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Community News

Martial arts help boy, 9, to overcome asthma

By Dan Muckelbauer

Cudahy — Peter Sorce Jr., a severe asthma sufferer, could not do a sit-up or push-up three years ago.

Now he can leap past six crouched-over adults and snap a board with one swift kick.

His mother, Colina Sorce, calls it his “flashy move.”

Despite his asthmatic condition, Peter, 9, has earned a first-degree black belt in tae kwon do, a Korean type of karate. He happily shows off five other belts, along with 42 trophies won in tournaments.

When he was 6, Peter’s asthma prevented him from running or jumping or doing most outdoor activities, Mrs. Sorce said.

Doctors had suggested that some type of indoor physical exercise program could help improve Peter’s condition. Peter became interested in karate after watching a demonstration at Summerfest.

Since his karate training, he can ride a bicycle around the neighborhood and play a little outdoor soccer, said his father, Peter Sorce Sr.

Mostly he enjoys breaking boards, performing the sport and helping teach it to other children at D.A. Yun’s Black belt karate school, 3974 S. 27th St.

Mrs. Sorce smiles proudly as Peter whirls gracefully about their living room, demonstrating “tornado kicks.” “Those are kind of hard to do, and he can do them now,” she said.

Not only has Peter improved physically, but so has his self-image, Mrs. Sorce said. “The way he thinks of himself now, he does think he’s crippled.”

He also has self-control, she said, adding that karate instructors have complimented him on his ability to ease up on kicks and punches against lesser opponents.

David Chung, 19, Peter's chief instructor, said Peter differed from other children because of his obedience and perseverance

"He does what he's told to do. He keeps going until he reaches perfection. I enjoy teaching him. When I teach Peter, he improves every time," Chung said.

Peter practices at least three times a week at the karate school. He said he really liked performing taekwondo.

He also has become a better student at Lincoln Elementary School. He won the third-grade spelling bee and was named the most improved student at the school.

Peter said the memorization of Korean words and concentration required in karate helped him in school. He also said he needed good grades to test for a black belt.