

Don't just toss out those old running shoes - donate them

A variety of groups will take footwear too worn for runners but still functional for casual wear.

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You might be ready to retire your running shoes, but those kicks can come out of retirement and discover a whole new purpose if you donate them to one of the Valley's running stores.

Those shoes can lead exciting new lives in places like Africa, where they could empower an orphan who is part of an after-school running program. Other shoes go to local homeless shelters, women's shelters and to local programs for refugees. We're not talking about worn-out, hole-punctured sneakers, either.

"A lot of shoes that are worn out for runners are still really nice shoes," says Gregg Mizuta, co-owner of Bandanna Running and Walking in downtown Boise.

A few community groups benefit from Bandanna's donations, including the International Rescue Committee, an organization serving refugees.

Running shoes should be replaced at around 500 miles, says Mike Shuman, owner of Shu's Idaho Running Co. Although they are too worn to support a runner's weekly training program, those shoes can still look great and are usually functional enough for casual use. Some of the shoes donated at Shu's place look brand new, he says. Shu's donates shoes to five local organizations.

See Jane Run donates shoes to the Women's and Children's Alliance and to Hope Runs, a program in Africa that helps AIDS orphans by introducing them to running and other activities to build self-esteem.

In addition to shoes, many local running stores also accept clothing donations and other shoes, such as dress shoes and shoes in children's sizes.

See Jane Run also accepts cash donations to help cover shipping costs for the Hope Runs program.

So think twice before you toss those trainers. You might think those shoes have outlived their purpose, but to someone else, those shoes represent a fresh start.

"Right now I'm looking at a pair of Reeboks that are in perfect shape," Shuman says.

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WHERE TO DONATE SHOES

Here are some of the local running stores that accept shoe donations:

- Bandanna Running and Walking, 504 W Main St., Boise
- See Jane Run, 814 W. Idaho St., Boise
- Shu's Idaho Running Company, 1758 W. State St., Boise
- The Pulse Running and Fitness Shop, 3100 E. Florence, Meridian