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Joy in Motion: an energetic addition to Moraga's fitness hub

By Sophie Braccini



Justin Cole and Linda Craig in their new Joy in Motion studio Photo Sophie Braccini

According to Tamra Aguinaldo, mother of two budding dancers, Joy in Motion is a place where children realize their dreams. Now the dance studio that started two years ago renting a place at Star Pilates is moving to a big standalone facility in Moraga's fitness hub: the stretch of Country Club Drive between Canyon and School Street. The two founders, Justin Cole and Linda Craig, will lead a reduced program this summer in order to complete their new installation and plan a grand-opening/fundraising "Deploy Joy" party on Sept. 15.

Joy in Motion has started transforming a former post office/warehouse into a dance studio, and it has quite a different vibe. The old post office is an historic Moraga site that was constructed at the corner of Country Club Drive and School Street. It is now owned by Song Chae Yun who first turned it into a warehouse in 2016 before renting it to the nonprofit Joy in Motion.

Across the street from the new dance studio is Si Si Caffe, flanked by two other fitness studios: Studio E and Humble Yoga. Cole and Craig have already warned Si Si Caffe owner Cathy Corsi that she might get new waves of young customers after classes dismiss.

At the building site, the old outline of the post office that closed at the end of 2011 could still be recognized, but the metal beams that will harness the sheetrock were already installed, outlining three very large studios. Cole and Craig are very pleased to now be in charge of an over 5,000 square foot building where there will be room for them to expand and provide a top-quality environment for their dancers.

The owners remember when they started their dance studio two years ago. They had met professionally in the East Bay where they have both danced, taught and put on shows for many years. Their purpose from the start has been to lift the perception of the value of dance education and entertainment and offer classes for all ages where very young to quite mature people can express themselves through dance and theatrics. They acknowledge having been inspired by the Luna Dance Institute (Berkeley), the Peter Pan Foundation (Lafayette), and the Pinole Community Players where they both performed and held classes.

Joy in Motion was very well received by the community, and now boasts about 400 clients. It offers a wide variety of classes for boys and girls and the founders are quite happy to have a sizeable number of boys enrolled, especially in the hip-hop classes. Joy in Motion offers a whole range of classes from contemporary, ballet, jazz, hip-hop, tap (including for adults), and the Funky Freedom class offered for clients 4 years old and up. Now with three studios available, Cole and Craig say that they are going to be able to expand their classes and hire new teachers.

Aguinaldo says that the kids learn more than dance at the studio; they learn kindness, perseverance and how to be part of a positive community. She adds that Joy in Motion's spring stage show leaves her speechless every year because it is just beautiful on every level.

Cole and Craig know that this new location is a reach for them, especially financially. Even if they consider the moderate rent for Moraga, the tenant improvement work is sizeable, from constructing new walls, to adding air conditioning and installing specialized dance floors in the studios. Cole says that this is both exciting and scary.

In order to make ends meet, the company is organizing the Deploy Joy dance party and auction on Sept. 15. The organizers promise a lot of fun, such as a glow party, and some surprises. The opening date of the new studio is Aug. 27 for the fall season classes. For more information, visit <http://joyinmotiondance.org/>.

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