

Being Mindful Matters At Root Runners

By Teresa Sellinger
Photos submitted by Matt Villardo

At Root Runners, a Sparta-based walk/run specialty shop offering personalized attention, the mantra is “being mindful matters.”

“One’s ability to acknowledge and assess his or her health both physically and mentally is what will help them begin or sustain being active,” explains Root Runners owner Matt Villardo. “Understanding mentally where you are, how you feel and what you can do is vital to improving upon yourself each and every day.”

Villardo firmly believes walking and running can change the way you feel about yourself and ignite an inner push to continue challenging yourself.

“When you see the goals you can accomplish in such a short time of walking and/or running, you begin to regain confidence in your abilities, your mind begins to crave more exercise, your energy returns, and your journey toward personal success—mentally and physically—is created.”

Villardo’s inspiration for creating Root Runners came from rediscovering an old notepad in which he’d jotted down early concepts for the business: the name, artwork and notes regarding his concept of creating a way to help others experience the mental and physical benefits of walking and running. After eight years of meticulous business planning, lease hunting began in 2020. Today, Root Runners offers Sparta Township and the surrounding community a family-owned walk/run specialty shop that provides thorough sneaker fittings for their customers and meets their specific needs. Their experienced team members offer support, encouragement and guidance to help ensure everyone leaves with more than the right fit.



Emma, Matt, Anastassia and Joseph Villardo arrive for the Sparta Turkey Trot.



Emma and Joseph get ready to run for Root Runners.

“I enjoy having a purpose,” Villardo states. “By showing up every day to the store, I know that I will be able to interact with people and have a chance to pass on what I have learned, what I have battled through, and what I have done to improve.”

Villardo explains that he started running as a way to battle through his depression and anxiety.

“The mental benefits of walking or running are just as important as the physical,” Villardo explains. “For me, being able to help manage my mental illnesses was a blessing and something that I continued to build on. It started as

a hobby and turned into more of a gift after I was able to help others accomplish their physical goals while at the same time helping them get through some of their own personal battles with mental health illness.”

Villardo strongly believes that the more awareness he can bring to mental illness, the more lives he will have the opportunity to help.

“Nearly one in five Americans will suffer from a mental illness at some point in their life. After losing my father on September 11, 2001, I know firsthand how hard it is to feel numb, lost and defeated. It hurts me to know that so many suffer mentally and that they don’t feel they have the support or tools to help them manage their illnesses. We do our best to inspire those people to take on being active, to help give them a tool in their shed, and to let them know that it’s ok to not be ok.”

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Root Runners
 www.rootrunners.com
 270 Sparta Ave. Sparta NJ 07871
 Open M-F 10am-6pm, Sat 9am-5pm

ROOTRUNNERS.NJ

A runner in Sussex County for over 15 years, Villardo feels fortunate to now travel the world for running, meeting and connecting with new people and building relationships within the local community that will last a lifetime.

“The relationships built through an active community are hands down one of the best support systems a person could be lucky enough to find,” Villardo exclaims. “The message I would share with the community is an exact replica of what the community has shown Root Runners and other small local businesses: support locally-run businesses. We value our customers and treat everyone as individuals. We spend the time to make sure we meet their needs and listen to their stories, all while providing an experience that you just can’t get in big box retailers. You are not just a number in a quarterly earnings report, you are a person with individual needs and wants. That’s why small businesses exist.”

Villardo’s biggest inspiration in life is “the pursuit of building a better me each and every day.” He explains that while on the surface this may sound selfish, he knows that by being mindful about his mental and physical health he will in turn be a better father, husband, friend, son and citizen.

“I have been blessed in this life to have a beautiful wife, Anastassia, two healthy children—Joseph, age 6, and Emma, age 3—and, as of recently, a new bun in the Root Runners’ oven,” Villardo laughs.

One of the Villardos favorite things to do as a family is to go to Kittatinny State Park.

“My wife will go for her run first while I bike with my three year old on the back, my son rides next to me on his bike, and we loop the park until it’s time to switch and my time to run. We are super-active. We call ourselves team V! It makes it fun and I love growing as a father everyday.”

As a parent, husband and business owner, Villardo understands how easy it is to feel bummed out. His advice?

“Remember to stop and find time to focus on yourself. Life is crazy, especially now, and ensuring you can find quality time to work on yourself mentally and physically is a vital asset, not only for yourself but for everyone around you. If you don’t run, start walking. Come in to Root Runners and we’ll get you on a plan and get you moving. We are a judgment-free zone— trust me, you don’t have weird feet!”

Visit Root Runners at 270 Sparta Avenue, Suite 106 in Sparta, New Jersey. For more information, go to rootrunners.com or call 973-512-3747.



How To Maintain Your Fitness Resolutions

By Matt Villardo

Do you find yourself faltering with your 2022 fitness resolutions? Never fear! Follow these five tips for assistance in maintaining your fitness goals this year:

Manage your expectations: We all want six-pack abs and to have the ability to run long distances well, but by setting manageable goals you’ll serve yourself better in the long run. View the final picture, now take ten steps back and put that first step in sight.

Consistency is key: Being able to work out a definite three days a week is better than the stress of thinking you’ll be able to go five days a week. Life gets busy and gets in the way, so be accountable to yourself and your goals but focus on consistency first.

Take the guesswork out of “what to do” or “how to do”: Talk to local professionals or active friends. They’re always willing to help guide beginners and offer any tips or resources that are available to them.

Manage your stresses: Being able to acknowledge the stressful aspects of your life and working to make them more manageable will help keep you motivated and focused on your workouts and fitness.

Don’t forget to rest!: Sleep is such an overlooked aspect of training. Poor sleep routines and sleep quality will dampen the effects of a solid fitness routine. Don’t ignore quality sleep like we often ignore the other important aspect of fitness: nutrition.



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