

# Kosama

## Carrying the weight of COVID

by Alyce Brown

Before the pandemic, Kosama was a busy gym in Davenport, beloved by its community of dedicated members.

Like almost all small businesses, however, Kosama took a hit when COVID shut-downs began across the state and nation. It has been a tough journey for them, and one that owner Lindsay Ulloa said has been “an emotional, physical and mental struggle.”

Kosama opened in July of 2011 and garnered a community around what its website calls a “one-of-a kind fitness program,” which Ulloa explained constitutes group fitness and functional movement with heart rate training.

As COVID kept more and more people home in the spring, gyms and fitness centers began to lose members, with Kosama being no exception. “Many members have completely terminated their membership because they don’t feel safe or comfortable coming into the facility due to the risks of COVID,” said Ulloa.

She was determined to find new ways to keep Kosama up and running during the global shutdowns, setting work at what proved to be a time-consuming undertaking. “It has caused many, many more hours of work for me,” she said, but she found ways to continue operation.

Starting in the spring, Ulloa began live-streaming all of Kosama’s workout classes and providing access to recordings of them through a new On-Demand system. Cleaning and disinfecting was also increased for members who still attended in-person classes, including the purchase of a fog sanitizer machine to reach all of the equipment and flooring.

Making such substantial changes to the way the gym is run was not easy, however. “From the months of March to June I practically lived at my gym, working 12 to 14 hour days instructing virtual classes all day long,” said Ulloa. The equipment required for live streaming and On-Demand services also increased the fees the business has to pay, with Ulloa adding that all the new technology has “financially taken a toll on us.”

But despite the struggles and obstacles that Kosama and Ulloa have faced through the pandemic, she is happy to keep it running for her members. “I saw a need and decided I needed to step up and be able to service my members however possible,” she said. “I wanted to give them options so they could still stay healthy. Not just for their physical health but even more so for their mental.”

Ulloa’s dedication to her members comes at a good time, as the pandemic continues to take a toll on citizens’ mental health. From extra hours to extra services, she stepped up for her members when it counted and

demonstrated an impressive resiliency during this difficult period for small business owners.

But the generosity didn’t end there. Ulloa’s desire to share the importance of fitness for one’s mental health combined with her love of the community prompted her to offer free community cardio classes via Zoom during the weeks when the Quad Cities was quarantined.

This summer, Kosama will celebrate its tenth year of business in the Quad Cities. While not without its struggles, Ulloa said COVID most definitely has proved to be the greatest of those by a landslide.

The gym continues operating and adapting to these changing times, and it seems clear that Ulloa’s positive outlook is surely the gym’s secret weapon to handling all this pandemic has thrown its way. “It’s worth it,” she said.

