



# Ian Connor

The Running Store

Gainesville, Virginia



## What do you sell?

While we do need to “sell” items in order to stay in business, I like to think of my team as educators. We are Gainesville’s Run & Walk Headquarters! Customers come in and get the knowledge they need in order to make the best purchasing decisions for their goal(s). Regardless of their goal, we at The Running Store are committed to helping customers be healthy, fit, and energetic so that they can enjoy life to the fullest and have the energy to pursue all of their ambitions. I guess at the end of the day we promote and sell a lifestyle.

## How long have you been in business?

We have been in business for eight years.

## How many employees do you have?

We have two full-time employees and 10 amazing part-time employees.

## What is your favorite part of your business?

This business is really conducive to getting to know and interact with your customers. It’s rare that someone comes in, grabs and pays for an item and leaves without us having a conversation with them. Customers tell us about their issues and we work with them on a solution. We celebrate their successes, and share our stories, knowledge and experiences with them. Our customers really feel like family to us.

## How are you engaged in the community?

We offer a multitude of programs, many of them free, to help people achieve their fitness goals and learn more about the sport of running and walking. We have programs that help beginners set up a realistic walking or running regime that they can maintain; programs for seasoned runners looking to be more competitive and achieve personal records; programs introducing cross country and track and field to area youth; educational opportunities for runners to learn about preventing and treating running injuries; and demo nights that allow people to test out new apparel, gear and nutritional products. We also support many local schools, churches and businesses by donating monetary prizes to their races or other athletic events.

## How has the online sales tax loophole impacted your business?

The word “online” is like kryptonite to the mom and pop brick & mortar stores of today. Not only are these online power houses undercutting our prices because of clever “in-cart” price manipulation, they have been twisting the dagger in our backs by not having to collect sales taxes from customers. While we have a very large loyal customer base, there is a growing demographic of what we call “shoppers.” We spend a large amount of time educating them on what they need. At the end of the hour of working with them they let us know they would like to think about it. This is basically them saying “Thanks for your knowledge, but now I’m going to go home and buy this \$150 running shoe online so I can save the \$9 in sales tax (we are 6% in Virginia). We need this loophole closed immediately so that our “shoppers” can become “purchasers” and small specialty shops like mine can continue to survive. We want people to lace up local and put their money where their house is.

