

Bay Aerials Gymnastics bounces with students' energy

BY MONICA LANDER
CORRESPONDENT

Large circles and geometric shapes painted in bright, eye-catching colors cover the walls at Bay Aerials Gymnastics in Fremont. Separated by mats and various equipment, classes of students are learning, practicing and trying to master techniques in the bright and lively gym at 4884 Davenport Place.

Purchased in 2004 by husband and wife John and Lisa Aguirre, Bay Aerials Gymnastics was recently expanded to double its size to 20,000 square feet and new equipment was added to provide even more opportunities for gymnasts of all abilities and ages.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Lisa says she always loved the sport of gymnastics as a child and started competing for the YMCA team when she was 12. She started coaching at the age of 16 and dreamed of having a gym of her own one day. Gymnastics "stayed in my heart," she said.

After studying physical therapy and education, she came to California 1989 on her vacation, fell in love with the state and never looked back. Her face breaks out into a warm smile as she nods and calls herself fortunate to be able to match her passion (gymnastics) with her job, and in a location she loves.

"We are a family, friendly, fun, fitness center that offers gymnastic classes for toddlers to adults," Lisa says proudly.

A staff of 20 teaches a wide variety of classes and programs including the Happy Feet Movement Education Program for preschoolers, Olympic gymnastics for beginners through intermediate students, tumbling and trampoline, junior and senior cheer, tumbling for martial arts students, boys' gymnastics and adult gymnastics.

Lisa calls their staff very experienced and passionate about the sport. Almost all of them are gymnasts themselves and all have a love for teaching children. Even before the children reach the mats and balance beams, they are warmly welcomed by Margaret Kristjansdottir who greets them at the front desk.

"I hire people who really love the sport. They are good people who spend a lot of time on safety as well," she adds.

The rhythmic gymnastic program is taught by a national champion, Mackenzie Goodmanson who was named one of the top 20 rhythmic



JIM CHAPMAN/SPECIAL TO BANG-EAST BAY

HUSBAND AND WIFE JOHN AND LISA AGUIRRE purchased Bay Aerials Gymnastics in 2004 and recently doubled its size to 20,000 square feet and added new equipment.

mic gymnasts in the United States.

Stanford graduate and international Elite gymnast Stephanie Gentry coaches the dance and gymnastics program.

With a business and finance background, it makes sense that John focuses on the business side of the gym from payroll and taxes to websites and marketing and more which allows Lisa to concentrate on working with people and the gymnastics programs, her favorite parts of the business.

"I'm here in the office or out on the floor and available to talk with the kids and parents."

If running a business and a family — they have a 10-year-old, Samantha — isn't taxing enough these days, Lisa says she also finds

herself challenged to keep their great staff.

"It's not a tremendously high paying job (teaching and coaching), but they do it because it is their passion," she says.

That students are continuing to fill classes and need practice time on the mats and equipment is a good thing, says Lisa, who adds that she hopes to continue with the gymnastic teams who compete in levels 4 through 10 in artistic gymnastics and levels 4 through 9 in rhythmic gymnastics. These state, regional and national champions compete in several areas including floor exercises, tumbling, vault and trampoline.

Other plans for the future include offering even more classes on more days, and hopefully even starting an all-star cheerleading team.

Lisa really likes that the gym is designed so that all the gymnasts are visible to each other during practice.

"The older girls are role models, great athletes and good students."

She is particularly proud of the growth of the program since they purchased the gym.

There is tremendous value in the sport of gymnastics, she says.

"Not everyone can do it. In order to learn it, your body needs to be in shape. You need flexibility and strength.

"Setting goals and reaching those goals (in gymnastics) gives a child incredible confidence and self esteem as well. They also learn discipline, respect and cooperation in the process."

She adds, "In the long run, all the things, the skills and the tools they gain, with setting small goals will help them in school, with their first interview, after college and in life."

As fairly new members of the Fremont business community and the Irvington Business Association (IBA), Lisa says they want to be more involved in the community and sees their involvement as a way to help their own business grow. Their involvement, she says, also gives them "the opportunity to give back to the community."

Lisa says she wants the community to know they are "friendly and professional" and "all our coaches and staff have the finest training and education. We provide for a wide variety of abilities and would love to be an all inclusive facility for the entire family."

For a complete list of classes and schedules, registration forms and information about the summer program, playgroup and field trip opportunities and birthday parties, visit www.bayaerials.com or call 510-651-5870. Bay Aerials Gymnastics is located at 4884 Davenport Place in Fremont.

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