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Eye on the Island

Fitness guru Marilyn Pick reinvents herself as a grocery entrepreneur for Aruba's tourists.

By Caryn R. Sagal

Around the Baltimore metropolitan area, Marilyn Pick has built a reputation for fitness and fashion. But on the Dutch Caribbean island of Aruba, she's best known for groceries.

Perpetually clad in red and black, Pick has taught countless cardio, step, strength training, body sculpting and Zumba classes, and was voted "Best of Baltimore" by *Baltimore* magazine. As an instructor and former business owner/group fitness director, she served on the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, offered exercise tips on TV and led warmups at numerous charity races.

That boundless energy recently propelled her into a new business venture. In addition to teaching total body workouts at Coppermine Racquet & Fitness Pikesville, Pick, an Owings Mills resident who attends Beth El Synagogue, serves

as marketing director of GroceriesToGo Aruba, the island's first full-service online grocery delivery business.

She co-founded the enterprise with her son, Jared, and husband, Karl, who grew up in Aruba and maintains dual citizenship.

"When European Jews were being removed from their homes and sent to concentration camps, the Dutch island of Aruba was welcoming as a haven for Jewish people to live, work and raise families," Pick says. "My father-in-law arrived in Aruba as a young boy from Poland. He eventually started his own business, as well as the first synagogue [Beth Israel], which is still thriving today. We attend services there whenever we visit."

During a New Year's Eve dinner on the island four years ago, the Picks conceived the idea of forming an online grocery delivery business to help Arubans and

vacationers alike.

Karl Pick, an orthodontist and University of Maryland School of Dentistry professor, oversaw the process of applying for the required business licenses. Jared Pick, a University of Michigan graduate with an MBA, did extensive research and planning before developing a customized website, converting prices from Dutch *florins* to dollars to make it easy for American customers.

When the business was operational a year later, they teamed up with Aruba's largest supermarket, Ling and Sons IGA Super Center in the capital of Oranjestad, to become their exclusive delivery partner.

GroceriesToGo Aruba's stated mission is "to provide quality products and convenient services to customers that will allow them more time to enjoy their vacation and the wonders of Aruba,

One Happy Island!"

Comprising thousands of grocery items and travel essentials, GroceryToGo's merchandise includes fresh produce, meat, desserts, dairy, frozen foods, snacks, deli, gluten free and kosher products; beverages including beer, wine and spirits; health and beauty; baby care; household goods, rental furniture and more.

Jared Pick is the company's CEO, running daily operations from New York, while Karl Pick is the CFO. To ensure operations run smoothly, the company has a full staff of employees in Aruba, including a manager and others tasked with taking orders at Ling and Sons, shopping and making deliveries.

Marilyn Pick says marketing was a major part of building her fitness business, so it's a natural transition for her to promote GroceriesToGo Aruba.

"I visit all the timeshares and hotels, educating the concierges on how we can assist their guests by our shopping for their groceries while they relax at the beach," she says. "I also do the social

media, which has become a very important tool for reaching many people across the country. We have excellent placement when anyone searches online for 'Aruba groceries.'"

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With 5,000-plus customers, GroceriesToGo Aruba now delivers to every hotel on the island of more than 104,000 inhabitants, as well as to timeshares, Airbnbs, villas, beach houses, homes, businesses, boats and yachts.

Islanders who are too busy to shop

applaud the service, as do vacationers who like arriving at their destination with groceries waiting for them. "We brought four generations to Aruba and didn't have to leave the family to go grocery shopping," says Jennifer Goldmeier, a Northwest Baltimore resident. "It is a great service, and we wouldn't do it any other way!"

Dr. Joanne Rief of Owings Mills concurs. "GroceriesToGo Aruba makes it so easy to have our groceries delivered right to us when we arrive," she says. "I can't wait to use this service again on my next trip to Aruba."

Pick says she finds it tremendously exciting and rewarding to create something that people enjoy and appreciate." She also loves being part of a family business. "We work well together, share ideas and collaborate in the decision-making," she says. "In fact, we hope to expand to additional islands." JM

For information, visit GroceriesToGoAruba.com.

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