

CARROLL AND 'HARD TARGET' — PROTECTING MIND AND BODY

For Aidan Carroll, what started out as a three-month plan turned into a seven-month extensive endeavour, but thankfully, the well-regarded martial arts instructor is almost finished the major renovations to his new full-time 'Hard Target Self-Defence Academy' in North County Dublin.

"At times the building reminded me of the comedy film, 'The Money Pit'", Carroll quipped. "For many years I've always wanted to create an Academy that offered much more than just the physical aspects of self-defence; that dream has now becoming a reality".

At his Hard Target Self-Defence Academy — in Unit 1, Roseville Business Park, off Turvey Avenue in Turvey — Carroll now offers many services, be-spoke courses and seminars and classes to suit males and females of all ages.

Carroll's full-time gym boasts an impressive 900 sq. ft. tatami grappling area, a 700 sq. ft. Kickboxing area, an 800 sq. ft. personal training studio and an impressive 700 sq. ft. boardroom.

"HARD TARGET' IS ALSO A TRAINING PROVIDER FOR MANY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND CIVIL SERVANT DEPARTMENTS"

VIEWING AREA FOR PARENTS

"We also included a state-of-the-art changing and shower facilities and a therapy room", Carroll explained. There's free private parking for 20 vehicles, a reception area and a tea and coffee viewing area for the parents.

Carroll founded his Academy in 2004 and since then it was gone through many changes and transitions. "As well as training thousands of civilians over the past 14 years, 'Hard Target' is also a training provider for many Government agencies and civil servant departments".

As Carroll's company name suggests, they teach 'self-defence'. However, he says that the "self-defence training we teach comprises about 10% of what we actually teach. The vast majority of our training focuses on self-protection, bodyguard training, situational awareness, body language, sexual assault prevention, non-verbal communication, threat analysis and recognition of pre-incident indicators and anomalies in people's behaviour".

'CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS'

"Our 'Ask, Inform, Defend' (AID) anti-bullying programme is one of most



ABOVE: the personal training and strength and conditioning studio at Focus Fitness, a sister company of Aidan Carroll's Hard Target Self-Defence Academy.



ABOVE: Hard Target Self-Defence Academy founder Aidan Carroll instructs a 'Breakaway Training' seminar for members of the Dublin Fire Brigade.

popular programmes for children and teenagers", Carroll added. "The programme is very empowering. It's wonderful to see a child's confidence and self-esteem improving week after week. This, in itself, is what keeps me and my team motivated to keep pushing forward and serving as many people, of all ages, as possible".

Carroll speaks very highly of his Academy staff. "I'm really blessed to have a great team of dedicated staff and coaches. They're all highly trained and experienced in their field of expertise. The main objective of the Academy is to provide a safe, friendly and welcoming learning environment".

Carroll continued: "Many of our students and clients have been subjected to varying levels of physical and/or psychological abuse. Our staff is trained to observe, acknowledge, listen, and guide these people through these testing times".

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-PROTECTION

One particular story Carroll shared provides a good insight into the importance of self-protection. "It was a busy afternoon in the Academy, the phone rang and I was just about to let it go to voicemail when I decided to answer".

The phone call in itself wasn't unusual, Carroll added. "The vast majority of calls we take are of the same nature — people generally looking for self-defence training, normally as a result of being attacked, under threat of being attacked, or a loved one of theirs has been attacked".

"I could tell immediately from the man's voice on the phone that the experi-



ABOVE: the 900 sq. ft. tatami grappling area at the Hard Target Self-Defence Academy in Turvey, North County Dublin.