

Hello runners,

I hope everyone is having a great Christmas holiday. And if you drink a little too much eggnog, you can always work it off at our next club run!

January 1, 2012, 2 pm: New Years Day Resolution Run, 5K and 1-Mile Run/Walk, Veterans Memorial Parkway. Meet at the southwest corner of the West Hills Mall parking lot. \$1 entry. Register at the starting point.

I hope to see you there!

Also, don't forget our annual Elections and Awards meeting, coming up on Thursday, Jan. 12, at the Junction Restaurant. The Awards part is new! In our November business meeting, we decided to create six new club awards, which we will give out that evening, and I will list my Top Ten Favorite Seven Hills Moments of the Year. I hope you can join us for what I hope will be a festive occasion! I will send out a reminder e-mail a few days before the meeting.

**** Club News ****

Unless you joined during the year, your Seven Hills Membership probably expires at the end of this month. In January, we will conduct a renewal drive, but you can get ahead of the game by sending in your renewal now! Membership is \$5 / yr. for students, \$7 / yr. for individuals, and \$10 / yr. for families. Multiple year renewals are encouraged--they simplify our record-keeping. As an enticement, if you renew for more than one year, you will receive a free entry to any one of our January / February club runs--what a deal! (If you have already renewed, you can add another year and receive the free entry.) You can renew by sending payment to SHRC, P.O. Box 6804, Huntsville, TX, 77342-6804, or at our awards meeting or any club run.

On our web site, we have now updated the schedule of events for 2012 (<http://7hills.us/events.htm>). This year, we will feature two new courses for our club runs, one in Elkins Lake and one in Forest Hills, both with bathrooms and one with a pool to cool off in afterward. In addition, we have added a new and unique distance to our annual Half-Marathon, a Quarter-Marathon. At 6.55 miles, this is slightly longer than a 10K. If it's your first quarter-marathon, you're sure to set a PR!

Please join me in welcoming our newest members: Todd Beauregard, James Bennett, Cindy Pate, Gene and Sheila Gaskins, Kristy Vienne, Jennifer Crispin, Ray, Dianna, and Cody Hopkins, Donna Fabian, Jay Maze, and Jose Moreno. There are a lot of enthusiastic runners in this group!

The minutes from our November meeting are located here: <http://7hills.us/documents/SHRC11-17-11Minutes.pdf>

Last Saturday, Dec. 17, in Livingston, two of our club members, **Mary Sweeten** and **Adam**

Jenke, were married! I remember watching them finish together at last year's Memorial Day run--they make a great team. We wish them a happy life together and many little runners.

Finally, remember to check out the Seven Hills web site, www.7hills.us, for the latest on everything. Ken's most recent "Running Shorts" column, if you missed it in the Item, is here: <http://7hills.us/RunningShorts.htm>. Recent race results for club members are here: <http://7hills.us/latestnews.htm> -- always up to date, and includes pictures. Please help our webmaster, Ken Johnson, keep up with your latest race times by e-mailing them to him at 1941runner@sbcglobal.net.

**** Runner of the Month ****

My secret team of scouts is always looking for club members who have had a great year of running. This year, this category definitely includes club member Leah Koester of Point Blank. As Leah tells it, she became a runner in September of 2009, when the gun sounded for her very first race, the "Tour De Bayou" in Houston: "Once we got going the transformation process from a jogger to a runner was felt immediately. The long-lost competitive spirit that I once displayed so many years ago on the basketball court and softball field as a kid, had just been found."

I can testify to this spirit. Wrapping up a group run last week in the Avenues, coming down the hill on Avenue O toward Pritchett Field, I heard what I thought was a freight train behind me. But it was no train--it was Leah, charging ahead to finish her run as strong as possible. This competitive spirit helped her become the female with the most wins in the Woodlands Sunday Night 5K series this year.

Leah shows us the joy and motivation that can be found through competitive running. Therefore, with the powers invested in me by Graphar, Roman God of Running, Egg Nog, and Candy Canes, I hereby declare Leah Koester Seven Hills' **RUNNER OF THE MONTH**. Congratulations Leah!

**** Runs and Related Events ****

The Houston Marathon is coming up on Sunday, Jan. 15. About two dozen club members are participating. While it is too late to register for this event, our club has been allotted a space to put up our canopy, in which to gather afterwards. However, the canopy must be put up on Saturday, Jan. 14th, from 3:00pm-6:00pm only. (Security will be provided so that it is not taken during the night.) If you are in a position to put up the canopy, please contact me.

The Rocky Raccoon 50 mile and 100 mile ultramarathon is taking place on Feb. 4 at Huntsville State Park. Our very own Curtis Barton will be running the 100 mile! We will be helping with an aid station at that event--I will send more details in January, including an invitation to volunteer. Yours truly has written an academic paper about ultramarathoning, no kidding, helped in part by input from Curtis. The paper is here: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1597331.

On Feb. 11, you will have a choice between two runs in Huntsville, both new for 2012: the Orphan Hope Marathon at Huntsville State Park (<http://www.orphanhopeintl.org/marathon/>), and the Sweethearts 5K, which starts on the SHSU campus (<http://www.active.com/running/huntsville-tx/sweethearts-5k-fun-run-walk-2012>).

To close, it has been a good and very productive year for our club. I want to thank the officers from previous years, who left this club in such good shape, and everyone who contributed this year--especially Steve Bickford and Ken Johnson, who have done a wonderful job all year and have been an absolute pleasure to work with. I believe even bigger things are in store for us in 2012!

Thank you everyone for helping make Seven Hills the "biggest little running club in Texas." If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, don't hesitate to contact me or any club officer. Happy Holidays, and Happy Running!--Darren.

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