

Hearns Involved In Fight To Save Kronk

By Mark Olejniczak

Detroit is a city known for many things. Depending on where you live or where you grew up, your view of Detroit may vary. First and foremost, the automobile industry will stand up front and center in the minds of many. Detroit is home to "Hitsville USA" with musical talents such as Diana Ross and The Supremes, Smokey Robinson, and Marvin Gaye to name a few stars that Motown has produced.

The City of Detroit is also home to one of the most famous boxing gyms anywhere in the world. Nestled in the westside of the city is 'The House of Champions', which is in the basement of the Kronk Recreation Center on McGraw Street.

The gym has produced over 31 world champions. In the mid-eighties alone, the Kronk gym was producing world champions like a Detroit assembly line. One of the more famous champions from the gym is Detroit's own Thomas "Hitman" Hearns. From humble beginnings as a skinny ten-year-old living on Detroit's eastside, Hearns worked on becoming one of boxings best to enter the ring.

Unfortunately, those days are just a piece of history now. There are layoffs and cutbacks in all industries in these ever changing times. Kronk's legacy in the local area is still strong, but the recreation center itself has been affected directly by cutbacks.

Near the end of November 2005, the City of Detroit announced it would close the Kronk Recreation Center. In the midst of a severe budget crisis, the power brokers of the city were looking for ways to save funds. The decision was made to lock the doors of the Kronk Recreation Center and eight other recreation facilities across the Metro Detroit area in Jan. 2006.

This decision was met with resistance from area residents, boxers, and others who use the Kronk Recreation Center. Hearns, like many other citizens was opposed to the decision. And, he was left asking the question many concerned citizens were left wondering, "How are you going to close Kronk?"

"Kronk is home for me," Hearn's points out. "It has produced lots of great fighters. Along with boxing, you have older people that go to the center to play bingo and games. If the center closes, they will have nowhere else to go."

Hearn's credits the gym for many things in his life. He recognizes how at the center, he learned how to fight and develop his skills. Through his teenage years, Hearn's spent so much of his time there that he was practically raised at the center. Kronk truly has a special place in Hearn's heart and that is why he has explored the idea of purchasing the gym.

"I have been talking to the city of Detroit, trying to obtain the gym," Hearn's says. "If it all works out, I believe it would be a good thing for the city. Being able to keep the center open and knowing that I came from there."

Hearn's is looking to fulfill his own destiny by having his very own gymnasium to produce his very own fighters. He wants to be able to give younger people an opportunity to learn boxing techniques and proper conditioning.

"You have got to give young people that want to fight the opportunity," Hearn's said. "There are many young people that look up to me. All they are looking for is a chance and the right gym so they have somewhere to go. This is something that I would like to happen real soon."

At the present time, the Kronk Recreation Center remains open. It will take continued effort and funding to ensure the long-term future of the Kronk Center remains safe.