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Running Blind Annual Report 2024

Hello friends, Running Blind members and supporters! 2024 was a busy year for me, but a very low-key year for Running Blind.

I joined the AATC Board (but unfortunately later left it...)

I was a Board member and a race director for the Ann Arbor Track Club 20 or so years ago, and in an effort to try to gain some human contact, I joined again in Dec. 2023. I'd been slaving away at home working on a major living room house addition, and I felt some balance to add some volunteer work with a group of people would be good for me. I had expected/hoped for in-person board meetings as I was accustomed, but it seems all things post-Covid are not necessarily the same as they were, and the AATC changed to Zoom board meetings during Covid, and once you make a change like that, it's really hard to change back, and they haven't. I made it clear this was not likely to work for my volunteer intentions, but I committed to stay on for at least 6 months.

I worked hard on a number of new initiatives with the AATC in 2024: **1)** a scholarship program to honor longtime youth team administrator Ron Beasley (who is a good friend of mine); **2)** a new formal Board policy for inclusion at AATC events, **3)** an initiative to raise the pay of the adult coach, **4)** an initiative to move the indoor workouts to Lincoln HS's 300 m indoor track (see the 2023 RB report!), and **5)** an initiative to make indoor workouts free for all AATC members. All of these initiatives were successful, but a sticking point occurred when much of the info I prepared to honor Ron was NOT allowed on the AATC website. That was confusing and very disappointing. Shortly after that, I requested, they publish a detailed cross-training options guide I spent a lot of time generating. Again, that was rebuffed by the board for reasons that troubled me.

Finally, after I spent an extremely challenging week doing very difficult volunteer work for the Ann Arbor Marathon (which is run by the Epic Races group whose owner (Eva) I know well) to measure and re-certify a modified course they were forced to use due to (ubiquitous) road construction. When at an AATC board meeting shortly after that event I was planning to inquire as to why the AATC wasn't listed as a supporting organization of the marathon. I didn't need to ask – the former AATC President filling in the answer with an off the cuff quip about her distain for supporting a "for-profit" organization such as Epic with AATC volunteers. That was basically the straw that broke the camel's back, and at the next (and my last) AATC Board meeting, I tried to explain just how hard I had worked (under dangerous conditions) to conduct the required certification. My frustration boiled over and a number of Board members didn't seem to appreciate my slice-of-life perspective on the difficulties of race event management (which the AATC

no longer does – they now farm it out to Run Toledo – also a for-profit group by the way (said the pot to the kettle)) and I realized that my fit with the Board was no longer healthy for me or for them, so I went on an extended hiatus, which I am still on officially.

What does all of this have to do with Running Blind? Exactly nothing, except that the energy in my life to support groups like the AATC and Running Blind was effectively sapped with my ultimately unsuccessful efforts to support the AATC. It was “interesting” but not a lesson I care to repeat any time again in this lifetime, and certainly not at a time that I was also swamped with other personal issues that were equally vexing.

Support for friend Geri F.

The main thing I did for Running Blind in 2024 was to conduct a guide search for my friend and former RB board member Geri Feigelson. She had just moved from the Detroit area back to her hometown of Cincinnati OH and she was hoping to find a running partner. So I did some networking with my own database, and also with United in Stride (which has grown to become a very useful resource) and found a young woman who seemed anxious to work with Geri, and set up a meeting for them very near the end of 2024. They met up just once in December and Geri is currently trying to set things up for some more workouts now that it has turned to spring.

Running Blind Fundraising *(See our donations link)*

I still have not conducted a fundraising campaign since 2021, but we are always looking for ways to continue to contribute, and to raise the funds needed to do so.

If you can consider supporting us with as little as \$30, that would be appreciated. As always, **I 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'll feel better about yourself and the world you live in! (The third one is a bonus!) How can you beat all that?! I hope you consider supporting us so we can continue to make a positive impact on the visually impaired community!

Thanks to our guides & our donors! *(All donors listed on the website.)*

Our efforts won't work without both financial support and the committed support of our volunteer guides. Thanks to all of you, and keep on runnin'!

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