

Passion for dancing leads to business

A husband-and-wife team with a love for all things Spanish has turned their passion into a promising small business.

By *Eric Wisgard*

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Earlier this year, Kristy Manuel and her partner Aloysius Leeson established Casa de Flamenco – Spanish for “Home of Flamenco” – in Seaview Downs.

Kristy is an accomplished flamenco dancer – having trained in some of the top dancing schools in Spain – while Aloysius is an equally talented flamenco guitarist.

And Kristy’s philosophy behind turning a passion into a business will serve as an inspiration to others.

“Don’t be afraid to let other people know what you are passionate about,” she says.

“So many people hold themselves back from what could be a really fulfilling experience in their lives.”

Both Kristy and Aloysius are Adelaide-born and – before they were a couple – had travelled separately to Spain to pursue their individual passions for dancing and flamenco guitar playing.

Between 2003 and 2004, Kristy spent about 14 months in Madrid, learning the finer points of flamenco dancing and improving her fluency in the Spanish language.

Aloysius also had made a number of trips to Seville to perform with and learn from Spanish flamenco guitarists.

On their separate returns to Adelaide, Kristy and Aloysius met while rehearsing for a flamenco performance. As well as getting married in 2007, they discussed the concept of working together on a flamenco-focussed business.

But like any good business, it has a twist that takes it beyond the typical. As well as dancing lessons, Casa de Flamenco offers Spanish language and guitar lessons.



Marion Business

Based on her experience in completing a cultural tourism degree at Flinders University, Kristy was convinced that a flamenco dancing school that doubled as a “cultural centre” would give their new business an edge over other dancing schools.

“If people want to really immerse themselves in the Spanish culture, they can not only learn dancing here, but if they ever travel to Spain, they will be able to communicate more effectively as well,” Kristy explains.

She says she’s always had an entrepreneurial flair and while she continues to work full time as a project officer at Flinders University, her evening and weekend business is continuing to grow.

“I’ve always wanted a business and it’s been fantastic that my husband and I were able to create a small business out of doing what we love,” Kristy says.

One of the unique features about flamenco dancing is that it is not partner based – so men and women don’t need to find a partner to enrol and don’t have to “pair up” with a stranger to have lessons.

She says her husband, who is a very creative person, complements her more business-like approach to running Casa de Flamenco.

Kristy has sought advice and information from the Inner Southern Business Enterprise Centre and intends completing business training courses.

“I studied ballet as a child but my love of dancing eventually led to flamenco,” Kristy says.

“Flamenco has an intensity and emotional attachment that so many other dance forms don’t have.

“And flamenco has so many different forms. You can express joy or much deeper emotions such as pain or sadness.

“Flamenco gives you a wonderful ability to express yourself,” she says.

And with Casa de Flamenco, Kristy and Aloysius have been able to express their passion for dancing, music – and business.

More information: www.casadeflamenco.com.au.