. “I’m approaching this knowing that most martial arts businesses fail —I’m very aware of that. I’m doing this because I have the passion.”