

December 2013

Howdy runners, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of you! I have personally put in a good word for each and every one of you with Santa.

With 3,700 household members, the Dallas Running Club is the largest running club in the state. No one else even comes close. They are a big operation, with seventeen club events throughout the year, a sophisticated web site, dues of \$50 per family per year, and a fifteen-person board of directors.

On the other hand, Dallas has lots of people. To truly measure the reach of a running club into the running community, you should scale the membership by the population of the local area--the club's home county. Even by that metric, the Dallas Running Club does well, placing second in the state.

But a quick look at the one club that tops them reveals the limits of size, sophistication, and money. That club is smaller, simpler operation, with a budget that runs in the thousands, not millions. Yet it managed to put on the same number of events this year, seventeen, and the spirit of that club, the closeness of its members, their dedication to the sport, their mutual supportiveness--are unmatched. That spirit begins with its founders, many of whom are still members today, and has been nurtured in many ways through the years by countless members, and by the rural community from which this club springs.

As a result, this club reaches out very broadly to the local running community, welcoming runners of all types, speeds, and ages into its fold, and regularly supporting running events throughout the region. That spirit and reach are increasingly recognized throughout the State of Texas. That club is us. Other than the Dallas Running Club, no one else even comes close.

**** Our Next Club Run ****

Please join us for our next club run, on New Year's Day.

Wednesday, January 1, 2 p.m.: 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. Register at the starting point. \$1 entry fee. Refreshments will be provided. Restrooms will not be available at the starting point.

What a great way to kick off the New Year! I hope to see you there!

**** Club News ****

The officers meet recently to prepare the 2014 schedule of club events. Minutes of that meeting are attached to this e-mail, and the schedule of events is posted on our web site, under Club Events:

<http://7hills.us/events.htm> . I am pleased to say that Run Forest Run, which was very popular last year, returns to the schedule, as well as a summer club meeting featuring a speaker.

The courses for a couple of club runs have not been nailed down yet. Our course committee has had some difficulty finding a fully satisfactory course in the neighborhood of SHSU, one that would meet the highest standards of safety with limited traffic control. That committee, consisting of Emily Garner, Clayton Heald, Ken Johnson, and Scott McDonald, is continuing to scout alternatives. If you have a course, in that area or elsewhere, that you'd like to suggest, please e-mail me and I will forward it to the committee.

Our annual Awards and Elections Meeting is scheduled for Thursday evening, Jan. 16, at a local restaurant soon to be determined. I will send out a reminder beforehand with details about times and locations. We will hand out our annual awards and elect officers. While I expect several officers are willing to serve another term--I will be making some phone calls next week!--all positions are open for election, and I will be stepping down as president after three wonderful years. If you are interested in serving as an officer please contact me.

The awards to be given out on Jan. 16 will be determined by our awards committee, which is off and running. The committee consists of Jacob Gautreaux, chair, Jill Blake, Glenn Green, and Leah Koester. If you'd like to nominate someone for an award or think someone in the club deserves special recognition, please e-mail Jacob at jgautreaux@yahoo.com--he'd love to hear from you.

New Members. We have had a number of new members join us in the last three months: Karen Tallant; Farrah, Cesar, Laura, Ethan, and Kylie Trevino; Jordan Holy; Carter Helm; Kirstie, Mike, Sophia, and Gabrielle Legerski; Stacy, Scarlett, and Ava Spann; Nancy Mills; Brian Belanger; Elizabeth Berger; and John, Debbie, and Casey Schindler. Welcome! As we approach year's end, our members totals about 300 people in about 135 households, a mild increase from last year.

More news can be found on our web site, www.7hills.us, which has the latest on everything. Ken Johnson'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 Ken, who serves as our webmaster, keep up with your latest race times by e-mailing them to him at 1941runner@sbcglobal.net . Also be sure to check out our Facebook group, here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/55964470688/> , which has lots of pictures and posts about running--there is something new every day.

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

This month's feature is in keeping with my opening ode to our club's welcoming attitude.

Cindy Pate, a member for the last couple of years, doesn't call herself a runner--but enjoys our club runs because that does not matter. She says, "Every time I am at a run there are all ages and abilities present and no judgement, everyone is very encouraging and how exciting when you get a ribbon. People bring their family to these events and it is like a big party."

You can always tell Cindy at races or club runs, because she is always wearing pink. But for this year's Half Marathon, she helped out at the awards table--a lot of work as we have three awards ceremonies. She says, "It was amazing to see how we all worked together so efficiently from beginning to end."

Cindy is looking forward to 2014 and participating in more runs with her Seven Hills family, starting with our club run on New Year's Day. She truly recognizes and contributes to the spirit that makes our club great. Therefore, with the powers invested in me by the membership of the Seven Hills Running Club, I hereby pronounce Cindy Pate Seven Hills' RUNNER OF THE MONTH. Congratulations Cindy!

**** Darren's Training Tips ****

It has been a nice series on "Finding Your Zen," achieving the right mix of training and rest to achieve maximum fitness with minimum injury and fatigue. All of our contributors have been great. I'd like to cap off this series with some of my own observations.

I have been a runner for 35 years, and during that time, Finding My Zen has boiled down to understanding cycles. Last month, Jesse Parker discussed the Golden Mean--the perfect balance between two extremes. For me, this means finding the right mix of hard and easy training.

The shortest cycle is the easiest to understand--between hard and easy training runs over the course of a week. For a long time, I ran five times a week: hard day, easy day, hard day, off, easy day, hard day, off. The hard days improved my conditioning, the easy days maintained my aerobic capacity, while the days off allowed me to recover.

But this isn't the only cycle. There are two others. One is like the seasons--periods of three months or so during which you do, or don't, train intensively. After a vigorous spring season of training and racing, for example, I would ease into a more gentle training regimen in the summer, followed once again by an intense fall racing season.

And then there are the long cycles, which were the hardest to learn. About every three years, I would need a couple of months off, completely, to let my legs rest. Before I learned this, I would seem to hit a wall in my training, get frustrated that trying harder and harder wasn't paying off, and slowly I came to understand that my legs needed not more training, but a long period of slow rejuvenation.

Now, when I watch or talk to runners, what I watch for is this rhythm, this sense of balance, this understanding that you can take a run that is too hard, as well as too easy-- whether that person has found their Zen. It is never too late to learn, and there is no secret manual or textbook--experience is a reliable teacher, if we are always open to learn from it. If you haven't already, may you find your Zen in 2014!

Thank you everyone for helping make us the "biggest little running club in Texas."
Happy
running!

Darren Grant
President, Seven Hills Running Club
Huntsville, Texas
PresSHRC@yahoo.com / 936-439-5899