

King Louie

LOUIE DI RAIMONDO was just searching for a job when he moved from New York City to Miami in 1972. He never imagined that the job he took would lead to his becoming the hot dog king—one of the world's largest distributors of hot dog carts.

While registering his car in Miami, Di Raimondo spotted a hot dog vendor and bought a dog. Then he saw a "FOR SALE" sign hanging on the cart. On an impulse, he bought it for \$1,500 and set up his own business.

But in his haste to get up and running, Di Raimondo forgot to remove the "FOR SALE" sign. The first day, he sold more than 100 hot dogs, but what intrigued him the most was the people asking if they could buy his cart.

Over the years, Di Raimondo bought more carts and made his living selling hot dogs, all the while fielding questions from people interested in buying a cart and starting their own business. Eventually, he realized that he could make more money selling carts than dogs, and in 1976 founded All American Hot Dog Carts (www.allamericanhotdog.com), which sells an array



ALL AMERICAN HOT DOG CARTS

He's on a roll, says Louie Di Raimondo, the hot dog king.

of vending carts, such as flower, pretzel and coffee carts.

Today Di Raimondo, a Costco member, sells more than 4,000 carts a year out of his Miami showroom.

He attributes part of his success to his flair for promotion. Donning a robe and crown, he branded himself "America's Hot Dog King," first in local promotions and ultimately in appearances on *The Today Show*, *The Discovery Channel*, *The Food Channel* and in several commercials and films.

"I branded myself like Donald Trump," Di Raimondo says. "Some people think I go a little overboard, but the more I go overboard, the more my sales increase." — Robyn A. Friedman

Adam@Home by Brian Basset



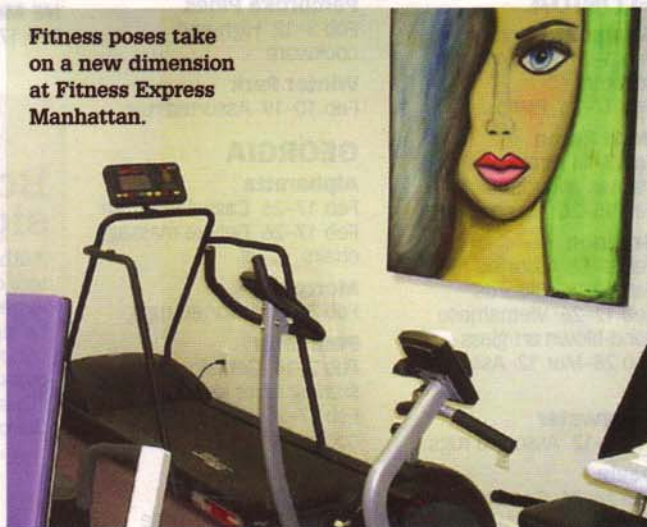
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Pet project

MOST PEOPLE pamper their pets, so why not get them a driver's license? Costco member Mary Kenez in Boulder, Colorado, created a license for her golden retriever Chloe (www.chloecards.com) as an adjunct to her postcard business. Driver's licenses are available for any pet (dog, cat, bird, potbellied pig) and every state and Canadian province. Kenez notes that the Pet Driver's License® is not only fun, it's functional, since it can be made into an ID tag. And no written test is required! —Anita Thompson



Fitness poses take on a new dimension at Fitness Express Manhattan.



The art of fitness

WITH THE PROLIFERATION of fitness clubs, Costco member and personal trainer Sylvia Clement felt it was time to hop on the entrepreneurial

treadmill herself, with a colorful twist.

Fitness Express Manhattan Inc. (www.fitnessexpressmanhattan.com) is a women-only circuit-training gym that caters to the community by providing

a place for women not only to get fit, but to expose themselves (figuratively speaking) to local art.

The walls are adorned with the art of fellow New Yorker Michael Perez (www.michaelperez-artist.com), a personal friend of Clement's.

"His work is very beautiful and very colorful," says Clement. "It makes each [workout] station that much more interesting."

—T. Foster Jones

We want to hear from you

IF YOU HAVE a note, photo or story to share (it should be about Costco or Costco members in some way), you can send it to "The Member Connection," *The Costco Connection*, P.O. Box 34088, Seattle, WA 98124-1088, or e-mail to connection@costco.com with "The Member Connection" in the subject line. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.