



Fleet Feet's 'Midland Mile' raises money for Montclair Public Library



*Runners of all ages get ready for the start of the Family Division race during Fleet Feet's Midland Mile on Sunday, Aug. 19.
Courtesy Fleet Feet*

by Andrew Garda

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Fleet Feet held its annual Midland Avenue Mile race, with proceeds going to benefit the Montclair Public Library, on Sunday, Aug. 19.

It is the third year the race has partnered with the library, which Montclair Public Library Foundation Manager Anita Peterson is grateful.

"In March of 2016, the owner of Fleet Feet, John Fabbro, called me and said we're starting this race and we're fans of the library and we would like to donate the proceeds of what we raise to the library for that year," Peterson said. "So we were just thrilled that they considered us."

According to Peterson, the first year saw the race donating \$2,500 after expenses, while last year the number jumped to \$3,700.

Based on the number of runners this past Sunday, which increased by almost 20 percent, the donations should also go up.

Fabbro said working with the library was a natural fit.

"We worked with the Montclair Adult school for a long time when it used to be over at the high school," he

said. "And then when they merged with the library, it just kind of seemed like a natural fit. One of our good customers had always raised money for the library and he was on the board, so we thought it would be a nice thing to do."

Fabbro and the store wanted to combine charity, a fun, family atmosphere and running. So, along with the race — which is certified by USA Track & Field and is considered a USATF-NJ Championship race — Fleet Feet has made sure there is plenty of activity for both runners and non-runners alike with kid-friendly crafts, food, beer and other things supplied by vendors.

"We tried to get as many local merchants involved as we could, just kind of make that finish line be something people could be drawn to, and want to stay around if you have a couple of kids," Fabbro said. "It was fun. At the finish line there was a DJ, people were dancing, and it had a fun party atmosphere."

Fabbro said the festivities are an added draw for the community.

"We even had a chalkboard where kids, or anyone really, could write 'I run because...' and then why they run. We have that in our window now."

As for running, there is a level for everyone, whether they are marathoners or just looking to get outside and run for a day.

There's the family race, which is for anyone who just wants to run and have a good time.

"You can run fast, but if you had kids you wanted to run with or if you just wanted to take a run, walk, stroll down Midland Avenue, this gives you the opportunity to participate," Fabbro said. "And everyone is timed, so no matter what heat you're in, you get a bib with the chip so everyone is recorded as an official runner. "

Of course, there's official and then there's seriously official.

For those looking to throttle the intensity up a notch, there's the main race as well.

"The USATF-NJ Championship race is for both Masters and open divisions," Fabbro said. "That means if you're over 40, you run in the Masters division and if you're under 40, you run open division."

The masters heats were further broken down by age, with men 60 and over or women 50 and over running in separate races than the younger runners.

The open division heats were arranged based on time, so the final race contained the fastest runners.

With the race finally run, Fabbro and his staff will now take a break before beginning to think about next year. But each year the event has grown, as they are always looking to add to the day.

"Each year, we try to get a little better."