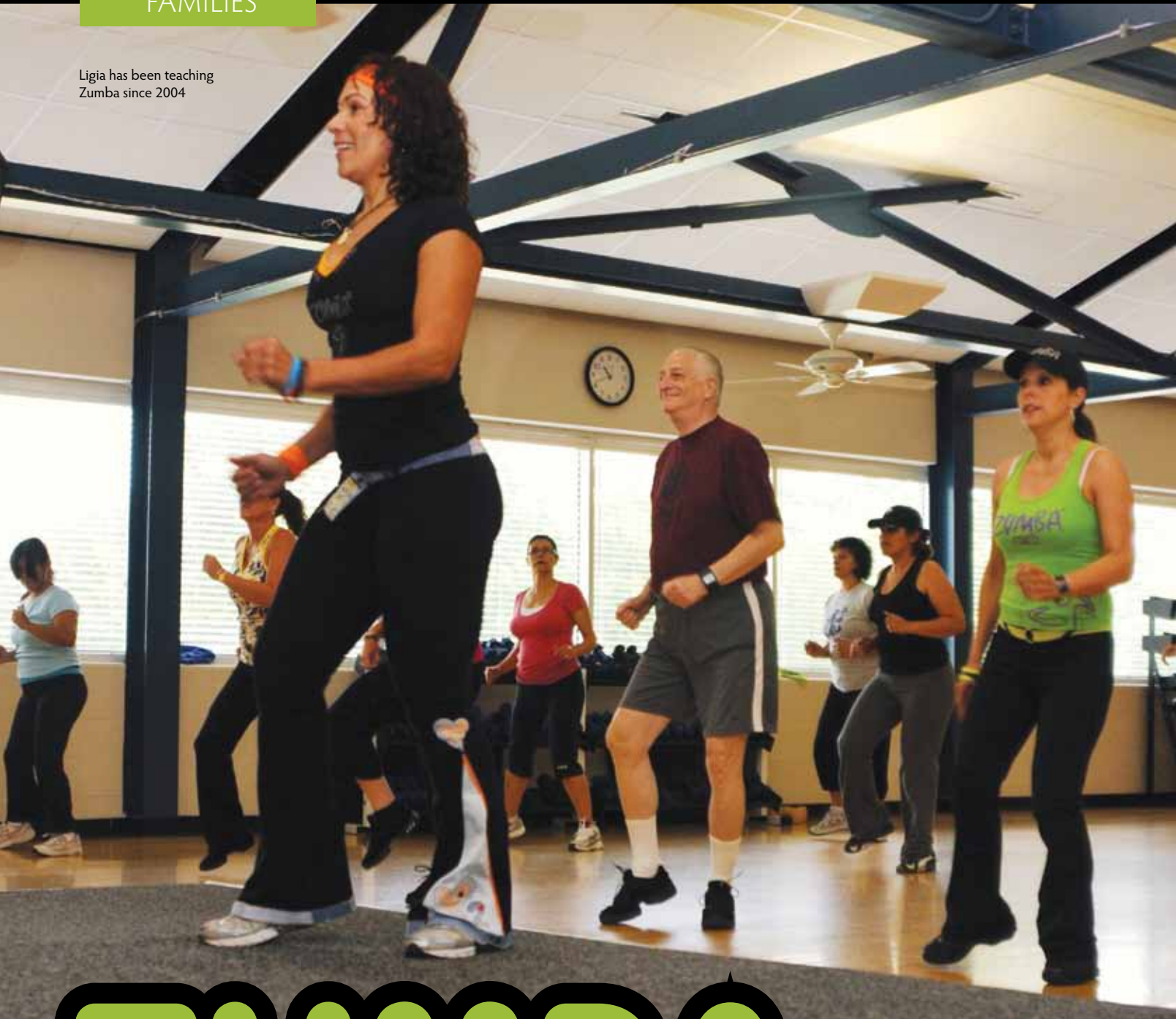


Ligia has been teaching  
Zumba since 2004



# ZUMBA

## Classes in Katy

*Aerobic Exercise with a Latin Twist*

Written by Shetye Cypher  
Photography by Suzanne Box

It's not often that people arrive early for an exercise class. But they certainly do for the Zumba class at the Katy Family YMCA, with many hoping to secure a spot in the front row.

"It's fun and the instructor makes it fun. She interacts with all the participants. We're like a big family," says participant Teresa Sitkoff. "Sometimes we're too serious and she makes us laugh."

## What is Zumba?

Zumba fuses Latin rhythms and easy-to-follow dance moves to create an energetic fitness class. The routines feature interval training sessions where fast and slow rhythms and resistance training are combined to tone and sculpt your body while burning fat. Breaks are taken only between songs and warm ups last for three continuous songs. For Sid Sitkoff, the classes have brought about another benefit. "It's given me stamina. I used to go dancing and complain the songs were too long," says Sid. "Now when we go dancing I find that the songs all seem short."

The routines are mixed and vary from class to class. According to Ligia Henriquez, the instructor, the music is 70-percent Latin and 30-percent international. Sometimes sticks or very light hand weights are added for additional resistance. "It's one hour of intense dancing," says Sid. "It's copying what the instructor does. We have some people that can hardly move, but they still enjoy it."

## Never Missing a Beat

The Sitkoffs, who attend every Zumba class the YMCA offers, have been going since they joined the Y in January of 2008. "I feel exhilarated. Sometimes you drag in and by the time the class is over, you have all this stamina and energy. It's a pick me up," says Teresa. "I love dancing, so it's not like exercising."

Ligia Henriquez, a Venezuelan transplant, has been teaching Zumba since 2004 and has had a class at the YMCA since 2007. She also travels with the Zumba team to train new instructors. "I saw the videos on TV and on the internet and I wanted more information," says Henriquez. "After about one year, Zumba Miami called me about being an instructor for Houston. I went there for three days to become certified."

## The Creation of Zumba

Celebrity fitness trainer, Beto Perez, stumbled upon the concept of Latin inspired fitness in his native country of Colombia in the mid 1990's. One day, he walked into his class and realized that he had forgotten his aerobics music, and his only option was to grab whatever tapes he had in his car. Beto's tapes were comprised of the songs that he loved, the traditional Latin salsa and merengue music with which he had been raised. But it was a challenge to improvise a whole class on the spot using non-traditional aerobics music. Beto rose to the challenge and from this last-minute improvisation was born the revolutionary fitness program of Zumba. The class soon became the most popular at his fitness facility.

In 1999, after his success in Colombia, Beto brought the class to the United States, where he was approached by entrepreneurs Alberto Perlman and Alberto Aghion to create a global company based on the Zumba fitness philosophy. The three young entrepreneurs then set a goal to offer Zumba classes all over the world.

About 40 people attend each class at the YMCA





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Light weights are sometimes used during the workout



## Everyone Can Zumba

Although the majority of participants are women, a handful of men join in each class. People from ages 25 to 75 have made an appearance, and about 40 people, mostly regulars, show up for each class. "It's a good place for camaraderie," says Sid. "We spend another half hour after class talking."

Burning 420 to 800 calories in the hour, the class has really caught on by word of mouth. Henriquez is even booked for private classes at client's homes and for various parties and companies in the area as well. She can be found on Zumba.com under instructors.

"I give all the passion that I have when I'm teaching," says Henriquez. "People come to me after the class and say 'thank you, you made my day, you inspired me. When I started to dance, I forgot about everything.'"

Latin dance, music, and food have been popular for some time now. According to Henriquez, Katy has many Venezuelans, which has contributed to the growing popularity of her Zumba classes. "The classes started small and got bigger in just one year," says Henriquez. "It's fun, easy, and is for everybody." KM

*SHETYE CYPHER is a freelance writer who lives here with her family. She has lived in Katy intermittently since 1976. She has written for several Houston based publications and is also the Journalism teacher and Publications Advisor at Mayde Creek High School.*

## Join a Zumba Class Today

### KATY FAMILY YMCA

22807 Westheimer Pkwy.

8:30 a.m. Tuesdays

11:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Thursdays

10:30 a.m. Fridays

### 24-HOUR FITNESS

19734 Saums Rd.

11 a.m. Saturdays