

In preparing remarks for today, I re-read my report from last year and while I wanted to take the easy way out and repeat that speech, it wasn't going to work. I do figure, however, that this can be the "Emergence From The Emergency Part 2". We have found that the running world we are re-entering post pandemic is quite different from the one we left. We have to make some adjustments. Just what those are and how we do them will need careful consideration. All club members must voice their concerns, their wishes, their desires during this readjustment period.

Right now, we continue to put on a significant number of well-organized and popular running events, though their popularity (and the popularity of racing in general) has waned. Participation numbers are down across the board, but expenses increase (hello inflation! and safety regulations!). The board is in a solid financial position, but we must continue to make adjustments as needed

The race market is saturated and nearly all our events face competing races on the same weekend or weekends just before/after. I see a barrage of events promoted for worthy causes or by for-profit management companies or entities with much more branding and marketing power than us. Smaller races without sponsorship or marketing experts on staff get overlooked. Many come and go as it's simply not as profitable or as easy to manage as one thinks. The bare bones races seem less desirable by the masses and people look to pay more for extra flair. Many pick "events" over "races". While our club offers some events, we pride ourselves in quality races for low cost as well. **Improving our marketing and securing race sponsors is a must if we want to continue our race calendar as is.**

Our club has eliminated several events from our schedule in recent years and may need to consider the elimination of more. I'd hate to see that happen as I personally like many of the smaller, cheap, low key events, but it's not apparent that others do so we'll see. Our current schedule has 20+ races with 11 being free for club members. We are only able to offer the free races with the dedication of our many race directors and with some profit from the other races. Some of our folks (Maureen Cox for the marathon, Mark Warner for the WTC, Brian Northan for the Stockade-athon & ROTG, John Parisella for Labor Day, Masters 10k, Distinguished Service, and WS #4) are giving many hours a week over several months of the year to the club. **We must find ways to recruit additional qualified race directors.**

Some opportunities exist for prospective RDs to get their feet wet by being an assistant or co-director or being a coordinator for one aspect of one of our larger races. The RDs of our major events have large jobs requiring a good deal of work. Their teams are invaluable. As is assistance they receive from our administrative assistant Carol Reardon, our club facilities manager John Parisella, and our insurance coordinator Barbara Sorrell. We must keep these teams strong. Not only does it lessen the workload for the director, it spreads the knowledge and experience should the director not continue in their role.

While it's possible we could create new "events" that might better reflect runners' interests in the modern era and perhaps draw more participants, we'd need the umpf to do that. Having more RDs is

great because it lightens the load, but in some ways it's a disadvantage as well. We lose networking ability when we're decentralized. Rather than having one RD build a solid rapport and repeated relationship with the police chief or mayor or town/county officer, we have multiple HMRRC RDs contacting them for different events and they don't really learn who we are or that we are all connected with the same club. We have the finances to start a new event but do we have the visions, connections, and manpower?

In the past, the board has discussed the option of compensating race directors, and some suggest we revisit that idea. It really isn't simple though and brings up a lot of questions. What would the compensation be? Which RDs would receive it? What about the coordinators who take on major parts of each race? Would they receive some compensation, too? Where do you draw the line between a volunteer and a paid worker? What impact would compensation have on the club's other programs? The club was founded on the spirit of volunteerism, and I'm hopeful (yet not confident) it can continue that way. Because of our wonderful volunteers, we are able to do so much for our community. So much beyond putting on quality running races.

Our Shrader Scholarship program encourages and supports young runners in their efforts to make running a lifelong part of a healthy lifestyle. This year we resumed full payout of six \$3,000 non-renewable scholarships to runners from Section II planning to attend a college, university or community college on a full-time basis. We are now in our 23rd year of the Shrader Scholarship program and have awarded in excess of \$223,000 to 89 student athletes. One of these athletes recently served on our board and others continue to race in our community. **We must find more ways to get younger runners involved with our club.**

In 2010, we started the Just Run program and while it missed a season during the pandemic, Ken Skinner has it thriving again. This program supports elementary school running programs and provides a stipend to teachers who run the program in their schools and t-shirts and snacks to the kids who participate. We put on a track meet last spring and in a couple weeks, 19 schools will be attending our fall cross country meet at Mohonasen High School. There are over 1200 students participating in the program this year and likely 850 will attend the meet over two days. We have 40 club members helping, and I'm smiling just thinking about all the smiles there will be :)

In addition to these programs encouraging the youth of our community to run, we partner with the Food Pantries of the Capital District. Over 348 pounds of produce and 218 pounds of food was donated by our club in 2021! And, since 2004 the CDPHP Workforce Team Challenge has selected one or more Charities of Choice annually. The program selects non-profit organizations in the Capital Region to receive a donation from CDPHP and HMRRC, as well as direct contributions from race participants. The Oakwood Community Center in Troy, NY was the recipient of \$31,188 after this year's race.

All of these efforts give me great pride, and as HMRRC members, you should be proud, as well. Much of our mission has been accomplished, but there is work to be done. The primary tasks for the new board as I see it: Secure sponsors for races, improve marketing, and recruit younger participants. We need to focus on ways to turn the Just Run participants into Scholarship Applicants and the scholarship applicant cohort into race participants, club members, and future race directors.

Without the addition of these incredibly hard-working and competent people, it's difficult to imagine how the club will move forward.