



Anne Mahlum (CENTER)  
with the original members  
of Back on My Feet

# Back on Their Feet

A new outreach program is poised to help DC's homeless find confidence, strength and hope. *By Christie Findlay*

ONE YEAR AGO, Darius Turner left Florida after a divorce and moved to Philadelphia. Unable to find a job, he wound up in a homeless shelter. Now he's running half-marathons, talking about the computer-training course he just finished and working two jobs. That's the classic inspiration story from Back on My Feet, a running club for people in homeless shelters, which launches March 22 in the District.

"It just makes you realize what a huge void there has been in our members' lives, and how when you provide people with an opportunity to succeed, extraordinary things can happen," says founder Anne Mahlum, who started the program in Philadelphia two years ago. After years spent running past her local homeless shelter, Mahlum decided to create a club that would allow her to share some of the benefits she got from running: confidence, strength and self-esteem.

Sign up to volunteer with the local chapter of

BOMF, and you'll find yourself at one of three area homeless shelters at 5:30 AM Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. You'll run an easy one mile with the members the first week, then build up to longer distances. When your running mates hit their goals, you'll award them T-shirts, pedometers and digital cameras provided by BOMF.

"These guys walk around in their BOMF shirts all day long," Mahlum says. "We've been able to take the negative experience of living in a shelter and turn it into a positive one."

The group will partner with shelters like Clean & Sober Streets and Emery House on Capitol Hill and Southeast Vets in Anacostia, familiarizing residents with the glories of early-morning runs.

As for Darius Turner: He's been saving money from his job and is now out of the shelter, in a home of his own. *For more information or to volunteer, visit [backonmyfeet.org](http://backonmyfeet.org).*

## Have a Heart

**IT'S TIME AGAIN** for one of our favorite spring galas: the Greater Washington Region Heart Ball. Like many of the city's best black-tie events, the Heart Ball is an elegant affair that includes a seated dinner, dancing and fabulous live and silent auctions. The inspirational stories, though, are what really drive this event.

"We have been involved with the American Heart Association for more than 25 years," says event chair Howard Bender. "With a family history of heart disease, our involvement is deeply personal. Three generations of Benders will proudly lead the 2010 Heart Ball, and we invite the entire Greater Washington region to carry the torch with us."

The event, emceed this year by WJLA anchor Leon Harris, supports the American Heart Association's cardiovascular research and education efforts. Committee chairs are John and Mona Oswald, Dr. Jack Flyer, Cheryl Campbell and Christyne Nasbe.

*Tickets are \$750. The event will be held from 6 PM to midnight, February 27 at the Ritz-Carlton in Tysons Corner. For more information, visit [dcheartball.com](http://dcheartball.com).—C.F.*



The band at the 2009 Heart Ball.  
RIGHT: Leon Harris

