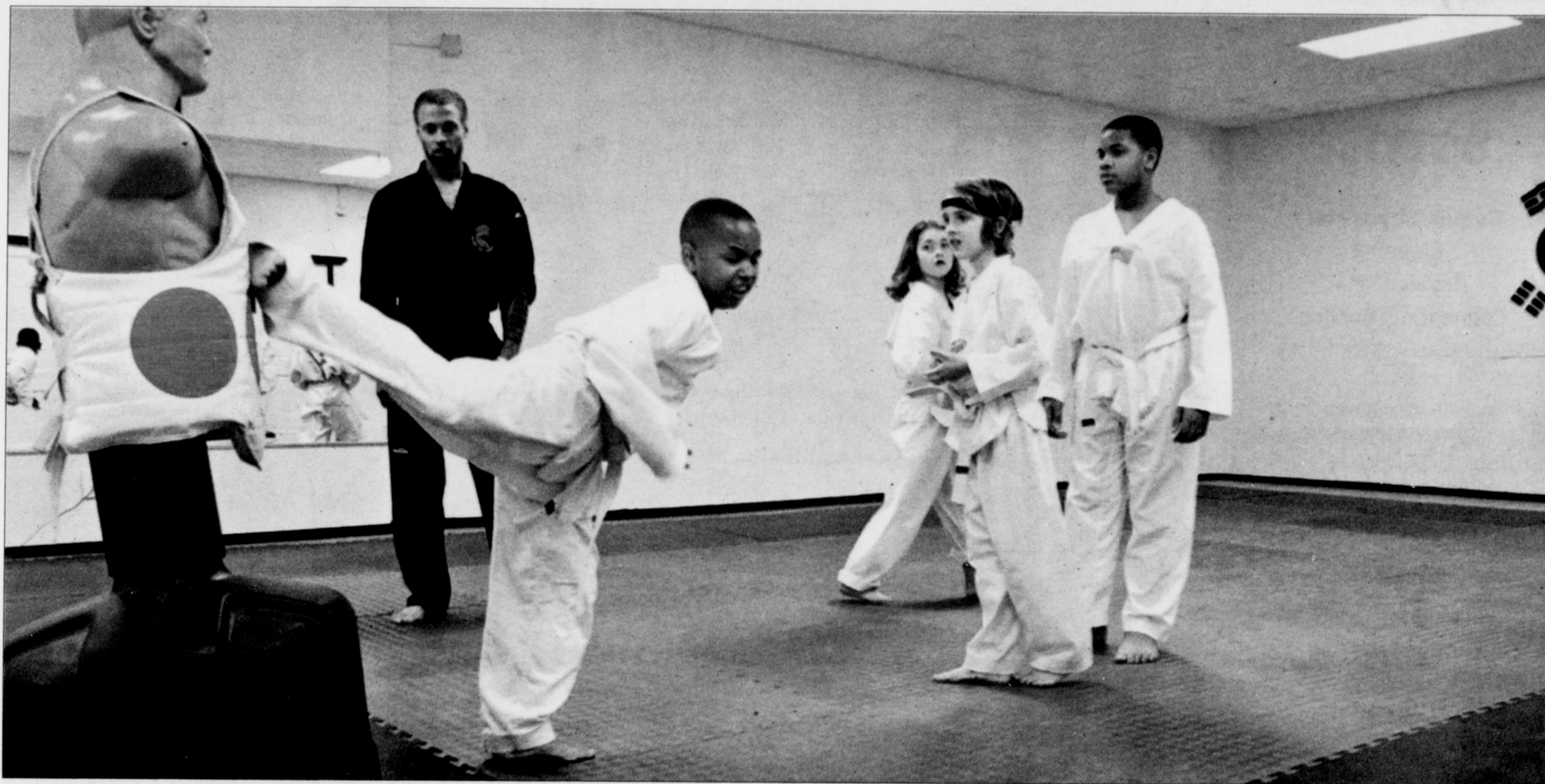


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Master Eddie Arnold works with local youth in the Korean martial arts style of Hapkido at Choais Academy in north Portland.

Teaching Kids to Become Like Ninjas

Master of Korean martial arts empowers local youth

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Although historically secret and closed to most individuals throughout the world, one local martial arts master is on a mission to share his knowledge of the Korean-based martial arts style of Hapkido, which he said can both empower and benefit youth to find new meaning in their lives.

As the youngest ranked African-American Hapkido master in the world, Eddie Arnold, 37, began his journey with the martial arts when he was just four-years-old in Cincinnati, Ohio, where his father first introduced him to the lifestyle.

"We grew up in an inner city, and my father knew we (Arnold and his brothers) all had to defend ourselves," he said. "Although we didn't have a choice, I instantly loved it."

Growing up, he experienced first-hand the profound changes studying martial arts can bring to one's life. "It empowers kids and gives them something different," he said. "That is what happened with me. It changed my life."

Hapkido, he said, like many martial art forms, is not just a way to learn how to defend one's self, but it is also a way of life, filled with personal growth and self-discovery. "It's a process," he said. "The man doesn't go after the belts, the belts chase the man."

According to Arnold, as long as you're working at improving the technique of martial arts, and you're healthy, then you are going to eventually reach whatever degree you desire.

Hapkido, he said, is a way of coordinating energy, utilizing both soft and hard techniques, and traced to the efforts of Korean nationals in the post Japanese colonial period in Korea.

There is nothing in it but time and maturity, he said. The secret is how you affect change in both your own life and other's through the art, which stems down to a deeper level of self defense.



Master Eddie Arnold, 27, meditates before his class in Heuk Choo Kwan, a style of the Korean martial art Hapkido, which translates as the way of coordinating energy.

"This is what I try to teach my students," said Arnold, who leads individuals aged 4-40-years old in his style of Hapkido known as Heuk Choo Kwan, which translates to 'black eagle style.'

"After a while, it transfers from physical to mental and then spiritual," he said.

Teaching youth and studying under his teacher Grand Master Son Young Gul, Arnold works six-days a week at Chois Martial Arts Academy in north Portland, which is one of four in the area that is part of the oldest traditional martial arts associations in Portland.

"North Portland is struck with a lack of identity, and youth are trying to find identity in gang activity," he said. "With Heuk Choo, we find identity in camaraderie, in the training and with the discipline Heuk Choo provides."

Fighting can be done by someone with no martial arts training to someone who has trained their entire life, he said. "But when teaching kids martial arts, I am not teaching kids how to fight."

Instead, he explained the highest form of martial arts success is when you can outsmart a person without a finger ever touching them.

"It is a way of looking at all of your options within the skill of seconds to decide what is the best way or option for you," he said. "This can benefit everyone."

You begin to be able to read somebody's vibes and mind from their physical acts, he said.

In his own life, Arnold recalled his own experience with martial arts when he began recognize the changes in the way he perceived the environment around him.

"I saw how it gave me strength to stand on my own two feet and make my own choices," he said. "And If I could be disciplined to do that, then I could be disciplined to make the right choices in my life."

Arnold received his first degree black belt in 1998, and has

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