

# senior SCOOP

June 2, 2021 | APP.COM

**COVID-19 Q & A:  
Don't let your guard down**

**To keep healthy in body  
and spirit learn to dance**

**This group connects seniors  
with services and advice**

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ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO ASBURY PARK PRESS

## Let's Dance

# Seniors enjoy social connection and the power of movement at Fred Astaire Dance Studios

**Susan Bloom**

Special to the Asbury Park Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**P**andemic or no, dancing is a beneficial activity – especially for seniors, who can help keep their bodies healthy, their minds sharp and their social connections strong just by strapping on their dancing shoes.

Perhaps no one knows this better than couple Devyn-Nicole Pasalano and Cristian Pozo, professional dancers and co-owners of Fred Astaire Dance Studios in Marlboro since October 2019.

“We really love our senior community – they’ve always been supportive of our curriculum and we learn so much from them,” says Pozo of their studio’s large senior-age clientele.

“Seniors also have an inherently positive connection with dancing because it was often a pastime for their generation and many times part of their school curriculum for gym, and they’re also familiar with renowned dancer, actor and singer Fred Astaire,” he says.

“We offer all different styles of classes, from instruction in the waltz and rumba to faster dances like the jitterbug, Lindy Hop, foxtrot and other popular dances from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s,” Pasalano says. “We give students the full experience of the dance by playing period music by such performers as Frank Sinatra, Elvis and other popular musicians of that era.”

Offering one-on-one instruction or group lessons, Pozo says, the studio’s instructors are highly attuned to each dancer’s needs.

“We work around any issues or injuries and make sure that everything they do is safe and comfortable by adjusting and modifying moves for the unique person in front of us,” Pozo says. “Many doctors send patients to us because dancing can be low-impact on bones and muscles, and they want them to have dance as part of their physical therapy. Our ‘sprung’ dance floors incorporate a powerful cushion underneath so that there’s no impact on the knees or joints, and our students can dance all day.”

Safety is paramount at the studio, which has taken all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) measures to enhance their clients’ safety and comfort during the pandemic, and which goes above and beyond to make any other accommodations requested.

“For example, those looking to avoid crowds can opt for private lessons instead of group classes, and we’re open from 12 to 9 pm, so they can pick their hours,” Pasalano says. “We also clean and sanitize before and after every session, wear masks, wash our hands, and keep all



Photos courtesy of Fred Astaire Dance Studios Marlboro  
Devyn-Nicole Pasalano, left, and Cristian Pozo, co-owners of Fred Astaire Dance Studios Marlboro.



Fred Astaire Dance Studios Marlboro, which opened in October 2019.

of our doors open, and we have a big ballroom, so people can rest assured that they’ll be adequately distanced in our spacious facilities.”

“All of our staff members are vaccinated,” Pozo adds, “and we also screen our students and know who’s walking in the door to control any situation.”

### A Win-Win Activity

“Dance is great physically, mentally and socially, and it’s fun for couples, but we also have a number of senior clients who are here on their own,” Pasalano says. “We have many singles coming in who recently lost their spouse or partner, and we develop a great schedule for them. No partner is necessary or required.”

For those convinced that they have two left feet, are afraid they won’t be able to keep up, or are otherwise hesitant to give it a go on the dance floor, “we offer a 30-minute complimentary private dance lesson so that they can try it out, and once they do, they’ll love it,” Pozo promises. “Clients tell us that it’s much easier than they expected. We make them feel so comfortable and work as a team to ensure that students get everything they need and have a wonderful time.”

“Dancing is a great experience, especially for seniors right now,” Pozo continues. “Seniors have suffered so much during the pandemic, being home alone in some cases and/or being limited in their ability to socialize, which can lead to stress and isolation, so we make it a fun experience for them every time. It’s important to remain active in order to live a long, healthy life, and dancing is a great way to keep moving and connect with others.”

“We hope area residents will come try us with no expectation so that we can show them the experience and benefits of dancing,” Pasalano says. “We’re a big dance family and welcome everyone who comes in. There’s nothing to lose — join us and be social!”

**Fred Astaire Dance Studios Marlboro**  
318 Route 9, Marlboro.  
Call 732-414-1835 or visit  
[www.fredastaire.com/marlboro-nj](http://www.fredastaire.com/marlboro-nj).

## Advice to vaccinated seniors on COVID-19: Don't let your guard down

*Experts from CentraState Medical Center and Allaire Health Services answer common questions about what to expect once you've been vaccinated*

**Susan Bloom**

Special to the Asbury Park Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**T**he coronavirus pandemic has been a big unknown for everyone and, as the first generation to receive one of the novel COVID-19 vaccines, questions remain.

Following, Freehold Township medical experts Dr. Zeeshan Khan, assistant professor, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at CentraState Medical Center, and Ben Kurland, CEO at Allaire Health Services, answer some of seniors' most pressing questions concerning the vaccine and what they can expect post-vaccination.

**Q. Can seniors who have been vaccinated now travel on airplanes, eat indoors, etc., with less concern?**

**Kurland:** In some ways, travel is safer than it's ever been in that infection control measures are in place universally and all travelers are required to wear a mask and, in certain circumstances, to get tested before they travel. However, even if you're vaccinated against COVID-19, anytime you're in a setting with large groups of people, any number of bugs circulating can put seniors at risk. Therefore, the decision to travel and re-engage in indoor eating or other activities where there's more exposure to other people should be carefully determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your doctor.

**Khan:** Things continue to change, and in the positive direction, for vaccinated individuals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that fully vaccinated individuals can resume the activities they enjoyed both indoors and outdoors before the pandemic began. But when you do travel, the CDC states that you are still required to mask up – that includes travel on planes and other public transportation.

**Q. Should seniors who have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine be concerned about blood clots or other side effects?**

**Khan:** The CDC and FDA (Food and Drug Administration) issued a "pause" on administering the Johnson & Johnson vaccine due to concerns about blood clots in more than a dozen people who received it. While use of that vaccine has resumed, the current recommendation



Photo courtesy of CentraState Medical Center  
**Dr. Zeeshan Khan, FAAFP, CMD, assistant professor, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at CentraState Medical Center in Freehold Township**

*“Continue to be careful but enjoy life, too.”*

is that women under 50 should choose one of the other vaccines until further studies are completed.

**Q. Do the vaccines seem like they'll provide long-lasting protection, or will they require annual boosters?**

**Khan:** Booster shots for the vaccine will likely be necessary to protect against COVID-19 and the emerging variants, though we don't yet have recommendations on the timing.

**Kurland:** It appears we're likely to require boosters of these vaccines. The jury's still out on how frequently those boosters will be required – whether it will be every three or six months or every year like the flu vaccine. Anticipate needing to get another shot at some point in the next year.

**Q. Should we be concerned about COVID-19 ramping up circulation again as the weather cools down this fall?**

**Kurland:** I think we can anticipate a ramping up of COVID-19 in the fall and winter. The hope is that by that time, a large enough percentage of the population will be vaccinated to allow for less transmission of the virus, and subsequent lower morbidity and mortality associated with it.

**Khan:** Last fall we did see an increase in the spread of COVID-19 after a marked decrease in the summer. We may see an uptick this fall again due to people spending



Photo courtesy of Allaire Health Services  
**Ben Kurland, CEO at Allaire Health Services, Freehold Township**

*“We all hope to see life begin to normalize again.”*

more time indoors, though the vaccines should have tamped down the spread of the virus by then.

**Q. What final messages would you like to share with area seniors to help them stay safe and protected during this important and transitional time?**

**Khan:** Continue to be careful, but enjoy your life, too. Now more than ever, it's important to get enough sleep, eat well and have a regular exercise routine — whatever you can do to maintain a solid foundation of health. Spend time in nature, socialize safely and do the things that bring you happiness. Also continue to get any medical care you need, whether for an emergency or a chronic health issue that needs to be monitored.

**Kurland:** As vaccines become more accessible and a greater percent of the population becomes immunized, we all hope to see life begin to normalize again. However, good infection control practices are something we should always be cognizant of. Throughout the pandemic, we've seen decreased incidence of other kinds of infectious diseases such as colds and flu because we've been practicing infection control measures with a greater vigilance than we may have in the past. If you do start re-engaging with your social circles, consult with your physician and continue to practice good hand hygiene and general infection control so that you can enjoy longevity and the social experiences that enhance quality of life.

## Baby Boomers anticipated as big share of recreational marijuana market

**Eleanor O'Sullivan**

Special to Asbury Park Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**W**ith the strokes of his pen, Governor Phil Murphy signed into law reform bills that will help more seniors relieve aches and pains, provide social equity, and even enable some folks to relive their more carefree youth.

Murphy signed adult-(recreational) use cannabis (marijuana) reform bills into law Feb. 21, legalizing and regulating cannabis use and possession for adults 21 years and older. Murphy says the ballot question won “overwhelming support (from voters)” for creating a well-regulated adult-use cannabis market.

There are indications that senior citizens may be a significant segment of the recreational market.

Dr. David L. Nathan of Princeton Psychiatry & Consulting LLC is founder and board president of Doctors for Cannabis Regulation, an international physicians’ organization focused on the legalization and regulation of marijuana.

When his parents moved into a retirement community in 2013, Nathan was invited to give residents a lecture on health issues, and he was asked, “When are we going to get cannabis at this place?”

“By the time I lectured there again in 2019, people had learned a lot about cannabis and I noted that I had started smelling cannabis around the hallways! It shows that people have grown more comfortable with its use and think less about the stigma,” he says.

“Older people grew up with cannabis when it was outlawed and there was a lot of negativity about it, so, there was a lot to unlearn.”

Nathan also says: “I’ve heard, though not lately, that the highest use (of cannabis) is among the senior citizen demographic.”

Tara Sargente, owner of the online Blazin’ Bakery, and a member of the New Jersey CannaBusiness Association, Trenton, sells a line of edibles infused with CBD and Delta 8, which have been legal marijuana derivatives. She says there is significant use of her products by senior citizens.

“I’ve seen a ten-fold increase in edibles use in the past 10 years by people who are 65 and older. It’s fantastic, because they are using them as an alternative to opiates and the more harmful pharmaceuticals. They’re medicating their aches and pains and finding a better quality of life,” says Sargente of Asbury Park.

Sargente said older customers who don’t want to



Dr. David Nathan

**Dr. David L. Nathan of Princeton Psychiatry & Consulting LLC testifying before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee in 2019 on the legalization of cannabis. He is founder and board president of Doctors for Cannabis Regulation, an international physicians’ organization focused on the legalization and regulation of marijuana.**

smoke cannabis prefer the edibles, as well as capsules and other products that are being developed for the new legal recreational use market. “And a lot of the seniors, the baby boomers, are reliving their youth and the ‘60s. Education has helped reprogram the senior population about cannabis. Despite all the propaganda, seniors see the medical benefits,” she says.

Still, Nathan cautions that “cannabis is most definitely not harmless,” and that potential users must do their homework about its effects.

“The occasional use of cannabis is no more harmful than the occasional, moderate use of alcohol,” he says. “As with every other drug, the best way to think of its use is to start low and go slow. There is controversy about what is a low dose; what is considered a single dose of cannabis is often given as 5 milligrams, sometimes more.

“But in senior citizens, as with all medications, remember: Senior citizens require less generally to get the effect of a drug. That is a normal process of aging and how we metabolize medication.”

Nathan said the at-risk population for marijuana use includes underage users (under 21) because of the effect of the drug on the developing brain, as well as pregnant and breast-feeding women. People with medical disorders must consult with their physicians about its use, he says.

“In older folks, probably the most significant side effect to consider with acute intoxication with cannabis is an increased heart rate, so for the individual who is at-risk for heart disease, sometimes there is an increase of risk in having a heart attack within the first few hours of ingestion,” Nathan says. Those with breathing problems can experience irritation of the lungs if they smoke marijuana, he says. “That would suggest you could ingest (it) as an edible rather than inhaling, but edibles are tricky to dose. So make sure you know exactly what you are getting



Photo courtesy of Tara Sargente  
**Tara Sargente of Asbury Park, a member of the New Jersey CannaBusiness Association, records an episode of her podcast “Trailblazin’ with Tara Misu,” her online persona.**

in terms of a dose; start with very low doses,” he says.

Nathan is advocating for standardized labeling on marijuana products, plus a cannabis content fact label similar to the nutritional labels on food products. The fact label would include warnings such as not to use while driving and cautions for at-risk populations.

Nathan said his father, who has Parkinson’s disease and takes medical marijuana for neck pain related to his condition, is typical of older medical marijuana users.

“Whether they’re the proverbial hippie or just an older person, they tend to take a fairly responsible approach to cannabis use,” he says. “The thing is to remember: Cannabis is not a miracle drug and is not without side effects. You’re always having to weigh the pros and cons — Is this something that I want to take to treat a particular problem?”

In signing the cannabis legislation into law, Gov. Murphy said, “Our current marijuana prohibition laws have failed every test of social justice, which is why for years I’ve strongly supported the legalization of adult-use cannabis. Maintaining a status quo that allows tens of thousands, disproportionately people of color, to be arrested in New Jersey each year for low-level drug offenses is unjust and indefensible.”

According to the state Office of Legislative Services, legalization of adult marijuana use is expected to generate more than \$125 million in revenues a year. That money is sorely needed, as New Jersey has struggled with budget gaps left by the COVID pandemic.

Voters approved a 6.625% state tax on marijuana sales to customers 21 or older, and also okayed municipalities to charge an extra 2% tax on those sales.

Use of medicinal marijuana for adults was legalized in

New Jersey 2010, and there are 15 dispensaries, or alternative treatment centers (ATCs), statewide. It can relieve the pain of arthritis and degenerative disc disease, common ailments among the elderly.

One advocate for marijuana use says recreational cannabis could be available for sale in New Jersey by the end of 2021. New Jersey is the 17th state to legalize recreational marijuana; it is also legal in the District of Columbia.

“The (new law) provides that an existing medical marijuana company in New Jersey may sell excess cannabis to recreational users, but not “until it has certified to the commission that it has sufficient quantities of medical cannabis and medical cannabis products available to meet the reasonably anticipated needs of registered qualifying patients, and the commission has accepted the alternative treatment center’s certification,” says Ken Wolski, executive director for the Coalition for Medical Marijuana-New Jersey, Trenton.

Wolski says the medical marijuana companies have already obtained state approval to dispense marijuana, which includes the testing, licensing and permit process.

“I believe the adult use marijuana dispensaries will eventually be in every county in New Jersey, and in several municipalities in each county. Some municipalities are banning dispensaries but with over 500 municipalities in New Jersey that should not cause much of a problem with access.

“Once towns see that the dispensaries, like the existing ATCs, are a net benefit to the communities, there will be greater acceptance and fewer NIMBY (not in my back yard) attitudes,” Wolski says.

Nathan of Princeton Psychiatry says: “Cannabis is a drug that can be effectively regulated, and we don’t need to choose between ‘free the weed’ and total prohibition.”

**For More  
Information On  
Tara Sargente and  
Blazin’ Bakery, visit  
blazinbakery.blazinbrands.com.**