

Pounding the pavement

My husband and I religiously attended Back On My Feet (BOMF) until March, a month before we got married. The final weeks of wedding planning were all-consuming. Then we went on our honeymoon.

In May we started settling into married life and BOMF fell to the wayside.

Last month we decided enough was enough. One Monday morning in late August we got up at 5 a.m., put on our running clothes and laced up our sneakers to meet our team for the 5:30 a.m. run (that's the time the group meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays). Boy did it feel good.

The team we run with is comprised on nonresidents, such as ourselves, and residents – the men who live at the Helping Up Mission in East Baltimore, which provides them with substance abuse treatment and detoxification, among other things.

When the team “circles up” – literally forming a circle – we all recite the Serenity Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

There is something about meeting as a team, doling out that day's race routes that correlate with a certain number of miles (usually between one and five miles) and running the streets of Baltimore in the dark during the early morning hours as many of the city's residents are still asleep.

We are all God's children and have far more than in common than we may think. Running is one commonality – and it is merely a springboard for deeper conversations.

Back On My Feet, a nonprofit that works with the homeless to build independence and self-esteem through running, was founded in Philadelphia in 2007. Earlier this year, the Baltimore chapter celebrated its third anniversary.

Baltimore began with only two teams and now has four, each at area shelters.

Volunteers run with members four mornings a week. Some members train for 5K races, 10-milers and even marathons.