

Published December 19th, 2012

Life after the Massage Parlors

By Sophie Braccini



Carlos Gomez, Marilyn Chalmers and Nancy Katz in front of the renovated storefront. Photo Sophie Braccini

It was a sad sight along Mt. Diablo Boulevard, where Carlos Gomez' tailoring business, Moises Gomez and Associates, was withering, surrounded by massage parlors of ill repute. Now driving to the corner of Mt. Diablo and Willow Drive, one might not recognize the place. The trees have been trimmed and the Spanish-style gate that marks the entrance to the Willow neighborhood is visible.

The storefronts on Mt. Diablo look completely different: neon signs and dark windows have been replaced with bright, large windows exposing the new private gym, Chalmers Fitness; and less prominent, but equally important, the back massage location has also been completely remodeled and is now home to the French school, French for Fun.

Last February, after Willow neighbors took matters into their own hands and the Lafayette Police Department cracked down on the illegal activity, the massage parlors that surrounded Gomez's business vanished. The area revitalized, Carlos Gomez is happy to introduce his new neighbors, Marilyn Chalmers and Catherine Jolivet.

Jolivet, owner of French for Fun for 15 years, had been looking for a new place for her school for a long time. "Finding this little cottage is a miracle," says the energetic

business woman. "I had been looking for a year and all the commercial real estate brokers I worked with told me to give up and move my business to Walnut Creek. But for me, it was either Lafayette or retirement." The husband of one of her teachers saw a Craigslist posting for the space and Jolivet made an offer. "The location was perfect. Of course, it looked awful inside, but we are creative and not afraid of work; we knew we could make something charming of it."

Marilyn Chalmers said exactly the same thing. She had been operating a small gym nearby where she offered private lessons and was looking for something bigger. When she saw the space along Mt. Diablo Boulevard she immediately loved it. "My husband thought it was awful, but I saw what it could become," she said. Her husband Don Chalmers also teaches at the new studio.

Now the three business owners work together. "Carlos (Gomez) and I used to be neighbors when I first opened my French school," remembers Jolivet, "and Marilyn is so professional and charming. Every time I come to the new place (where she plans to move at the beginning of January), I see people I know going to Carlos' business."

Gomez already has flyers from Chalmers' practice on the desk of his tailoring business. "I want everyone here to be successful," says Gomez, who has already seen a change in his business since the massage parlors vanished in July. "My customers are coming back," he says looking at the chart of his increasing sales.

Chalmers is also experiencing increased activity in her bright new studio. "Now I can offer group classes, on top of my individual training practice," she says. "I love coming to this place," adds Nancy Katz, one of Chalmers' clients. "It feels like Marilyn (Chalmers): energetic, fun and inspiring." Chalmers, who says that she works with clients at any level of fitness, offers Functional Fitness training classes, TRX, stretch classes and boot camp.

Grand openings of the new businesses should happen soon. You can find more information about Chalmers Fitness at www.chalmersfitnessusa.com and French for Fun at www.frenchforfun.com. For information about Moises Gomez and Associates, call (925) 283-6755.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA