

ATAWorld

CREATING TOMORROW'S LEADERS ... ONE BLACK BELT AT A TIME

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Grand Master Sam Hwang with
Amber Peeler and David Hwang

Eat Well and Play Right

ATA student Kenderick Scorza wins a Nickelodeon wellness challenge and inspires other kids to live healthy and dream big. by Susan T. Lennon

One year ago, Kenderick Scorza was a shy, 215-pound pre-teen who was afraid to swim, could not run and didn't know how to ride a bike. "The only exercise I ever got was pushing buttons on the video game controller," says the middle-schooler. "I rarely went outside."

Then he signed up for two weeks of free classes at the ATA Black Belt Academy in North Little Rock, Ark. Initially, the physical activity interested him, but he took to heart his instructors' lessons about setting goals, focusing and practicing self control.

Now, one year later, 13-year-old Kenderick is a purple belt. He has lost about 38 pounds and has trained successfully for a triathlon. He's also signing autographs, using his own tagline, "Eat well and play right."

That's right—autographs. Kids now often recognize Kenderick from his appearances on TurboNick, Nickelodeon's broadband channel at nick.com. His early successes in Taekwondo inspired him to try out for Nickelodeon's national health and wellness initiative, "Let's Just Play Go Healthy Challenge," and he won.

He's since been on the "Rachael Ray Show," met with former president Bill Clinton (three times) and earned second place in weapons and fourth place in forms at ATA World Championships.

But in true ATA fashion, he's humble about his accomplishments. "All I really wanted to do was get healthy," he says, "and learn how to kick higher and do the

techniques well." He's achieving much more than that, however.

Powered by Taekwondo

When Kenderick's family heard that Hurricane Katrina was coming, they packed a few clothes and headed to high ground, assuming they'd be back home in a few days. But when the hurricane hit, they lost everything. "Although it was devastating," says Barbara Scorza, Kenderick's mom, "we were not devastated."

Strong faith and family ties helped the Scorzas keep their spirits up as they relocated to North Little Rock. They now love their new home and plan to stay, but it was difficult for Kenderick to lose hometown friends, one of whom sparked his interest in Taekwondo.

"I'd actually thought about trying [Taekwondo] in New Orleans,"

Kenderick says. "I was thinking about how to increase my energy and become more fit to inspire my family."

His brother has a serious heart condition and his grandmother has diabetes.

Kenderick had tried baseball and basketball but didn't enjoy them



Kenderick Scorza

much. At Taekwondo, however, something clicked. “I liked the energy, the things you get to do,” he says. “And as you advance, you can take part in leadership class.” Kenderick was invited as an orange belt—the only lower-ranking belt in the class.

The ATA was a good fit from the start, adds his mom: “He loved that although [Taekwondo] is a team support system, it’s also an individual sport. You learn your forms and weapons, become as good as you can be, but don’t hold others back.”

In the past, Kenderick feared failure and shied away from difficult physical feats. But in Taekwondo, his confidence grew in leaps and bounds. “Instead of giving up,” he says, “I’d tell myself, ‘I’m just going to try. Even if I can’t do it the first time, I can try and try again.’”

ATA Taekwondo was the catalyst for his transformation, his mom says: “It demands that you come to class and do your best.” His school work improved, he made new friends and his commitment to getting healthy increased.

Above and Beyond

Accomplishing small goals often motivates people to take on bigger challenges. This was the case for Kenderick, who wasn’t content to simply do his best at Taekwondo. Even though he’d never ridden a bike, run a race or put his head under water, he decided to compete in the Arkansas Kids’ Triathlon, a 4-mile bike ride, 1-mile run and 100-yard swim.

He had six months to get ready, and in the beginning, Kenderick had his doubts. But he began hitting the gym five times a week, training with his “Let’s Just Play Go Healthy Challenge” coach, David Bazzel, to get in shape. A nutritionist also taught him how to switch from junk food to nutritious food—a change that has helped his whole family.

Soon Kenderick discovered that he was capable of more than he’d ever imagined. Practicing balance and concentration in Taekwondo class helped him conquer the bicycle. Stretching, push-ups and working



If Kenderick Can, You Can, Too!

Team sports can be intimidating to a lot of kids,” says instructor Senior Master Kathy Lee, “but ATA’s Karate Kids program emphasizes the positive: every kid is special, every kid is a winner. It’s upbeat. Kids feel welcome; they aren’t pressured to compete with others, and they’re not just benchwarmers. They feel good when they leave, and can’t wait to come to class.” —S. T. L.

on endurance improved his ability to run. Using front kick and hammer fist techniques helped him learn how to swim. And breaking a 15-pound cinder block when he’d never even broken a real board taught him that he could look deep inside himself, find focus and overcome his fears.

“Kenderick is amazing,” says one of his instructors, Senior Master Kathy Lee, a 7th Degree Black Belt. “Last year, he was shy and timid. Now, he’s strong and confident. He is determined to have a healthy lifestyle and is overcoming a lot of odds through his perseverance. He’s taken Taekwondo so seriously and incorporated all

aspects of it into his life.” His mom agrees: “He has a new dedication to his school work, and demonstrates leadership abilities with friends. He’s putting into practice what he’s learning about character, integrity and commitment.”

In July, Kenderick swam a lap without stopping, ran a full mile and had ridden long distances on his bicycle. In Taekwondo, small changes lead to big outcomes, one goal at a time.

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