

ENTERTAINMENT

Von Storch tries for role in D.C.'s reality TV scene

By Missy Frederick
Staff Reporter

Vida Fitness: The man behind the madness.

The life and career of gym, salon and brewery owner David von Storch may sound like an improbable subject for a reality TV series, but get ready. It just may come to a prime-time lineup near you.

Von Storch, who owns D.C.-based Vida Fitness, Capitol City Brewing Co. and Bang Salon, is working with New York production company Celebrity Endeavors on a pilot episode of "Complicated Order," the working title for the show. The pilot wrapped up production over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Von Storch is just the latest in a line of D.C. business figures to let cameras into their lives, whether they've sharpened their knives to become "Top Chefs" or sifted through their swatches for HGTV's "Design Star."

The extremes some reality wannabes will go to have been all over the front pages lately, courtesy of now-infamous Michaele Salahi, so desperate to be on "The Real Housewives of D.C." that she and her husband allegedly crashed a state dinner at the White House.

Former Monument Reality principal Jeff Neal is developing his own reality series, though he's remained mum on the premise

and networks involved. Entrepreneurs such as the co-owners of Alexandria-based Pork Barrell BBQ and D.C.-based College Hunks Hauling Junk have been on "Shark Tank," the "Apprentice"-esque show that focuses on venture capital funding for new businesses.

Von Storch said the business focus of his show was a natural choice.

"I am very much self-identified through my businesses, and while this is not entirely a business show, if you want to understand my life, you have to look at the businesses I've created and the people who help me run them," von Storch said.

Although some of the area's past reality stars have auditioned for their spots, von Storch was introduced to Celebrity Endeavors producer Damon Banks through a friend, and they financed the project together for an amount they would not disclose.

Von Storch had explored the idea of a reality show about a year ago, but discussions ended when he wanted to focus on his personal life and health issues, rather than just his businesses. He learned he was HIV-positive more than 20 years ago.

"There really isn't a voice out there for a large group of people who can't relate to Magic Johnson as a role model and need to see someone living and thriving with this condition who isn't in rehab," said von Storch, who



ON THE SET: D.C. entrepreneur David von Storch, seated, talks with TV producer Damon Banks about a proposed reality series that focuses on people involved in von Storch's myriad businesses.

is gay. "I'm not going to be preachy about it ... but people just aren't having these conversations. Most successful gay men with HIV have not been this open about it."

Von Storch's new idea for a show revolves around him and the cast of characters populating his businesses — people who are also his friends, such as Bang Salon co-owner Nikki Esoldo, "the most significant woman in my life," von Storch said.

Banks said negotiations are under way with multiple networks, though he would not reveal which ones. If things go as planned, an announcement could come in mid-January, with shooting continuing in

spring and a summer air date to follow.

Von Storch got his start in the D.C. nightclub business when he was in his 20s. He founded Capitol City Brewing Co. after the D.C. Council changed a law prohibiting brew pubs in 1991. The restaurant now has three locations. In 2006, von Storch opened his first Vida Fitness and turned his expansion attentions to Vida and Bang.

"People have come up to me and said, 'Isn't this risky?' and I say, 'Welcome to my world,'" von Storch said. "This is what I do — there's no guarantee when I open a restaurant or with anything in life."

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