WV Winter Solstice Endurance Run Post-Run Report

Author: Ian Voysey

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# Overview

<https://runsignup.com/wvwser>

The run was based out of a HQ at the Red Hall in Helvetia, WV. Runners were welcome to show up as early as 3pm for bibs and check in and to get settled; we had a quick pre-run “two on the left means go left” at 4:45pm, then started out as a group at 5:02pm to do laps of the Historic Trail until 7:35am the following morning, through the longest night of the year. Two runners went ahead on the first lap and one or two fell off the back or started late, but the rest stuck together in a pack. We set up a board with paper on it for runners to mark down their lap tallies and fastest-loop-so-far, so folks came in every lap or every other lap to rest or get something to eat and update their row on the board.

At our peak, we had all 50 of our cap on runners signed up with 11 more on the waiting list. As the event got closer, we had quite a few drops. The day before the run, we had 36 runners still on the books; 11 folks didn’t start for one reason or another, so we had 25 people complete at least one lap.

I think the weather forecast was rough for some people, but also it’s just a hard time of year: there’s lots of family events that come out of the blue, lots of stress and excitement and travel, a fair amount of illness from being stressed out and indoors. If this event continues, I think it will always have a high drop rate for those reasons as well as the nature of winter weather in Helvetia.

It was a tie for men’s “most laps” between Donald Marsh and Drew Joseph at 18 laps (or approximately 52 miles). Women’s “most laps” was Alisha Moreno at 13. Alisha also had women’s “fastest lap” at 33:28. Men’s fastest lap went to Lou Butler at 20:11, who also ran a very respectable 10 laps total. 7 people ran at least 50k. All together, we ran 230 laps or approximately 667 miles.

Every runner was offered a Mtn State Trail Run Series t-shirt from a box of retro shirts Dan found in his garage. We gave out WVMTR pint glasses to the 4 folks with fastest laps and most laps; another idea was to go a little more Helvetia-centric and give cookbooks from the Swiss Roots store or similar.

There were no injuries that were significant enough to report. I know several runners took a fall or two, but I think that’s it.

Aimee Manion volunteered to decorate the Red Hall before the event and she was joined by Clara Lehmann, her husband Jonathan Lacoque, and their two girls. This netted the girls a few 4H volunteer hours, which was a nice bonus. Aimee kept the aid station going and organized through the night, and both Aimee and Clara helped clean up the Red Hall the morning afterwards. Kelly Young made herself a de facto volunteer through the night as well and kept several runners other than Randy north of bad without making a fuss about it. We encouraged runners to bring their own bowls, cups, and spoons, so we only produced one bag of trash.

Many runners expressed real interest in running the event again next year.

One runner told me that the run was a deciding factor in traveling back to WV to visit their family this year. Many talked about the need they felt for running with people and being in and among the community at this time of year because of the stress of the Holidays and depression that comes with less daylight. At least one runner ran her furthest distance ever, and one described it as “the perfect end to the running year.” A native WV runner with Highlands finishes to their name said it was “down home in the best way possible.”

We made it known to the HRDO board and others that they were welcome to come and celebrate with us or walk a few laps. Several local Helvetians came out to hang out with the runners through the night in the Red Hall. Two local non-runners spent the night in their hot tub watching the lights “gliding down the hillside” in the darkness and listening to snippets of conversation passing by, which they described as “magical” and “inspiring”.

I’m overwhelmed by how much this event meant to people.

# Results and Photos

Full results and photos from runners are hosted on RunSignUp, here:

* <https://runsignup.com/Race/Results/171753>
* <https://runsignup.com/Race/Photos/WV/Helvetia/WinterSolsticeEnduranceRun>

# Finances

Dan and I made a report with exact details to Lauren Beam.

Because this was a club-sponsored fun run, we made it very clear to the runners that it was a free event with no financial obligation of any kind. It was important to me from the start that someone could spend nothing more than the money it took for gas to get to and from the run and feel welcome and comfortable the whole time. I believe we achieved that goal.

Dan, myself, Clara Lehmann, and the HRDO board came to an agreement that we would be allowed use of the Red Hall for a reduced fee if we also offered the HRDO as a possible and optional place that people might donate money.

We got $595 in donations from runners online, plus another $150 in cash at the event. RunSignUp took some fees out of the online donations. I’m really amazed at the spirit of generosity our small community has. Dan and I will send “thank you” cards to the folks that donated in the coming weeks. After our expenses we were able to donate a little over $900 back to the HRDO.

# Notes For Future Runs

* The food we bought from Kroger barely got touched. People really went all out for the idea of a “potluck aid station”. We might not need to buy almost anything at all in the future, although I would worry about really truly having nothing at all. You need some basic safety net for folks, I think.
* Jonathan donated some rock salt and a shovel during the run to help keep the ramp into the Red Hall. That was pretty important and we should have thought of it.
* It’d be good to have a boot scrubber outside the door, too, especially if it was muddy instead of snowy.
* This event might not be possible if it’s 33F and raining; it was very cold but dry enough to make this work. That kind of wet day would be a whole other ball game, if not just plain old dangerous.
* On the parade lap, I stayed at the first turn to direct people. Sarah Forbes took over for me when she got there, then I jogged ahead to catch the leaders and stand at the second turn (just past Umbright’s). Randy Young took over for me there, then I did an Indian run again to the turn on Zumbach. That worked just fine with the old hands we had, but it’d be better to be less ad hoc and have a volunteer standing at those 3 places to direct folks just for the first lap. Several runners told me they were glad that I was at the first hairpin left because they were expecting yellow tape and would have gone up and over to Selbyville otherwise (there was no tape because there’s traffic on that road and it’d have gotten torn up).
* There were two runners that egged each other on and caused me some worry in the beginning of the event. They were brothers and one was only 16 years old. They burned each other out early. Even though it was all above board with parental consent and presence at the run, I think an 18 year age minimum would be prudent, even though I believe in this case it was not the first ultra-distance run for either brother.
* We could make less trash if we had another bag out for recycling. Folks were very good about bringing camping cups and bowls and didn’t make a fuss about it at all. That was very gratifying.
* The event felt about the right size. 50 people would have been OK but very tight; more would not have worked. There were some locals hanging out and one or two crew, but it was mostly just runners.
* The honor system timing chart was great. We had originally thought to use the chip system but I think this was way better – it emphasises the fun run and community nature of the thing. It wouldn’t work with more than 50 runners, and that’s good too.
* We had a miscommunication about the heat in the Red Hall. The cold water to the kitchen faucet froze during the run, but the heat got turned off during clean up before the water got drained out of the pipes so the other water froze in the day or two following the run as well.
* We got lucky with respect to non-binary entrants and entrants who chose not to disclose their gender. We did have folks in both camps sign up, but they either didn’t show up or weren’t in contention for a “most laps” or “fastest lap” recognition. I’m not sure what we would have done if that wasn’t the case. As far as I can see, the sport as a whole doesn’t have a good answer to the various and real questions there, but neither did I. I do think that it is more welcoming to let folks pick non-binary or choose not to disclose when signing up, and the right thing to do.