

New boxing enterprise for Crescent City

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A new business has arrived at the Northcrest strip mall in Crescent City, home to CC's Diner, Bicoastal Media and Back Country Bikes.

Behind the delicately decorated glass doors of its traditional building, you can hear the sound of bags hitting the walls. A peek inside reveals black walls covered in graffiti, a platform (soon-to-be fighting ring) and people pounding punching bags under Richard Ybarra's supervision.

Ybarra and his wife, Raquel, opened King of the Grind Boxing Club three weeks ago at 1339 Northcrest Dr., hoping to see it become the go-to boxing business here.

"If you're looking for fitness, BAM, I want that to be right there," Ybarra said. "Guys will get real good, then they'll go compete. And I want it to be out of this gym."

Word travels fast. Already, 30 children have attended Ybarra's boxing classes. And Crescent City's Big 5 Sporting Goods sold out its boxing gloves in just the first two weeks of the gym's opening.

Ybarra used social media to grab people's attention, but he didn't really need to. Many already knew about his business. For the past few months, Ybarra had been using his garage as a boxing gym, hanging punching bags from the ceiling and taping agility ladders to the floor.

He started teaching his friends from work, and somehow ended up with 15 to 20 kids gathering regularly for boxing lessons.

"Started in my garage, and I taught my kids. And I always told them, 'We're gonna have a boxing gym. I'm gonna give you a boxing gym. And when we get a boxing gym, we're gonna make it a true athletes' gym,'" Ybarra said.

Now he has a gym, and it's taking off. Four boxing classes are scheduled, with more in the works. Some of the friends he coached in his garage have volunteered to help him coach the classes – kids ages 6 and 7 on Mondays and Wednesdays, adults at 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"It's pretty rewarding to help them and see them improve, too," said Justin Chaves, one of the friends Ybarra coached.

He said Ybarra taught him everything he knows about boxing, helping him to lose weight and get in shape.

"He was doing it with us, and then he was doing it with the little kids. And then here we are now," he said. "It's really good exercise. That's the best part about it."

Ybarra began his business with a few weeks of youth-only classes. Then, on Nov. 19, he incorporated adult classes. Eventually, he wants to have open-gym hours, where people can come in and use the equipment without a class.

For the month of December, eight classes a month (twice a week) will cost youths \$60 and adults \$90. Ybarra plans to raise the prices in the new year, once he's had a grand opening.

It takes a community to start a boxing gym. Or at least, a family. His cousin drew graffiti on the gym's walls to set the mood, his brother made the logo, his wife manages the office and found the location, his children pitch in now that he's given them boxing lessons.

Ybarra, a USA Boxing-certified coach, has spent his entire life in the sport. He was introduced to boxing when he was growing up in Los Angeles.

"I did boxing my whole life. I grew up in a boxing gym. Pretty much every workout I ever did my whole life was... boxing. Just one of my passions, honest truth," Ybarra said.

His mom enrolled him in YMCA and Boys and Girls clubs, which offered boxing lessons, and he was hooked. He fought competitively a few times, but found he had more passion for coaching.

"I couldn't coach and be a fighter at the same time. So I figured, you know what I'd rather [do is] put it all into coaching and show kids and let them live out the dream that I've been wanting," Ybarra said.

He said the training in his new gym will be old-school. No kickboxing or mixed-martial arts.

Ybarra sees the training as a way to burn calories, learn self-defense and release aggression. “There’s a lot of work that goes in here, so anything you pretty much do, it’s going to be a lot of aggression that you can take out,” Ybarra said.

“Give them a skill, whether they use it to compete or whether they use it to defend themselves. Or just to give them something good to do.”