

Rich Grogan and Grogan's Martial Arts Academy inspire hundreds of children with positive messages, training

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Bullying awareness and raising confidence and self-esteem of children have been priorities for schools nationwide. For **Rich Grogan** and the **Grogan's Acedemy of Martial Arts in Edwardsville**, those are motivating factors in reaching out to his students and schools.

Grogan's Acedemy of Martial Arts has been in existence since 2006. It is located today at 310 Hillsboro Ave. in Edwardsville.

Rich Grogan said one of the things he enjoys most about his academy is doing bullying awareness assemblies at schools. He started his professional career as a teacher in the Edwardsville School System, so he feels right at home instructing children.



“What we want to do is change the mindset that you don’t have to be a victim, but be firm in your convictions,” he said. “If you do that, bullies will find someone else. Bullying is an acquired behavior conditioning. We establish a positive mindset in the kids.”

Grogan is one of the highest-ranking Americans in his form of karate. He has studied for years, including four times in Korea and has a master’s rank.

He said he applies a different approach for middle school students compared to K-2 students. After about 10 minutes, the K-2 students are not that receptive to individual talks about character development, so he shortens talks to the youngsters to have impact.

“We deliver a message to people to believe in themselves and that they can overcome,” he said. “You have the power to feel how you want to feel. If you continue to push the message, people start to believe it.

“If you look in the mirror and say I am going to have a great day and make a change today, after time you believe it and it makes a positive impact.”

Rich’s life in martial arts began at age 10 or 11, when his grandma took him to a church summer martial arts class and he immediately fell in love with the sport/art form and its principles.

“I always played football, baseball and hockey and martial arts combines the sports in mindset and discipline, which can be used in other sports,” he said.

Rich’s wife, Desi, was a nurse, but in 2014 she quit to become the full-time administrator /marketing side of Grogan’s Martial Arts.

Here are some staggering Bullying Facts:

- **1 out of every 4** kids are bullied.
- Every day **160,000 kids** miss school due to bullying.
- **Possible effects of bullying:** Low self-esteem, Depression, Disinterest in any activities.
- **Warning signs:** lost or destroyed clothes or possessions, resistance to attending school, mysterious injuries.

What parents can do to help: Involve them in activities to improve their confidence, teach them how to handle bullies, talk to their teachers.

The No.1 tool to prevent being bullied or being a bully is **confidence and high self-esteem**. This is a **main focus** of the **Grogan's Martial Arts** program.

Grogan said the classes lead to improved focus, better grades, improved concentration and responsibly in children.

Rich moved the business to its present location in 2011 and he said he loves the new home because it has potential for significant growth and it is in Downtown Edwardsville.

“We have 2,500-square feet in the back we will renovate and create a secondary training space and use for after-school programs,” he said.

He said he has owned his business for 17 years. He also taught in the Edwardsville School District for 11 years.

Rich Grogan graduated from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville in 2001 and also played collegiate hockey.

“I grew up just outside Chouteau Island on a farm,” he said. “My dad was in Vietnam and he emphasized respect and manners,” Rich said. “Those are where my roots and work ethic come from - my dad - and my softer side comes from my mom.”

Grogan tries to teach youth that the mindset of a champion is never giving up, even with the ups and downs of life. “Things aren’t always great, but you can make them great with your response,” he said. “You have the power to feel how you want to feel.”

Many of the inspirational people Grogan loves to read from Zig Ziglar, Jack Hanfield, John Maxwell and Brian Tracy all talk about helping others and putting others first and that is something he tries to instill in kids. One of Ziglar's favorite quotes was "**Attitude makes all the difference,**" and Grogan's Martial Arts uses that theme as part of its principles in its teaching methods. "A person's attitude toward things is incredibly important," Grogan said in regard to success.

For girls, Grogan said self defense is very important and having self confidence is 99.9 of self defense.

“If you believe in yourself to act out or yell, it decreases a person’s chances of being attacked,” he said. “In the jungle, a lion goes after the weakest gazelle. They are an easy target.”



Desi said it is wonderful seeing kids change their lives when they join the academy. Desi and Rich's two sons and daughter are heavily involved in the karate academy, instructing and working with the younger children.

"I have watched several kids over the last two or three years, totally transform themselves with confidence," she said. "The best part is seeing kids grow up and mature."

Call **Grogan's Academy of Martial Arts** at **618-656-7700** for any additional information about the karate center or its wide variety of programs. Rich Grogan is also available for inspirational anti-bullying programs in schools. Parents are also invited to visit the studio and witness classes.

