

WITH HELP FROM THE IRELAND FUNDS

A NEW BOXING CLUB

& COMMUNITY CENTER OPENS IN DUNDALK





John Fitzpatrick and Paul Taaffe, founder of the boxing club, along with kids from the Dundalk community at the opening of the new boxing club. Photos: Ken Finegan

Dundalk-based O'Hanlon Park Amateur Boxing Club celebrated the official opening of its new spacious, top-class facility. Located in the old Toymaster building in the Long Walk area of Dundalk, the new Club/Community Hall will be open to members of the community of all ages—children from seven years of age right through to adults who have reached retirement.

John Fitzpatrick has been involved with the boxing club since 2011, when he participated in *The Secret Millionaire* show which aired on RTE 1 and he made a donation to the club. At the time, John struck up a friendship with Paul Taaffe, one of the founding members of the Club. Following the broadcast of the program, John committed to raising additional funds personally and through his foundation for the club to help purchase a building that they could make their own, instead of renting the local Parish Hall as they had in the past. At the time, they had to set up and take everything down each day that they used the space in the Parish hall.

A new building means that they will now have everything in place and be able to offer more days for the community to take advantage of a wide-ranging program of activities. Special needs children, adults with low self-esteem, those who suffer from obesity, former addicts and anyone who needs a friend are welcome to participate in special training programs to help them in their everyday life.

When it operated from the local Parish Hall, the club had access three nights a week and approximately 125 members. It is hoped the new facility can increase its opening times from 10:00am-10:00pm five days a week and be able to open on weekends for competitions and Sunday training. Ultimately, it will be a facility for the community and could be used by up to 200 children, young people and adults on a daily basis.

"I am incredibly excited that the new O'Hanlon Park Boxing Club is finally a reality. For me, the journey to get here started seven years ago when I agreed to participate in a television program and go undercover in Dundalk. My participation was meant to draw attention to the charitable foundation I started to honor my late parents, but it turned into so much more. It allowed me to meet some incredible people working hard to make a difference here in Dundalk, including Paul Taaffe, who founded the club."

Their commitment to keeping kids out of harm's way was incredibly inspiring to me, and I decided to stick with them to get this done. And finally – seven years later – here we are.

"This is a great reminder that while it's important for us to look to help worthy causes in challenged areas around the world, it's also important to remember that there are needs right here at home, too."

— John Fitzpatrick, Chairman of The Ireland Funds America

