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Back on My Feet, the Nonprofit that Helps the Homeless through Running, to Launch in Indianapolis in March 2011

INDIANAPOLIS -- On March 8th, 2011, **Indianapolis will become home to the seventh chapter of Back on My Feet**, the nationally-recognized nonprofit that promotes the self-sufficiency of homeless populations by engaging them in running, as announced today by Founder and President **Anne Mahlum**.

Mahlum founded Back on My Feet in July of 2007 when she developed a rapport with a group of men standing outside the homeless shelter she would pass each morning on her runs. Mahlum didn't see people who were homeless, she saw her father in these men who had struggled for many years with addiction of alcohol, drugs and gambling. She could never figure out a way to help her father so she turned to running to get through these difficult teenage years.

Ten years later, she felt if she could help these men through running – the sport that gave her guidance and direction – that she could somehow vicariously help her father by turning his hardships and struggles into an opportunity for these men to have a better life.

Three and a half years later, Back on My Feet is operating not only in Philadelphia, but also Chicago, Washington D.C., Baltimore and Boston. In addition to Indianapolis, the organization is expanding to

Atlanta, Minneapolis and Dallas in 2011.

“The support for Back on My Feet from the Indianapolis community has been extraordinary and we’re very grateful to have such strong partners in this city,” Mahlum said.

Back on My Feet works with 29 shelters in its current five markets and has more than 400 active members who run every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 5:45 am. The organization has a success rate of 70 percent and helped more than 425 individuals move their life forward by way of enrolling in job training/educational programs, securing employment and moving out of the shelter to live on their own or back with their families.

“Back on My Feet is not a running club,” said **Wylie Belasik**, vice president of programming for the organization. “We’re a running-based program that helps teach our members about the steps they need to take to have a better life. We give them the environment and opportunity to be successful, but they have to do the work.”

Part of the organization’s expansion process is ensuring sustainability for the program. In expanding to Indianapolis, Back on My Feet has found a devoted partner in hotel management company **White Lodging**, which has set a goal to raise \$100,000, or a quarter of what is needed to launch the new chapter.

“White Lodging has many urban hotels and was looking for an opportunity to make a difference in the neighborhoods where we work,” said Dave Sibley, President and CEO of the Hospitality Management Division at White Lodging. “Back On My Feet has provided us that vehicle and resonates with our associates.”

According to 2007 figures from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, there are roughly 1,800 people experiencing homelessness in Indianapolis on a given night.

“We welcome Back on My Feet to Indianapolis,” said **Tamara Zahn**, the president of development organization **Indianapolis Downtown, Inc.** “The innovative collaboration among the hospitality industry, business community, social service providers and homeless population brings more awareness, resources and volunteer support. This is a win-win for Indianapolis as the program offers hope, confidence and self-sufficiency to those truly in need.”

ABOUT BACK ON MY FEET

Back on My Feet, which launched in Philadelphia in 2007, is a nonprofit organization that promotes the self-sufficiency of the homeless population by engaging them in running to build strength, confidence and self-esteem.

Members must run Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings and must maintain a 90 percent

attendance rating in order to move forward in the program and gain access to job training, employment and housing opportunities.

The organization has chapters in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Boston, and Chicago and will expand to Dallas-Fort Worth, Indianapolis, Atlanta and Minneapolis-St. Paul in 2011.

The organization has received incredible media support, including attention from NBC Nightly News , ABC World News,CNN,and The Today Show for its ingenuity in tackling this difficult social issue. In addition to Philadelphia, the organization has chapters in Baltimore, Washington DC and Boston, and will launch in Chicago in September. More information can be found at www.backonmyfeet.org

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