



Members of the Walk/Run Ministry at New Antioch Baptist Church of Randallstown.

Photo: (Photo by Deborah Green/Examiner.com[above])/ (Slideshow Photos by Carole Shipman/New Antioch Baptist Church Walk/Run Ministry)

## New Antioch Baptist Church's Walk/Run Ministry unifying women through fitness

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By **Deborah Green**, Baltimore Fitness Trends Examiner

When you walk into the sanctuary you can feel the presence of a divine calling of women gathering in fellowship for fitness.

[Walk/Run Gospel Aerobics Ministry](#) at the [New Antioch Baptist Church of Randallstown](#) is a diverse group of thirty women from all walks of life including, nurses, doctors, teachers, personal trainers and realtors, who gather twice a week to workout.



The Ministry began its mission eight years ago under the founding principles of [Pastor Kenneth L. Barney, Sr.](#) and his wife, [Ellen P. Barney](#).

Through the vision of First-Lady Ellen P. Barney, who taught LEAD classes the women's fitness ministry was formed.

"It was a vision of Sister Barney to have women support and connect with each other; whenever, they would go through some challenges," says, [Cynthia Evans](#), the Ministry Leader of Walk/Run Ministry.

[Carolyn Owens](#), 54, who has been a member at the church since 1989, joined the group to improve her health and cut down on medications.

"I am a diabetic, I have high blood pressure, cholesterol and I am trying to lose weight. If I lose the weight then all of those medical conditions will get better and I can cut down on the medication," Carolyn Owens said.

But cutting down on medications and weight loss is not an easy task for most group members, but with the help of several instructors that are enthusiastic and dedicated to the ministry the women can reach their goals.

One member who has been with the group for five years and lost a total of twenty-five pounds and is continuing to be an example for her patients and herself is, [Dr. Ditra S. Scruggs](#), a podiatrist specialist.

"I have lost a tremendous amount of weight since I have been a part of the ministry. This is a wonderful ministry, we have an excellent leader with Sister Cynthia Evans, we are just grateful to our pastor and first-lady for allowing this type of ministry in this facility," Dr. Ditra S. Scruggs said.

Dr. Scruggs along with Donna Bacon oversee the new members of the [Walk/Run Ministry](#). Together they designed a running and walking route.

"It allows the ladies to fellowship while they walk," Donna Bacon said.

Women ranging from ages 20-years old to 70-years of age come to work up a sweat with this group. You don't have to be a member of this congregation to work out with the ministry- you just have to have a desire to fellowship and workout.

This isn't your typical workout in a gym where you hear secular music blasting the air waves; instead, the ministry jams to their favorite gospel music while working out.

"It's not a gym, it's a ministry and a ministry has a different kind of focus," Evans said.

A different focus that allows women to let their hair down, walk around with mid-drift sport bras and not worry about any men stirring at them working out, because men are prohibited from the ministry.

They even like to laugh jokingly calling it, *gospel aerobics*, because it's a simulation of working out while listening to gospel music.

Many of the women before joining the ministry tried to work out on their own at a local gym or track, but could not stick with it.

"I tried to exercise before and do it in my own strength; I never could stick with it, but I'm trusting God, I'm trusting Jesus to help me with it this time," Owens said.

[Patricia Aduna-Boatin](#), 66, whose family suffers from hyper-tension has set a primary goal to stay healthy and continue to unite other women since joining the ministry.

"We have an outreach program, not only do we work out and look after our fitness, but it is our goal to unify the sisters and to help them understand that health is very important," Patricia Aduna-Boatin said.

Some of women thought that they would never live to see a day that they would be able to run a 3.1, 13.2 or even 26.2 miles. But now several of them have competed in 5K's up to marathons.

You have probably seen the group in their bright decorated T-Shirts at former [Mayor Shelia Dixon's African American Heritage Festival 5K](#), [Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure](#), [New Balance Baltimore Women's Classic 5K](#) or the [Baltimore Running Festival](#).

"The women had been able to reach their individual fitness goals. I don't feel that God wants us to be internal, I feel it's important to reach out into the community and to serve the community in which ever way we can with fitness," Evans said.

Last week the ministry participated in the [Lupus Walk](#) held at the Baltimore Inner Harbor in which they raised over \$3,000 to help support the cause.

"When we do marathons, 5K's the focus is fitness; whereas, for lupus it's exclusively for those who struggle with lupus. We're not going into this event to see how fast we can walk or to see if we can make a personal best time, it's to raise funds and to eradicate lupus," Evans said.

[Carole Shipman](#), who is one of the fitness instructors, has been training with the group as she prepares to run her first full-marathon in [October](#).

"Training for the marathon is extremely intense and it requires a lot of time and dedication. I do have full support from the ministry and Sister Evans, our ministry leader and I will be running with another marathoner, Jodi," Carole Shipman said.

But in order to maintain a healthy body that is your temple, the group knows that nutrition is a key component of staying fit.

That means fasting certain foods from their diet, for example, tossing out that junk food or eating fried foods in moderation.

"One year I fasted red meat and completely gave it up. We just recently fasted carbs, soda, sweets, cakes, pies, cookies, all the good stuff," Shipman said.

The ministry meets twice week on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. and Saturdays at 10 a.m. They are gearing up for several local walks and road races including, the [New Balance Baltimore Women's Classic 5K](#) in June and the [Baltimore Running Festival](#) in October.

For more information about the [Walk/Run Gospel Aerobics Ministry](#) contact (410) 521-7866.

### Slideshow: New Antioch Baptist Church of Randallstown Women's Walk/Run Ministry



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