

# Future looks bright for Horizon Taekwon-do

By Nathan Howes  
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Challenges and triumphs have been bittersweet for Oakville's Horizon Taekwon-do in the decade since it opened.

The business recently marked its anniversary and owner and head instructor Louie Sanchez reminisced about when he started out at Speers Road and Fourth Line in a 4,000 square-foot building with just his wife, the taekwondo program, 30 members and a passion for martial arts.

"I've always wanted to do this. I love it and I'm going to go until I can't do it (any) more," said Sanchez. "I love being active and seeing kids active and into martial arts."

Now Horizon Taekwon-do boasts 10 taekwondo adult and student instructors, two spinning instructors, one zumba instructor and over 350 members at a 7,000 square-foot facility on 212 Wycroft Rd., Unit 26.

"It is great (that) people know where we are now, so I don't have to tell them. Wycroft and Dorval, it's good," said Sanchez.

The club also now offers more programs to its members besides taekwondo.

"We improved our services. We have zumba, weight training, kickboxing classes and spinning classes now in our new facility," said Sanchez.

Sanchez's move to Wycroft Road last year has been one of his most memorable moments



MICHAEL IVANIN / OAKVILLE BEAVER

**A PASSION:** Louie Sanchez celebrated the 10th anniversary of Horizon Taekwon-do.

in the last 10 years. Another was in 2004.

"I had two students who went to junior and senior World Championships in Korea. One came home with a gold medal for team patterns and the other one just tried out but came home with a lot of experience."

Along with the good times, comes the bad for Sanchez and his group. In 2009, one of his students was fatally stabbed in an altercation at a house party in Burlington. Sixteen-year-old Jesse Comeau held a second-degree black belt in taekwondo that he first earned when he was 12.

"We were all close, a very close family in martial arts. That was hard for us."

It was a particularly rough time for Sanchez, as he had known Comeau since he was five years old and watched him grow up to become one of his instructors.

"He was a close friend of everybody. Instead of doing classes, we just sat down, we talked (about) the memories left behind and it was hard for teenagers because they knew him and I knew him since he was

five," said Sanchez. "He was amazing."

To honour Comeau's life and memory, Sanchez organized a tournament in his name last year that drew 200 competitors from across Ontario. He plans to make it an annual event.

"It was named after him so people don't forget who he was. It's held at Iroquois Ridge High School every year in April," said Sanchez. "We had one two months ago with 200 people from all over Ontario. We showed everybody a slide of Jesse over the years."

Despite the tragedy, Sanchez remains optimistic about the future and where he wants to be in another 10 years from now. He hopes to expand his business with the addition of another facility and wants to add more black belts and taekwondo champions to the company's roster.

"I have five black belts trying out for the World Championship in Ottawa. I would like to get more world champions in his club and I'd like to open another location," said Sanchez.

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