DON CHU

When Don Chu opened the Ather Sports Injury Clinic in the Castro Village in 1977 it was one of the first of its kind.

“There were only two of us who used the name ‘sports’ in our title,” Chu said. “Now you can’t go 20 feet without seeing ‘sports’ in the title of some clinic.”

The Ather Clinic remained in the Village for five years before moving briefly to Hayward, then back to Castro Valley on Redwood Road until 1996 when Chu sold the business to Novacare. In 2004, he reopened at the Redwood Road location as Athercare Fitness and Rehabilitation Center, which is now located in Dublin.

In addition to his sports medicine career, Chu, who holds a Stanford PhD in physical therapy and physical education, also has excelled as a track and field coach. He’s been particularly successful coaching high jumpers. When a young high jumper named Dick Fosbury began setting records by clearing the bar upside down, his back to the ground – a style unheard of at the time – Chu became intrigued and studied the science behind the jump.

“I think I have this figured out,” he told Jim Santos, Cal State Hayward track coach at the time, and convinced Santos to let him coach the Pioneer jumpers. His first success story was Castro Valley’s Chris Schneider, who won the conference championship and made the junior national team before he was tragically killed in an auto accident.

Schneider was the first of several All-America high jumpers coached by Chu. Others included Dave Haber, who won the NCAA Division II championship; Doug Reinhart, a two-time All-American; and Jimmy Moran, who cleared 7-4½ and qualified for the 1984 Olympics. He also worked with Colleen Summers, a former world record holder in the women’s high jump.

Chu’s keen interest in maximizing an athlete’s potential has opened many opportunities for him in the education field as well as the professional sports industry. He developed the curriculum for a physical therapist assistant program at Ohlone College, served as head of athletic training and rehabilitation at Stanford one year, was strength coach for the Golden State Warriors under Don Nelson and has worked with the Oakland Raiders on strength training.

Even synchronized swimmers have benefitted from Chu’s expertise. Some 20 years ago he got a call from Santa Clara Aqua Maids Coach Chris Carver, who was seeking ways to improve her swimmers’ physical fitness. He began working with the team and accompanied it to Atlanta where the U.S. team won the Gold Medal at the 1996 Olympics. Don also worked with the synchronized swimmers at the 2000 Olympics in Australia and the 2004 Games in Greece.

Don has four adult children, three of whom are in the medical field, and nine grandchildren.