



Marilyn Pick: "This was my way of giving back to the community by helping people to be fit and healthy so they could keep their immune system strong while being stuck at home."
(Provided photo)

Going Global

Marilyn Pick offers fitness instructions to virtual students around the world.

By Caryn R. Sagal

Baltimore fitness guru Marilyn Pick made her mark in group exercise and didn't slow down during the pandemic. In fact, the pandemic propelled her in a new direction.

Pre-lockdown, Pick taught countless cardio, step, strength training, body sculpting and Zumba classes, voted "Baltimore's Best Fitness Instructor" by *Baltimore* magazine. Besides running her own aerobics studio and being a group fitness director and instructor at local gyms, she served on the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness.

Pick also motivated TV audiences to stay physically active and energized crowds with warmups at the annual Pikesville 5K Miles That Matter, Green Valley Turkey Trot and other fundraisers.

Adapting to the pandemic in early 2020, Pick expanded her repertoire by creating a Zoom fitness class at the request of Beth El Congregation, where she is a longtime member.

"With 1,000-plus views, Marilyn's 'Beth El's Got Talent' episode quickly became one of the most popular virtual programs we hosted," says Bekah Waltemeyer McDonald, the Pikesville synagogue's development associate. "Afterward, my inbox flooded with praise and requests to bring her back for another program."

Pick soon returned for a second "Beth El's Got Talent" class for the congregation, followed by a virtual dance party for the religious school and a virtual fitness class for pre-school parents.

Sparked by popular demand for her instruction — plus her own desire to perform a *mitzvah* during such difficult times — Pick became certified in virtual teaching and took courses on mastering Zoom technology for fitness classes. Along with fine-tuning the sound system, speakers and camera placement, she hardwired her device for optimal internet connections.

In May of 2020, she launched her free "Fitness For All Virtual Cardio and Tone Class." Participants could burn calories every week while exercising to cardio,

dance, kickboxing and body sculpting routines over Zoom. Following the 45-minute total-body workout, many people would stay logged in and chat with each other.

"This was my way of giving back to the community by helping people to be fit and healthy so they could keep their immune system strong while being stuck at home," Pick explains.

Initially, attendance comprised her former students and fellow Beth El members, and expanded to include their friends and blossomed into an extended "virtual fitness family."

"I am grateful to Marilyn for offering her motivational and fun fitness classes via Zoom during the pandemic," says Owings Mills resident Lisa Meizlish. "Her classes kept me in tune with my fitness plan during such an unsettling time and continue to do so."

In December of 2020, Pick demonstrated her virtual teaching skills on TV's "Live with Kelly & Ryan." Word spread, inspiring people to log on from Virginia, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Michigan, New Mexico, Aruba, Italy and Israel.

"Marilyn's class is awesome. I love the music and routines," says Arlene Dobrow of Marlboro, New Jersey. "It definitely helped me through the pandemic and continues to motivate me to exercise."

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—Pearl Zarsky

Says Pearl Zarsky of the Israeli town of Caesarea: "One glance at Marilyn's smile and you're pepped up, then the music and steps. It's a wonderful way to round out the day and, of course, the extra perk is connecting with lovely ladies and family from afar."

Still going strong and free, "Fitness for All" takes place Sundays at 10:30 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time). Pick livestreams from the homes she shares with her husband, Karl, in Owings Mills and Aruba (where their GroceriesToGo Aruba family business is based).

The class has a recurring Zoom link that Pick sends in a weekly email reminder, often with a healthy recipe. Busier than ever, she devotes hours and sometimes whole days each week to choreography and music selection, choosing a mix of Top 40, dance and high energy songs to keep everyone moving and grooving.

"Creating 'Fitness For All' has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my career," Pick says. "To this day, I love meeting everyone who attends my class and connecting with them from wherever they are in the world. Sunday morning is my most special time of the week." **1**

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