

Features

Fitness Unlimited Celebrates 30 Years in Square

By Kathy Kurtz Ferrari
Staff Writer

Paul Maduri was just 24 years old when he decided to take a chance on a new business venture.

Thirty years later, that successful business has become one of the trademarks of East Milton Square.

Fitness Unlimited is celebrating this month, as the women's health and fitness club is marking its 30th anniversary. Little did Maduri realize when he took over a small storefront on Granite Avenue in 1980 that he would someday be one of the torchbearers for the revitalization of East Milton Square.

"I started young," Maduri remembered, noting that he also opened a similar health club in Brookline earlier that same year. He sold the Brookline property in 2008. "I was always a gymnast, always active in sports and it just appealed to me. When I saw health clubs starting to come of age, because back then there were very few health clubs out there ... something appealed to me."

The original space in Milton measured 3,000 square feet, and now is over five times that size, measuring around 17,000 square feet. His business also has gone from about a dozen employees to more than 60. And exercise itself was a little different back then, too. There was very little equipment in the original club – a few manual bikes, a few sit-up boards and a couple of benches.

"High-impact aerobics, which kind of beat you up a little bit," Maduri said with a hint of sarcasm, as he remembered the trend in exercise when he first opened the doors of his club. "And, of course, the technology; we're using floating wood floors now, [which are] a little more forgiving. Back in 1980 we did it on carpets."

Maduri took over the space that had been a facility called Women's World, and the square itself was a bit of a hodgepodge.

"It's changed a lot over the years," Maduri said. "We've actually expanded a total of, I believe, five times over the years. We were very lucky to be able to find space that was attached to us, as tenants moved."

Some of the businesses that occupied space where Fitness Unlimited now resides included the original location of Video to Go, ice cream vendor Emack & Bolios, a convenience store, and longtime tenant Osborn's Furniture.

But why did Maduri decide to concentrate on women's fitness?

"Many years ago, I looked at the women's fitness industry, and most of the health clubs were treating women's fitness as not really serious," he said. "They were unfortunately building these little facilities that really didn't treat women like they wanted to exercise seriously, and I didn't like that at all. I said, 'Let's give the women every tool that we are giving a man, and let's see what happens.' And it's amazing how they use



Cindy McCarthy, Beth Whitney and Paul Maduri.

(Photos by Kathy Kurtz Ferrari)

every tool that we put in front of them to the fullest extent."

Maduri's longtime employee Beth Whitney, general manager of Fitness Unlimited, has another perspective. "To this day, women just want to work out with women."

Apparently, Whitney is right. Membership numbers have steadily increased, and as new, state-of-the-art equipment arrives, Fitness Unlimited has found the need to stretch and flex its own muscles.

"It's busy. It's happening, which is good," said Whitney, as she explained how the increase in membership has added more than just bodies on the treadmills.

"It's a good thing, and it's a great feeling, too," Maduri said. "Because when we're really moving, and we've got three classes going at once, plus the cardio center is full ... when those are all going, it all works very smoothly." Fitness Unlimited now offers around 90 classes a week – from kickboxing, to spinning, to yoga and more – each offering its own dynamic to the energy inside the doors of the club.

But there always seems to be a new form of exercise coming along. New types of yoga are becoming popular, as well as the hot dance exercise known as Zumba.

And as new forms arrive, usually coming from the West Coast, Maduri keeps pace, constantly striving to update equipment and training. The most recent expansion downstairs added new studios for spinning classes and a childcare area has been expanded. Even the locker room has enjoyed an overhaul, now offering

more space for changing rooms, and spa-like steam and sauna areas.

"Fortunately, our niche was that we weren't just a small women's fitness center. We grew to be a full wellness facility," Maduri said, noting his staff includes nutritionists and wellness educators. "And we're very fortunate to be able to pull that off, with a great staff to help."

As the club grew, it was important to Maduri that the exterior esthetics also flowed together. Joining the Milton Chamber of Commerce and chairing the town's business revitalization committee, he has offered suggestions, designs and money to upgrade lighting and building facades in the square.

"East Milton was really run-down, and I've worked tirelessly to try to get the improvements in the square," Maduri said, noting the renovations he has pushed for. "Some of the things we're working on have taken forever, some of it is just coming to fruition. I really just wanted the whole square to be a better experience for people to visit."

To celebrate its longevity in Milton, Fitness Unlimited will host a member appreciation day Saturday, March 13, which will be open to the public. The whole day will be filled with special activities. Other events are planned throughout the month of March to recognize the milestone.

"I'm most proud of the atmosphere that we've created, that makes people feel comfortable and is a very productive atmosphere," Maduri said. "I think that we're lucky that my staff has created an energy that's just great. It's kind of a synergy. ... I don't know if I can use the word 'sisterhood,' but it really feels that way. People are connected."

For more information on Fitness Unlimited, stop in for a tour at 364 Granite Ave., visit its Web site at www.fitnessunlimited.com, or call (617) 698-0260.



Some of the staff, from left, are Stephanie Malcolm, General Manager Beth Whitney, J-Lyn Burke, Paul Maduri, Aileen O'Donnell, Manager Cindy McCarthy and Jane O'Connor.

