



people think MMA, they think of what they see on Pay Per View and TV, guys beaten up with bloody faces, but that's not what our program is about" he said "It's not just about punching and fighting but to teach a martial arts life training program".

At the school, students of all ages learn self defense, respect and focus which Alders says has a real impact on children. Students are expected to maintain good grades in school, treat others with respect both in and out of the dojo and to uphold the core values taught by Alders and his staff. Students are also expected to excel and set the bar high once they "bow-in" to their training session. Unlike traditional karate programs, belt testing at the Karate Dojo is not just about how well the students execute their moves, but how they perform throughout the entire training process. "On top of getting a belt or stripe on their belt, we also grade the students with letter grades" Alders said of the process "Two students can execute the same moves, but if one had good focus in training, made eye contact when talking to the instructors and showed they were more focused, it could be the difference between a B+ and an A". This system helps kids reach higher.



## THE KARATE DOJO



Since he was 7 years old, Eric Alders always wanted to run his own karate school. As a child back in 1983, living in nearby Howell Township, he began taking karate lessons and fell in love with martial arts. In 1995, at the age of 18, he became a black belt, training in the mixed martial arts of Tae Kwon Doe, Kenpo, Hapkido, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and Aikido.

It wasn't until 10 years later that Eric had become Master Eric Alders, a 5th Dan Master Black Belt that he finally got that opportunity to open the school he had dreamed of most of his life.

Alders, now a resident of Toms River, realized his lifelong dream three years ago when he opened up The Karate Dojo, a mixed martial arts and karate school for the entire family.

"I drove by one day and saw the sign that they were building the Jackson Crossings Shopping Center and knew it would be the perfect location for the school" Alders said. Since opening, the Karate Dojo has become a permanent fixture in the ever changing shopping center.

Opening a karate school was not enough for Alders. He wanted his school to be different. Special. Instead of adopting an existing martial art such as Tae Kwon Do or Jujitsu like most schools, Master Alders created his own unique



American Top Team Class at the Karate Dojo

style called Yuugou-Ryu, which means "Fusion System". It is a style that takes what Alders feels is the best components of each traditional style and combines it into a single program. Yuugou-Ryu focuses on the kicking of Tae Kwon Do, punching of Kenpo, the moves of Hapkido and Aikido, Okinawa's Goju-Ryu and the grappling techniques of Japanese and Brazilian Jujitsu.

"Yuugou-Ryu takes the best parts of each of the styles to create a very well rounded system and allows the ability to keep the style fresh." said Alders "Instead of being set in traditional rules, we can easily incorporate new and modern techniques to always improve and become better".

Last year, The Karate Dojo became one of just a very small handful of schools nationwide to offer the American Top Team Mixed Martial Arts program. MMA is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States and the American Top Team is recognized as a leader in MMA training programs. They are currently a level 2 certified school within the program, one of only 12 schools nationwide at that level.

Separate from it's Yuugou-Ryu martial arts training, but still complimentary, the MMA program at the Karate dojo combines kickboxing, wrestling and judo with traditional martial arts philosophies, values and ettiquette. The program is not just for adult men either. Alders says the teens and women also participate in the program. "When

Students with good grades are rewarded with Dojo Bucks, money they can use to buy apparel, snacks and drinks at the school. It doesn't end there. Before a student can earn their next belt, they must first have their school teacher and parents sign a form that confirms that they have practiced the dojo's core family values outside of the school. Good grades in school also translate into more Dojo bucks for the students.

Training for the karate classes at the dojo start at 3 years old with their "Little Ninjas" program which introduces young children to the basic concepts of martial arts and to prepare them for their eventual entry into the actual program at age 5. Little Ninjas learn balance, focus, fitness, coordination and more. The program is very age appropriate.

Alders is also a common face at local area public schools and pre-schools where he teaches stranger awareness, bully prevention and self defense to students.



This year, the dojo added the Cage Fitness workout program for men and women. Cage Fitness gives you a total body workout over five 5 minute segments that focus on endurance, strength, power and core.

The Karate Dojo promotes strong family and traditional martial arts values which Alders hopes inspires his students to achieve both in and out of the class. To learn more about Master Alders and the Karate Dojo visit [www.tkdojo.com](http://www.tkdojo.com).



Master Alders instructs a Cage Fitness workout.



Master Eric Alders 5th Dan Black Belt and owner of the Karate Dojo in Jackson, one of only 12 Certified Level 2 American Top Team schools in the United States.