

Toms River woman stretches her business skills

By DANA AURIEMMA • August 29, 2010

I knew I wanted a career in business and marketing since high school. I received my marketing degree from Penn State University and was thrilled to be hired by Johnson & Johnson after graduation.

After five years, my career landed me in Providence, R.I., as the company's baby sales representative for the CVS pharmacy chain. While J&J was an incredible company, I wanted to pursue something I felt more passionate about and something that would have a greater impact on people's lives. Without another job waiting for me, I left my career with J&J and my husband and I moved to Toms River.

I always loved fitness, so I started to teach aerobics classes using the fitness certifications I had received two years prior as a personal interest. Meanwhile, I had been experiencing severe back pain for over four years and missed the Pilates classes I took in Providence.

Pilates had helped with my back pain and I thought it was a great form of exercise, so I decided to become an instructor through the Balanced Body University Instructor Training Program. But I didn't find any existing Pilates studios in the area to work for, so I decided to start my own in Toms River. I thought it would be a great opportunity to bring something new to the area.

I was unsure about how the town would respond to their first Pilates studio. In a studio, Pilates is taught differently than in a gym class or DVD. The instructors receive special training, equipment is often used and classes are more expensive. So I started by renting just one room, bought one piece of equipment and opened for business.

After only three months, I had enough clients to feel that a full studio would be welcomed and moved to a bigger space. Over the next year I purchased more equipment, hired instructors and grew into a full Pilates studio. I was thrilled to see how many people came in and loved their classes.

After a year, I wanted to offer just a little more to my clients — other types of fitness that would be e

qually fun, functional and intelligent. In November 2009, I added more space and introduced yoga and Kinesis classes. With weights, cables and an innovative design, Kinesis allows students to exercise with three-dimensional, unrestricted movements and resistance. While it will take a while to educate people about Kinesis, it is worth it.

While owning a business is more work than I ever could have imagined, it has been far more rewarding to help my clients be strong, healthy and pain-free. It's not just about demonstrating exercises, it's about educating students how to correct bad movement habits and exercise better. That, in turn, will improve their quality of life.

As Joseph Pilates said, "Physical fitness is the first requisite to happiness." I hope we make our community very happy.

Dana Auriemma owns Pilates By the Bay in Toms River (www.PilatesByTheBayNJ.com). Getting Ahead runs Sundays. If you are a businesswoman interested in writing about your career, please send your story to Business Editor Dennis P. Carmody at dcarmody@app.com

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Dana Auriemma, owner of Pilates by the Bay in Tosm River, works with Sue MacNeill, Jackson. (STAFF PHOTO: BOB BIELK)

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