

# TEAMS



## NORTH BROOKLYN RUNNERS

### A Non-Virtual Interactive Program

From old-fashioned letterpress printers to artisan sausage-makers, Williamsburg is known for creative craftspeople who follow a do-it-yourself archetype. Born from similar proactive roots, the North Brooklyn Runners (NBR)—founded a year ago and already with nearly 400 members—was the brainchild of personal chef Aja Marsh.

“I looked into running clubs—there was nothing in the area,” Marsh, 27, recalls. “I kicked the idea around for months. I didn’t know if I wanted to be responsible for another thing, but it kept nagging me.”

Marsh, who ran track in high school, claims she’s no longer very competitive. Before starting the group, she saw many runners in McCarren Park and on the subway on weekend mornings, bound for NYRR races in Central Park. She suspected that some might be searching for a local running community.

“When it’s cold out and people are at the track, you know they’re real

runners. I wanted to know who these people were,” Marsh says.

Marsh spent nine months in 2008 posting fliers in McCarren Park and nearby gyms, asking people to e-mail her if they were interested in starting a local running club. She created a Facebook page. Marsh and her boyfriend, Cherie Yanek, the sisters Linda and Jennifer Daniels, and Sherry Rosenkrantz formed NBR in January 2009.

Each founder plays a vital role in the organization: Yanek is the ultrarunning expert, co-leads Thursday-morning runs, and organizes an educational series; Rosenkrantz manages most administrative tasks and leads group runs; and the Daniels sisters design and coach speed workouts. “Because there are hundreds of members now, we have at least two social events per week,” Yanek says. “And I try to hold one educational program each week.”

Yanek, 31, just presented a well-received session on running in heat, and she’s held programs on cold-weather running and preparing for a first marathon. Although NBR’s membership mirrors the diversity of its home territory—most members live

in Williamsburg, Bushwick, and Greenpoint—and includes runners of all levels and specialties (including several triathletes), many members are new to the sport. Yanek gladly helps educate and support these novices. During her seven years in the neighborhood, she’s seen it shift from an older Polish majority to younger professionals—many of whom play as hard as they work.

“We like to socialize,” says social event organizer Lidie Lajoie. “NBR has an amazing variety—from total beginners to former college stars.” NBR’s men top the open B division in the NYRR team-points standings.

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— LIDIE LAJOIE, MEMBER

Lajoie joined the group for its second bridge run—over the Williamsburg or Brooklyn bridge and back, then coffee at a local shop—and has been the team’s social butterfly since. From brunches to happy hours to dinners to bowling trips, NBR members like to mingle, and members bring friends, many of whom join.

“I constantly encourage friends, runners on the street, and strangers to join,” says new member Katie Winther. “I’ve had an incredible experience, and there’s something for everyone—old, young, new, or experienced. It’s great for people new to the neighborhood, and also for those like me who want to get faster.”

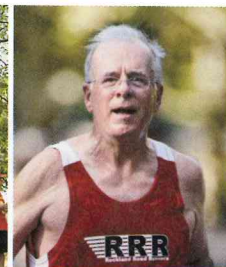
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