

Fame

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first martial arts studio in 1988. Known as Master Chen to his followers who've come from far and wide to learn from his expertise, the Taiwan native first began practicing Tai Chi himself at the age of seven. Before long, he began to study Tai Chi — frequently referred to as meditation in motion — with some of Taiwan's most famous teachers.

“As I got older I was very fortunate to be a student of several Grand Masters who are world famous today,” Mr. Chen said. “My Grand Master was Liaw Jen-Shyang who was a senior student of the Great Grand Master Cheng Man-Ching who first introduced Americans students to Tai Chi Chuan in 1964.”

Born in Taiwan, Mr. Chen was the son of a western-style physician whose brother practiced traditional Chinese medicine and healing arts, so he grew

up between both worlds. At the age of 12, he was invited to study Taoist and Confucian philosophies with the monks who lived in a Taoist Temple adjacent to his family's home. He moved to Anaheim, Calif. in 1983 but after a few years realized he didn't like living life in the fast lane.

“In my search for a more tranquil environment, I found the Treasure Coast,” Mr. Chen said. “When I moved here, a friend took me to the beach, and as I looked out on the water it reminded me of the ocean in my hometown of Keelung in Taiwan. I knew this was now my home and I could root myself here.”

Master Chen has been teaching Tai Chi and different forms of meditation on the Treasure Coast for 24 years now. He opened his latest studio, Master Chen's Wellness Center, in 2001 on U.S. 1 in North Stuart. In addition to Tai Chi, he performs acupuncture and Tui Na massage for natural pain relief, offers counseling on healthy weight loss, ses-



Photo courtesy of Donald Rodrigue Song-Tso Chen, center, the owner of Master Chen's Wellness Center in North Stuart, practices Tai Chi recently with Heather Pettersen, left, of Port St. Lucie and Chuck Vazquez, right, of Jupiter.

sions on meditation and Qu Gong breathing techniques and even Tai Chi for golfers.

Master Chen's fame has even begun to extend beyond Florida. Former New Orleans artist Heather Pettersen moved to Port St. Lucie in 2012 after hearing there was a Tai Chi master teaching somewhere on the Treasure Coast. She first began practicing the martial art in New Orleans as a relaxation technique to relieve the stress brought on by success as an artist.

“Work was intense, and in need of learning how to balance my life and keep mind, body, and spirit in harmony, I began learning Tai Chi,” she said.

Ms. Pettersen was disappointed in the first Tai Chi teacher she found here and subsequently moved to Fort Lauderdale in search of a true master. Unsuccessful there, she was about to move back to New Orleans when someone introduced her to Master Chen. Instead, she returned to Port St. Lucie.

“This was truly the teacher I had been looking for,” she exclaimed.

Chuck Vazquez of Jupiter has been studying Tai Chi under Master Chen for 11 years. He says he was always drawn to the ancient martial art but never seriously considered it until a friend began taking lessons under Master Chen and convinced him to go along.

“I have been hooked and committed since that first lesson,” he said. “Master Chen always gives 100 percent to his students and goes out of his way to teach us to the best of his abilities. Every class is a new learning experience.”

Mr. Vazquez says he used to suffer from chronic back and shoulder pain but has seen the symptoms disappear over the years he's practiced Tai Chi. He's also seen a change in his mental attitude when handling the stress of his job as a Palm Beach County fire rescue worker

“I have learning to live my life with balance and peace,” he said. “As a 911 dispatcher for 16 years, this was a valuable gift. Now when I am put in a stressful situation, I am always able to remain calm and have a clear head.”

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