



## Running Blind 2017 Annual Report

2-10-18

### **Hello friends, Running Blind members and supporters!**

I hope 2018 is treating you well. 2017 was another challenging year, but a good one. For Running Blind, trying to create and maintain active pairings is still looming as a daunting challenge. But the good news is that we did manage to establish two new active pairings last year that are flourishing. One is with a young women in Holland Michigan who we managed to find both a guide and a back-up, and the often run together as a group, which is great. Saraelizabeth and guide Mary ran in a 5K race in the fall, and hope to do more. The other pairing is a young man from Pleasantville NY, one of our first out of state pairings. Rory and his guide Sarah have been running most every week at a nearby H.S. track. Our longest running pairing is Sile and Mikel, and they are still doing great. We have a couple more pairings that are works in progress. The effort (and luck) required to establish and maintain a good pairing relationship is a challenge, and growing the ranks of our members adding to that workload for me is not something I can currently consider. That will take more support from donors, volunteers, and the Running Blind staff. But for now we're making the best use of the time and money that we have available to us supporting the pairings we have, and working with summer camps.



Saraelizabeth and guide Mary



Hal directing the Gallup Gallop Sept 10, 2017

### **A Sad Good bye to the Gallup Gallop (and thanks to the Ann Arbor Track Club)**

Managing the Gallup Gallop has been rewarding, but a challenge. I'm an experienced race director, but I couldn't breathe life into this event. There are so many races to complete with, and even a beautiful venue like Gallup Park is just another race – one of many on any given weekend. The race steadily declined in attendance and proceeds, and I recently made the decision to step down as race director. It was also clear that after 37 years, the park no longer has any real need for the event as they are very busy with their

enhanced livery business. At some point I may get busy and try to start the Running Blind 5K, which I think would be better a better fit with the public and much better for Running Blind. But **thanks to the AATC** for allowing me to stage the race for the past 5 years. (It's their event but they let me keep all of the profits for Running Blind!)

**Running Blind Adventure Camp – it's back in 2018!**

Another combined effort with Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind will occur this July as we partner for our **3<sup>rd</sup> Running Blind Adventure Camp**. The other two camps (2014 & 2016) were both fantastic experiences, for the kids, the staff, and for me. This one will start in the U.P. near Pictured Rocks, and conclude at my family property on Lake Charlevoix for some boating and beach fun. I'm working with Gwen on the planning and will start a fund raising campaign soon also. Without the Gallup Gallop, I'll be more dependent on donations from the running community. (Hint hint...!) I hope and think it will work out - I know the camp will. Gwenn Boetting who runs OUB does a great job with her regular camps and I'm really looking forward to this year's adventure camp!



Group shot in Mackinaw City from our first Adventure Camp in 2014.



Canoeing the Big Manistee in 2016



Boating fun on Charlevoix in 2016

**Other News – Welcome to Geri, and thanks to Tom**

Other areas of Running Blind are moving along slowly but surely. Geri Feigelson is now working as our communications director (and now a board member) and is trying to establish a more regular communication schedule with the dozen or so blind members on

our roster. (She took over from Hope last year.) Communicating with the athletes is part of the challenge we face as a service provider. I'm also trying to pay Geri, but that is also a challenge as our budget is limited and so far she has done the work for free, but that isn't fair to her in the long run so I'm hoping to shore up the income needed and be able to budget a better salary for her. I communicate with the guides, which generally is a little less work, but can still be a challenge. And Tom is still doing a fantastic job on the website. He makes regular updates and has been a great volunteer supporter and board member. Finally, I organized a very nice dinner in Ypsi for Tom and Geri, and also included Hope, Ozzie, and Mikel, guide to Sile. We used Uber to get Geri and Hope to the dinner, and Ozzie came in by train Tom picked him up, and I dropped him off the next day. The transportation costs some money, but that's the reality visually impaired people face. I hope to make this fun holiday gathering an annual tradition.

### **Running Blind 10K Fundraising Campaign** [www.active.com/donate/runningblind](http://www.active.com/donate/runningblind)

I realize that I need to put more effort into our online fundraising efforts, and that I need to do initiate a campaign every year. So far I have only pitched an online campaign in years that I'm hosting and funding an Adventure Camp and needed money to support it. But it's apparent that we need more support every year to have a chance to support the work Geri needs to do, and the needs of our runners (we offer them shoes if needed, safety bibs, and a couple race entry fees every year). I'd also like to be able to offer them the costs required for a Planet Fitness health club membership, but at the moment that is well out of our reach. *At the moment we offer ~\$200 per year to each visually impaired runner on our list, and adding a Planet fitness membership would bump that up to more like \$500 and at the moment we can't afford that.* But **with your help, maybe we could offer more than we do now, and at also create a more stable ability to plan and budget our support and activities.** That would really help, and if you can consider supporting our 10K campaign, that would be fantastic and if so I can promise you two things: 1) all the money you donate will be spent wisely helping people that benefit greatly from our support, 2) your name will be listed on our website as a supporter and 3) you feel better about yourself and the world you live in! (But remember I only promised two!) How can you beat all that?! I hope you consider supporting us and either way I hope 2018 is a great year for all of you. Thanks, and keep on runnin'!

### **Thanks to our guides!**

Our running partnerships won't work without the committed support of our volunteer guides. They are the heart of our organization. Thanks to all of you!

**Mikel Gurrea Rubio** – guide for Sile in Ann Arbor MI since 2015

**Tom Kelner** – guide for Paul in Dallas Texas since 2016

**David Saperstein** – guide for Geri in W. Bloomfield MI since 2016

**Sarah Croak** – guide for Rory in New York since 2017

**Mary Miilu (& Katie Ralston)** – guides for Saraelizabeth in Holland MI since 2017

**We need guides in:** Columbus OH and the London England areas

**Hal Wolfe** - Running Blind Director and Founder

**e-mail:** runlikehal@yahoo.com

**website:** www.runningblind.org