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Eating Out - Friday, April 3, 2009

Shop Talk

by Daryl Savage

DON'T MESS WITH MIDTOWN ... Midtown Palo Alto is about to get its second martial-art studio. The mystery of Midtown has been solved with the revelation that the 10-month-old vacancy at 2741 Middlefield Road, the former site of Territory Ahead, will be filled by Hiruko, a "holistic learning program" that uses what its website calls "healing martial arts" to "transform people's lives." This will be Hiruko's second martial-arts location. Its first studio, on Fremont Avenue in Los Altos, opened five years ago. But what about United Studios of Self Defense, a karate studio approximately 125 steps away from the new Hiruko space? How many martial arts studios can Midtown sustain? USSD chief instructor Gary Flickinger is not worried. "We've been here 14 years. We've got a great student base and great parents. We're just going to keep doing what we've been doing," he said.



BIG SHOP LITTLE SHOP ... Uncertainty clouds a section of Mountain View's San Antonio Center where Sports Authority is and where Shoe Pavilion was. With last week's opening of the new 50,000-square-foot Sports Authority in East Palo Alto's Ravenswood 101 Retail Center, the future of the current Sports Authority in San Antonio Center, which is one-fifth the size of the EPA one, is looking less and less viable. The 10,000-square-foot store is currently on a month-to-month lease, according to Fred Thoits, president of Thoits Brothers Developers, the firm that manages the center. So will it stay or will it go? "The short answer is 'I don't know.'" At one point, they (Sports Authority) were considering building a new, 30,000-square-foot store using its existing space and the space from the old Shoe Pavilion. They even submitted an application to the City of Mountain View. But they changed their mind and withdrew the application," Thoits said.

As for the other two stores that make up the rest of the strip facing San Antonio Road, "Burger King and Rite-Aid both have leases that don't expire until 2013, so they're staying put," Thoits said.

Meanwhile, East Palo Alto's Sports Authority is gearing up for an 8 a.m. grand opening on April 4. Store manager Ryan Souza expects quite a turnout. "We're anticipating a long line even before we open," he said. Souza said sales for the first few days of the store's "soft opening" were larger than expected. "Word has already gotten out. It's been a great week," he said. Saturday's grand opening will include appearances from San Francisco 49er Roger Craig and Olympic swimmer Matt Greves. Add to that an in-store golf simulator and hitting cage.

CARTOON CUTS ... A bevy of well-coiffed kids may be the new standard in Town & Country Village. An East Coast franchise with more than 60 salons has chosen T&C for its first California location. Snip-its, a hair-cutting salon for kids, has its official grand opening today (Friday, April 3). "Visiting a Snip-its is unlike any other salon experience," founder Joanna Meiseles said. Meiseles, who also happens to be the granddaughter of comedian Jack Benny, has created a cartoon atmosphere in the salons, with animated videos and interactive computer games. "Kids look forward to coming back because it's like being inside a Saturday morning cartoon," she said. Also offered at Snip-its are spa services for the little ones, including mini-manicures, mini-pedicures and mini-facials. Daniel Liberman, who owns the Palo Alto Snip-its, already knows who his first customer will be. "That would be my 2-year-old son, Riley." Liberman has used his marketing background to aggressively market the shop. "More than 50,000 pieces of direct mail and postcards have been sent," he said. "I expect a big weekend."

Heard a rumor about your favorite store or business moving out, or in, down the block or across town? Daryl Savage will check it out. She can be e-mailed at shoptalk@paweekly.com.

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