

## Ambassador Han Duk-soo Presents Awards to Taekwondo Essay Contest Winners



Nine of the 15 award recipients for the 2009 Taekwondo Essay Contest, some travelling from as far away as Colorado and Georgia to attend, were presented with certificates of achievement by Ambassador Han Duk-soo in a ceremony at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea on December 22, 2009. The event was the culmination of months of planning by the Korean Embassy in order to host the event, hundreds of essays written and submitted from across the United States, and many hours spent poring over heartfelt essays about the personal benefits that come from Taekwondo.

“When was the last time you read 80 stories in a row and they all had happy endings?” said Herb Borkland, a Taekwondo expert and one of the final judges. “And all of these stories end with Taekwondo.” Borkland also confessed that judging the contest was a great challenge because of the volume and quality of the essays.

Taekwondo, which originated in Korea and is distinct from other Asian martial arts, is acclaimed for its emphasis on moral character, honesty, and integrity, as well as physical fitness and self defense skills. Since its widespread introduction in the United States in the 1960s and 70s, hundreds of Taekwondo schools have emerged across the United States and around the world, shaping the lives of thousands of young people.

After gathering at the Korean Embassy’s KORUS House, the awardees and their families moved to the embassy’s main building, where each received their certificate from Ambassador Han. During the reception that followed at KORUS House, the group heard from Grandmaster Jhoon Rhee, known as the father of Taekwondo in the United States.

The Taekwondo Essay Contest, now an annual embassy event, will take place every summer and is open to all Taekwondo fans in the United States.

“It was really an honor to come here to the embassy and meet the Ambassador,” said one parent. “It was a special day that we won’t ever forget.”