

GRRC 5/3 RIVER BANK RUN MENTOR TEAM PROGRAM

Our Program, Our Coaches, and Our Mentors



THE MENTOR TEAM PROGRAM is a program of the **Grand Rapids Running Club**. It was established for the purpose of “mentoring” new runners who were interested in training for their first 25K River Bank Run but wanted the extra support and coaching they could get from experienced runners. Although the program focuses on new runners, veteran runners are welcome too! There is no cost for participating in the Mentor Team Program.

Beginning the first Saturday of January each year, and leading up to the Fifth Third River Bank Run (which is scheduled for the second Saturday in May), the Mentor Team meets for group training runs every Saturday morning at 8 a.m. The training runs are held at John Ball Park Zoo, with a couple exceptions, which are reflected on the Mentor Program 25K Training Schedule. The 25K Training Schedule is posted on the Mentor Group page of the GRRC website (www.grandrapidsrunningclub.org).

We welcome first-timers and will run with you, support and encourage you, and be available to answer any questions you may have. The only steps you’ll take alone are the ones to get off the couch and out the door to meet us on Saturday mornings! One of the biggest challenges facing new runners is simply getting started. Coaches and mentors will be there to guide new runners, as well as to encourage and motivate returning runners. We will take you from ground zero to the Fifth Third River Bank Run 25K. You will not be left behind!

All aspects of running will be covered—from the type of clothing that works well, nutritional needs of runners, hydration, rest days, setting your pace, and stretching will be covered. If you provide an e-mail address, you will receive weekly Newsletters that will include stories and articles written to encourage and motivate you, and will discuss the physical and “mental” part of training for an endurance event.

THE 2017 MENTOR GROUP COACHES are: **Francine Robinson (Leader), Paul Beuschel, Kathy Haase, Jerry Roersma, Abbie Stoppa, Debbie Snider, and Mike Lapp**. They are experienced runners, as you will see from their biographies below:

Francine began running in the spring of 2001 and ran her first marathon in Chicago that fall. Since then, she has completed 16 River Bank Runs and almost 150 marathons in 43 states, including seven ultra-marathons (six 50ks and one 50-miler). She has also qualified for and ran nine Boston Marathons. This will be the ninth year for Francine as leader of the GRRC Mentor Program. She volunteered on the Metro Health Grand Rapids Marathon Race Committee for 12 years, including 7 years as Race Director for the Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital Grand Rapids Kids Marathon. She has been a volunteer pacer for 10 marathons, including eight times for the Chicago Marathon Nike Pace Team. Francine enjoys inspiring others to set goals that will improve their physical, mental, and spiritual health, and that will encourage them to discover their inner strength and potential. Francine has two daughters, Rachel and Carly, and in 2009 gained a “son” when Rachel married Bryan Tuma in Niagara Falls, Canada.

Paul has been running for 17 years. He has run fourteen River Bank Runs (only one for himself, the other thirteen as a coach for the new runners in the Mentor Group), three marathons and one ultramarathon. Paul says that he “totally” enjoys the people involved with the Grand Rapids Running Club and finds mentoring for the 5/3 River Bank Run one of the most rewarding experiences in his life. He has been married for 38 years to a “wonderful woman,” and has been blessed with four children and six grandchildren.

Kathy has been running for over 30 years. She started off running 5K and 10K races. She later moved on to the longer distance races when she moved to Grand Rapids and decided to run the River Bank Run 25K. Since then she has completed 39 marathons and ultras in 20 states. She has been a member of the Grand Rapids Running Club for many years. She enjoys helping with the GRRC River Bank Run Mentor Program, as well as being Secretary of the GRRC. In addition, she is on the Grand Rapids Marathon Race Committee. Kathy looks forward to seeing new runners, and returning runners, each year at the Mentor Program Saturday runs.

Jerry ran his first 5k on a dare in 1999 and got hooked on running right away. He now enjoys running with Sue, his wife of 39 years. They run many races every year, from 5k's to marathons. They have three adult children and three grandchildren. Jerry has run 14 River Bank Runs, including running six of them as a pacer for the 9:00 minute per mile group. Jerry enjoys sharing the fun and health benefits of running with new runners. He very much enjoys seeing the smiles of runners that just finished their very first River Bank Run.

Debbie started as a walker and competed in race-walking races for several years. When she and her husband (an avid runner since high school) moved, she no longer had her training partner or coach. Soon the non-activity had taken its toll. With the help of her husband, a “slow runner” began—1/2 mile out, 1/2 mile back. Debbie has run countless 5K, 10K, 15K and 25K races and said for many years “I will NEVER run a marathon.” Well, Debbie says “crow tastes pretty good” after she crossed the finish line of her 1st marathon in 2013 (Grand Rapids Marathon). She continues to run marathons and also competes in triathlons. Debbie and her husband have been members of the Grand Rapids Running Club for many years. She has been a “green bandit” for the Mentor Program and is now a coach. Debbie is happy to help everyone achieve their goals.

Abbie began running in August of 2012. Her first run was the 5k color run. She never believed she could run and breathe! She finished that race with such a feeling of accomplishment and thought....what can I run next? She was hooked! Since then, she has run numerous races of various distances, including 15 half-marathons, three 25K River Bank Runs, one full marathon, and various marathon relays. Being the mother of a special needs child, Abbie says she needed something for herself, but she also needed something she could do with her son. Running allows her the best of both worlds. She feels blessed to be a part of the Mentor Group, to give back and give motivation and encouragement to new runners. Abbie says she would not be here today without the support she has received from the GRRC Mentor Program and thanks all who have helped her along the way.

Mike is an avid runner. He is a past leader of the GRRC Mentor Group and has continued to help out each year since. He has competed in races of all distances, including a 100-mile ultramarathon. Mike has been a pacer at various marathons, helping people to run at a steady, even pace throughout the race. Mike spends countless hours mentoring and training friends whose goals include faster times or qualifying for the Boston Marathon.

THE MENTORS: The Grand Rapids Running Club has many enthusiastic, seasoned members who will mentor you at the group training runs. They are nick-named the “Green Bandits,” because you can identify them by the green bandanas or headbands they wear. The Mentors will run alongside you during the training runs and answer any questions you may have. Enjoy a great support group in the GRRC Mentor Team!

For more information contact Francine Robinson at: GRRCMentorGroup@aol.com.