



Carlisle TaeKwonDo & Fitness Academy

Johnny Birch
800 E. High St
Suite#110
Carlisle, PA 17013
(717)701-8310 Cumberland County
www.carlisletkd.com

“The SBDC took care of all the things I was missing and also taught me a lot of key things about the process of starting a business.”

- Johnny Birch

Industry: Fitness Instruction
Year Founded: January 2012
SBDC Assistance: Business Plan, Market Research, Financial Projections and Loan Assistance



Shippensburg University SBDC
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Dream, Perseverance and TaeKwonDo

Growing up, Johnny Birch knew that Tae Kwon Do was his passion and ultimately he pursued it as a career. During his enlistment in the Army, Johnny was one of the top Army Tae Kwon Do competitors. Upon leaving the Army, he dedicated his career to teaching children Tae Kwon Do at the Yellow Breeches Education Center. He never expected to start a business, but his desire to create a place where his daughter could practice and make new friends and he could continue training students outside his current employment changed that expectation.

Using this motivation, he set out to start his own Tae Kwon Do school. Johnny would soon learn the difficulties in starting a business, as he looked for buildings he could afford. He was surprised by the higher cost of commercial leases and considered giving up on his dream. Having the Tae Kwon Do teachings of “Perseverance” instilled in his character, however, prevented him from giving up and soon he leased a location in the Carlisle Plaza Mall.

When it came to funding, Johnny was connected to Community First Fund in Harrisburg for his business loan. Community First Fund referred Johnny to the Shippensburg University Small Business Development Center for additional assistance in developing a business plan and for guidance in addressing the challenges of small business ownership.

After meeting with his SBDC Business Consultant, Robin, Johnny realized there was more to starting a business than he considered. The SBDC provided valuable information, including how he could set his business apart from his competitors while remaining competitive. Johnny also received assistance in developing his financial projections and finalizing his business plan. Robin recommended he establish his business in the community by joining the Greater Carlisle Area Chamber of Commerce.

Being ambitious caused Johnny to make mistakes in the beginning with building renovations, but he was able to complete all facility improvements and have a grand opening in January of 2012. Since opening, Johnny has hired employees and continues to expand his student base. Since the business launch, Johnny has also added Zumba classes to his fitness offerings and after-school programs for kids.

Now that Johnny and his business are established he continues to make improvements to his business and operations. Most recently he updated his payment system to increase the ease of student payments. When asked about advice he would pass on to someone else, he was quoted as saying, “Know what sets you apart from everyone else and use it as your foundation to grow your clientele - start small and build your reputation - simple is good, motivation is key and relationships lead to success.”