

Small Business Roundup

Small Business Alliance of Costa Rica

The Small Business Alliance of Costa Rica is a core group of forward-thinking entrepreneurs based in the San Ramón area with some very big plans. Their mission statement announces that they are "dedicated to helping ex-pats conduct business in Costa Rica through business networking events, building awareness about their product or service, and providing referrals, contacts, information and other resources."

The initial group of founders and members is a mix of people who have been living and working in Costa Rica for years. There are 20-year veterans who have seen it all and neophytes who have been here only six months who have a lot to learn.

The Small Business Alliance has just launched their website www.sbacostarica.com. It's already a gold mine of information for expats, even if you don't have your own business. New information is added regularly so you'll need to check back on it periodically.

The continuing goal of the SBA Costa Rica is "Supporting Expat Entrepreneurs." But remember, you don't have to own a store or shop to be an entrepreneur. When the entrepreneurial spirit animates your life, every day will have added zest. You'll never be bored, and what's more, your life will take on extra meaning as you engage people and ideas, and find solutions to problems.

If these sound like your kind of people, you should go to their next social mixer on December 11, 2009. Call or email Mike Styles, 8333-8750, mike@styles.com for more information.

Container Homes

Unless you live in a yurt, all homes are boxes, really. Jimmy Lee had a great idea. Take a steel shipping container, build it out with windows, doors, a kitchen, bathroom and wiring and plumbing, and you have a solid, secure instant home. No permits are required, and especially no CCSS hassles with workers. With some imagination you can stack or cluster a few of these around and end up with a great home. Add some landscaping and you're good to go. Plus your carbon footprint will be tiny. You have to see these to believe it. Call Jimmy Lee at 8850-7805. E-mail: admin@containerhomes.net. Website www.containerhomes.net.

Rent a Cabin -- El Castillo de Relajamiento

Before you buy some of Jimmy Lee's containers to live in, stay for a week or several months at the Castle. César Carrillo is your host at this group of charming and rustic (but well-appointed) and beautifully landscaped cabins just three miles south of San Ramón on the Puntarenas highway. Call César for directions to the cabins. 8997-8487. E-mail him at transcarrillo@yahoo.com. Take a look at the furnished cabins, on their website www.cabinasofcostarica.com.

Iguana Tranquila Art Gallery & Gift Shop

Continue down the Puntarenas highway and you'll start seeing the signs for Iguana Tranquila gift shop. Stop when you get to this incredible landmark filled with the most beautiful art and handiwork of Costa Rica and Central America's finest artists and artisans. There really is a laid-back iguana to see in the

side parking lot, along with the laid-back ex-Californians who run the shop, Mike and Jacki Styles. Just ask Jacki anything about the art and gifts that fill the old Cambronero building (which was a waystation for the oxcart caravans laden with coffee heading to the coast) and she'll tell you. If you're looking for some land to buy to put your postmodern Jimmy Lee container homes, step over to the real estate department and talk to Mike. They have some incredible ocean-view land for sale. Be sure to decorate your container home complex with the art from Iguana Tranquila.

Yoga School of Graciela Valverde

Got an ailment? Get yoga. We like the style and excellence of Graciela Valverde's Yoga Studio in San Ramon. It's located in the Central American Chiropractic building located 200 north and 50 east of Bomba Churry--the big gas station you get to right after the San Ramón turnoff. Don't worry if you don't have cool yoga clothing. Graciela makes and sells her Om Ganesh line of yoga wear. Graciela's certified yoga instruction is a blend of Anusara and Astananga Hatha yoga schools. Graciela also conducts Vipassana (mindfulness) meditation classes. Open Yoga classes are Monday and Friday at 6:00 P.M. and Saturdays at 2:00 P.M. These two hour classes cost 3000 colones. Private sessions are available for 6,000 colones per class. Call Graciela at 8843-2851, or 2447-3655 for more information.

Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation in Palmares

We highly recommend the physical therapy of Lic. Evelyn Zúñiga. Evelyn is a protégé of the dean of physical therapists in the Occidente, Lic. Johann Baltodano. She works at Johann's physical therapy center is the Centro de Fisioterapia Monte Albornia. The center is adjacent to the Centro Diurno de Ancianos. It's easy to get to some 500 meters from the Palmares turnoff and another 250 meters west. If you can't get there, Evelyn can also come to your house and help with wound-healing, musculo-skeletal problems, rehabilitation, and stress reduction. Evelyn lives in San Pedro, right next to San Ramón, and you can schedule sessions at her house. Call her at 8870-3866. The number of Johann's center is 841-0480. I take Kathleen to this center once a week.

Aqua Therapy

Milena Chavarría conducts aqua therapy sessions for physical rehabilitation, weight loss, and fitness in the swimming pools at the Campo Turístico Bajo Caliente, in Bajo Caliente, San Juan, San Ramón. Milena has her degree in Physical Therapy and is an experienced aqua therapist. There are some ailments that respond only to the reduced gravity effect of exercise in water. For these, only aqua therapy will do the trick. Call Milena at 8863-2782 for a free evaluation.

Central American Chiropractic

The talented and energetic Jimmy Lee is best known as the best chiropractor in the Occidente and beyond. If you have the following symptoms head over to his clinic in San Ramón: dizziness, depression, anxiety, insomnia, tiredness, pain in shoulders, arms and hands, neck pain, back and waist pain, sciatica, foot pain, digestive problems, asthma, and just about anything that ails you. Jimmy's expert chiropractic treatments can help. Tel. 2447-0996