

Runners Give Credit To Sports Store

By Eric Vo
EVO@COURANT.COM

Caroline Bedard-Nower "still gets emotional" as she remembers crossing the finish line of the first 5K race she ran in its entirety.

"The first time I did it all by myself without any walking was last November," said Bedard-Nower, 45, of Wethersfield. "When I got to the last curve ... I still had juice in me."

In the past, she'd finish the 3.1-mile courses by doing a run-walk interval — something she learned after signing up for a training plan at Fleet Feet Sports, a specialty running store at 1003 Farmington Ave., West Hartford.

The store offers a number of 10-week training programs, such as a 5K, 10K, half and full marathon.

The programs are for people of all abilities. The coaches tell runners that they can walk if they need to, said Paul Lavery, 63, of New Britain.

"I could remember where I started from," Bedard-Nower said. "I could barely run a minute and a half ... For my first race, I had to walk a little bit ... [but] I never felt like a failure."

Bedard-Nower has come a long way since her training began in 2011. She's finished a number of races — because of a healthier diet and "challenging" her body. Bedard-Nower has lost over 110 pounds.

Still, finishing the race in November was "bigger than [her] weight loss," she said.

"When I finished that race without any walking, it was my accomplishment and mine alone," she said. "I'm proud of what I've become."

It was a long journey, but she credits two people for motivating her: Stephanie Blozy, co-owner of Fleet Feet Sports, and Rich Dillon, a coach for the training programs.

"I knew I had someone that was proud of something I was doing," Bedard-Nower said. "To me, knowing they were there for me has been a really big plus for my motivation."

The coaches aren't "like track coaches," who yell at runners, said Abigail Jewett, 44, of West Hartford.

"They're just people who love running and you get the sense that they care about how you're doing," she said.

Jewett also has overcome her own challenges. Two years ago, after completing two 5K training programs, she woke up and "had spasms down [her] arm" and a "feeling [she] couldn't get rid of." A doctor told her a disc in her neck had herniated, she said.

And she was told her she may never run again — a diagnosis she found "devastating."

But Jewett was determined to keep running. Six weeks after surgery, she began training for the O'Hartford 5K. Immediately after that, she began training for a 10K, she said.

Defying the odds of a medical diagnosis is something Lavery can relate to. He was diagnosed with lupus several years ago — an auto-immune disorder in which the body's immune system attacks healthy tissue — and prostate cancer earlier this year.

He found refuge in running. If he didn't get out and run, he wouldn't feel good for the rest of the day, he said. So when he was told not to run for 10 weeks after surgery, it's no surprise he did the opposite.

"I started to run a little bit. I was sore and it took a lot out of me," he said. "I told [the doctor] I



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RICH DILLON (from left), Paul Lavery, Stephanie Blozy, Caroline Bedard-Nower and Abigail Jewett. Dillon, a coach, and Blozy, co-owner of Fleet Feet Sports, have helped the others overcome obstacles and continue with the running they love.

was going to do the Iron Horse [half-marathon] in Simsbury ... I'm going to do it even if it takes me a whole two hours."

And that's exactly what he did — after training two days a week for two weeks, he finished the Amica Ironhorse Half Marathon. Lavery, Jewett and Bedard-

Nower all overcame their own hurdles, and they all credit Fleet Feet Sports' staff and training programs for their successes. While they may not be currently training, they're still going out and doing one of the things they love — running.

HIO THE HARTFORD COURANT SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2012 6 *

Winter Heating Assistance Sign-Up Under Way

Submitted by Jason M. Natelle
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
COMMUNITY RENEWAL TEAM, INC.
STATEWIDE

It's the dog days of summer, so you may not be thinking about the coming winter heating season. But with fall right around the corner, phone lines are open at the Community Renewal Team for people to call and make appointments to receive financial assistance for winter heating.

This year's start to the energy season also comes with a cool way to beat the (current) heat—a chance to win one of two window air conditioning units donated from a local business. All customers that complete an application for heating assistance by Aug. 31 will be entered into a drawing for one of two window a/c units (up to 15,000 Btu) donated by local vendors.

Customers using all types of heating fuel—electric, natural gas, oil, kerosene, wood and propane—may apply for assistance. Both returning and new customers, including recently laid-off residents, are



COMMUNITY RENEWAL TEAM

A NATURAL GAS BURNER is shown inside a home. Phone lines are open at the Community Renewal Team for people to call and make appointments to receive financial assistance for winter heating.

encouraged to call and make an appointment to see an intake specialist.

The number to call to make an appointment or to get more information is (860) 560-5800, and operators are available from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Documents needed to apply for heating assistance include the following:

- ▶ Social Security Number and date of birth for all household members
- ▶ Current rent or mortgage statement
- ▶ For electric or natural gas: Current utility bill in name of a household member over 18
- ▶ For oil, kerosene, wood or propane: Name of fuel company
- ▶ Proof of current gross income (pay stubs, bank statements) for all household members for four weeks prior to application date
- ▶ Documentation for Social Security and other monthly benefits, such as bank statements
- ▶ Current statements for checking, savings, credit union accounts, stocks, bonds and CDs

Last year, CRT gave out energy assistance payments to more than 27,000 Connecticut households despite the mild winter. In years with the largest number of applicants, CRT has given out payments to 33,000 households.

Expanded income guidelines and benefits for those recently laid off have made

even more households eligible for assistance. Based on last year's figures, a two-person household may qualify with yearly income up to \$41,668, while a household of four can make up to \$61,276.

Families and individuals facing recent layoffs are encouraged to apply. Income eligibility is determined based on gross earnings from the four weeks preceding your intake appointment. After a layoff or reduction in hours, families who were previously over income may qualify.

For more information or to make an appointment, call (860) 560-5800.

Community Renewal Team Inc. is the designated Community Action Agency for Middlesex and Hartford counties and is the largest nonprofit provider of human services in Connecticut.

CRT's programs include Head Start, Meals on Wheels, energy assistance, supportive housing and shelters, and many others, serving people in more than 60 cities and towns in both our core catchment area and throughout Connecticut. www.crtct.org