

# Dubai opens world's first kids' fitness centre in Palm Jumeirah

**Bernd Debusmann Jr.**

DUBAI — In what is being billed as the world's first "kids' fitness centre", a new Dubai facility has opened its doors to the public in an effort to combat childhood obesity and have fun at the same time.

The Little Gladiators facility — which is located at Golden Mile Galleria Mall on the Palm Jumeirah — offers a wide range of options for little ones, ranging from swimming and cardio lessons to wall climbing, kickboxing and even kid's yoga.

Little Gladiators is the brainchild of South African expats Javed and Shanna Gani, who moved to Dubai just last year.

In an interview with *Khaleej Times*, Javed said that the idea for Little Gladiators came about due to the inspirational vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, who hopes to reduce childhood obesity in the UAE from the current rate of 34 per cent to 12 per cent by 2021.

"We came to Dubai and were looking for a business to set up and open. We went everywhere, looking at different ideas with different business brokers, but we were never ever successful in finding something different and unique," he said. "We sat down and looked at where the country is and where it is going, and we saw that the rulers are always talking about children and their health."



**Javed, founder, Little Gladiators**

"We thought, what better place than Dubai for a world's first," he added, referring to Little Gladiators.

Additionally, Javed said he was also inspired by his own experiences with obesity, and hopes to prevent younger generations from going through the same things he has.

"I am an obese person myself, and I don't want my kids growing up in the same manner, or other children for that matter," he explained. "The problem is that nobody is instilling this (appreciation for health) into kids from a young age. We wait for them to get fat and then we want to do something about it."

The 7,400 square foot facility,



**Kids perform wall climbing at Little Gladiators. Targeted at kids aged 3 to 14 years, activities include gymnastics, yoga, tree climbing and kickboxing. — Photos by Shihab**

Javed explained, is designed to offer anything that might be found in a gym, but catered to the needs of children.

Among the activities included are cardio, yoga, kickboxing and a swimming pool and party area, as well as a high-tech interactive climbing wall and 'virtual sports' gaming.

"What you find all over the world is facilities for adults, not children. We've taken that concept and made

it for children," he said. "But we've also made it fun."

"We even have a kid's hammam, a sort of Moroccan bath concept," he said. "We do a full body scrub and massage, and it has a jasmine and Aladdin theme."

Being Dubai, the facility is also designed to be high-tech, with parents able to receive digital updates on what their children have been doing.

"From the second they walk in

## What is special at Little Gladiators

It is the world's first "kid's fitness centre" with 7,400 square foot facility designed to offer anything that might be found in a gym, but catered to the needs of children. Among the activities included are cardio, yoga, kick-boxing and a swimming pool and party area, as well as a high-tech interactive climbing wall and "virtual sports" gaming. The facility is located at Golden Mile Galleria Mall on the Palm Jumeirah.

# 999

dirhams for a year-long membership at the Little Gladiators

long membership — also strives to be affordable so that it can reach the greatest number of children.

"I have three kids of my own, and I have found that the pricing of children's activities here can be very expensive," he said. "It can cost a lot to keep your children healthy."

"Every bit of this place is a game. It's fun and there's a healthy part of it," he noted. "The kids we've had so far are here on a daily basis."

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Children engage in various physical activities at Little Gladiator. At the high-tech facility in Dubai, parents will be able to receive digital updates on every activity children perform.