

PUMPed to Run will help people who are homeless get on their feet

Volunteers and donors are being sought to support an outreach effort designed to bring the many benefits of running to people living in homeless shelters.

The [PUMPed to Run](#) group will link mentor runners with anyone in a shelter who would like to improve their physical fitness and fuel a sense of accomplishment with a morning workout in Downtown or on the North Side. Organizers are targeting the week of May 16 for PUMPed to Run's start up.



Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Program (PUMP) and its Pittsburgh Sports League are assisting in an outreach to bring the benefits of running to people who are homeless. Right, Seth Abrams of the Bureau of Homeless Services, a devoted long distance runner, is among the PUMPed to Run organizers.



The group is a project of the [Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Program](#) (PUMP) and its [Pittsburgh Sports League](#). Seth Abrams, Program and Fiscal Specialist for the Department of Human Services (DHS) Bureau of Homeless Services and an avid long distance runner, is serving on PUMPed to Run's advisory board.

As planning for PUMPed to Run progressed, Seth researched similar groups in other cities. He said running can help participants who are homeless by improving self-perception and therefore, the ability to complete tasks. Running releases endorphins, chemicals in the brain that have been shown to boost self-esteem and reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Endorphins also improve sleep.

For volunteer mentor runners, who are expected to lead runs at least once a week, PUMPed to Run is "a way to give back through a sport that they love," Seth said.

Mentors need to have "patience, knowledge of running and an outgoing personality. Some new runners might only be able to run for 30 seconds or a block and will need encouragement," Seth said.

The advisory board sought partners for PUMPed to Run. Along with DHS, currently the other partners are Bethlehem Haven and North Side Common Ministries, and Light of Light Mission, also on the North Side. [Fleet Feet Sports Pittsburgh](#), a retailer of running shoes and gear in Upper St. Clair, is helping by promoting the project on its webpage and agreeing to gather equipment donations.

The shelter providers will ensure that runners who are staying at the shelters can shower and go on with their day before the shelters close in the mornings.

Donors can help out by contributing funds that will buy equipment, or by donating equipment. Details are on the [PUMPed to Run webpage](#).

Fleet Feet will host a drive to collect new or gently used running shoes or apparel from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 17. The store is located at 1751 N. Highland Road, Upper St. Clair, in Norman Centre II off Route 19, near South Hills Village mall. Phone: 412-851-9500.

Those interested in assisting may also contact Seth at seth.abrams@alleghenycounty.us or 412-350-6147.