

New women's fitness center and spa heads to the hills

W. Scott Bailey

San Antonio's continued growth is pushing people further north and west toward the Texas Hill Country. That migration is creating the need for the kind of urbanized businesses and services that heretofore may have seemed unnecessary or out of place. One of the latest examples is a new fitness center and spa that will cater to a high-income population sprouting up along an ever-changing Interstate Highway 10 West corridor that stretches from North Loop 1604 to Comfort, Texas.

Compliments Women's Fitness Center & Spa will officially open in early January near Leon Springs at 25333 IH-10 West and Ralph Fair Road. Already, more than 100 members have joined, say owners Marcie Cook and Sherry Willis.

Cook is a San Antonian and Willis moved to Boerne from Houston. The two say Compliments will offer total fitness classes, salon services, nutritional counseling and metabolic testing among other services. They add that the 7,000-plus-square-foot fitness center will bring a new concept in total wellness options to women interested in comprehensive health services.

In a single location, members will be able to participate in circuit training or take classes in yoga, Pilates or kick-boxing. They can also have a facial, manicure or pedicure without ever leaving the center.

One-stop shop

Cook and Willis say they decided to open the new facility because women in the area were in search of a healthier lifestyle and one-stop convenience. It doesn't hurt that there is plenty of disposable income in the area.

"We looked for an area where there were women with the time and the resources to pamper themselves," explains Cook, who says the Dominion community that is home to stars such as David Robinson and George Strait -- and their wives -- is only a stone's throw away from their fitness center.

Cook says today's women have little time to devote to themselves. She says they are searching for "convenience and comfort" and need to maximize the few minutes they have available to keep themselves healthy and fit. Willis says the goal was to create a place that provides incentives for those women to remain fit and healthy.

"We've combined the knowledge of medical science with the understanding of how fitness can best be maintained into a facility that saves a woman time and money while improving her health," Willis explains.

Compliments will offer a selection of equipment and services staffed by trained fitness personnel. The main exercise room, for example, will contain treadmills and fixed-weight machines.

"There are no weight stacks to change,

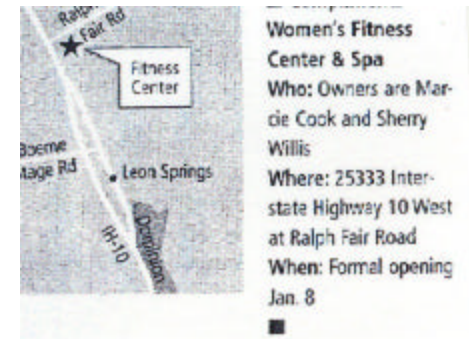
so that means our environment is totally safe," says Cook. "This means it is ideal for those who have never exercised before or who have been away from the gym or have difficulty scheduling regular workouts."

Cook adds, "Our facility includes all those elements we know a woman wants and needs to keep herself feeling healthy and looking vigorous. After a good workout or a class, women can shower, change, have a manicure, pedicure and a facial ..."

On the move

Owners Cook and Willis saw the retail activity occurring along the IH-10 corridor, with new restaurants, shops and inns popping up seemingly overnight. They say the decision to locate a new fitness center and spa in the area indicates just how dramatic that growth has become as more San Antonians are trading in big-city sprawl for a quieter country crawl. Perhaps the greatest magnet of that growth has been Boerne, a bustling town where historic architecture and new business activity are merging together. Considered the heart of the "Golden Corridor" by some in the real estate industry, Boerne is roughly halfway between San Antonio and Comfort and minutes from Compliments.

"There is a dynamic growth occurring from Leon Springs past Boerne and all the way up to Comfort," says Jo -Ann Powter, spokeswoman for Compliments. "It's a well-educated,



high-income area. These women (Cook and Willis) saw a definite need in a corridor filled with other women who were looking for something like this." For Cook, this is the next great challenge. In addition to being a published author, she is an adventurer. The latter almost cost Cook her life in 2002 when she was involved in a hot-air ballooning accident and was severely electrocuted. With that horrible chapter behind her, Cook says the next challenge is to make the new fitness center a success.

"Everything will be high-end, very classy," she says. "We wanted to take a whole different approach than the Ballys and Spectrums. If this one is as successful as we think it will be, we'll definitely do another." Cook says there is already interest from associates in two Florida communities -- Port St. Lucie and Naples -- to put similar clubs there.