

2018 Running Blind Board Meeting

12/30/2018

Attendees: Tom Gardner, Geri Feigelson, Hal Wolfe

Activity Summary

Running Blind helped organize, co-sponsored and co-hosted the 2018 OUB Adventure Camp. The expense for the camp was \$1,542. This was about half of the year's expenses. We also spent \$1,392 for other support, including a donation to Ozzie and Abby for their support of the mission (Village Schools International), support of Geri for the DxA2 Run, the RB Holiday dinner (\$192 for dinner and \$130 for transportation).

The Adventure Camp was the main event for the year, and was a lot of work for Hal and the OUB group. The results were good, but there was an issue with the rafting on the Jordan River. Becca – an OUB staff member and lifeguard, was not well suited for the role of kayak support, and she got wet and chilled and also banged her head, and had to go to the hospital twice, initially for being chilled, and the 2nd trip for possible concussion symptoms. That cast an unfortunate feeling over the trip, but according to Gwen, it was the best adventure camp they had had that she was a part of. The lesson learned was that we need to get better guide support for any rafting activity, and also that the Jordan River is not a good fit for this group. But the cooperation with OUB provides a great opportunity for RB to make a big impact on a large group of visually impaired youth and young adults, and is definitely an activity we will continue to support, with a very special event being the boat rental to allow the final day of the camp to include boating and tubing. This gives the kids a thrill and makes them feel excited about life, normal, and special in a way that is hard to explain and duplicate. (2019 will be in southern Ohio.)

The primary challenge that we continue to face is our funding. In 2018 we had a shortfall of most of a thousand dollars. We had enough money to cover for the loss. Hal tried to shore up funding with a 2nd e-mail campaign just after Christmas that netted ~\$600 mostly from friends, so it was a nice bonus, but less than expected / hoped for based on all of the work Hal did creating a trip report, and annual report, and nice e-mail note in Mail Chimp, and lots of website updates. 2018's return on the e-mail campaign was the worst of the 3 years that we conducted a large scale campaign. (In 2014 we netted \$5,400, and in 2016 we netted \$2,700, whereas in 2018 we netted only \$2,000, so the downward trend is evident and needs to be addressed.

Abby and Osman (aka Ozzie)

Hal made a proposal to Abby to support Running Blind with communications support, such as mass e-mails like the donation notes, and other info notes to the guides and visually impaired runners. She agreed. How much time she will spend and how we will be able to pay her remains to be seen, so this is a challenge, but her help might provide support for fundraising that might be beneficial. (A \$15 / hour rate is what was paid to Hope.) Osman (who is not engaged to Abby) also agreed to help out, and will attempt to solicit grants for us. He tried once before and had no success, but hopefully we can work in a bit more strategic manner and get some results this year. How we will pay Osman is also an issue. Hopefully if he gets some grant support, we can pay him a small fee for

each grant he applies for and then also a percentage of the grants money he gathers, such as \$10% which is somewhat standard, but that amount may be adjusted depending on the amount he would be able to gather. This needs to be discussed and agreed upon.

Meeting and Holiday Dinner

The dinner was a big success this year, with the following people attending: Hal Wolfe, Tom Gardner, Geri Feigelson, Amy and Andrew Shepherd, Gwen and Jim Botting, and Hope Springstead. We ate at Aubrey's which worked out, but the big booth was a bit difficult to deal with when people had to go to the bathroom, but it was still a great night and we stayed most of 3 hours. Hope and Geri required Uber transportation, so that cost over \$100, but that is part of the expense of hosting an event like this. I hope to organize this event every year. Getting Sile and her loyal guide Mikel to be able to attend would be great, but that would require a date either before Christmas or after New Year, which is possible, but might be harder to get other participation.

Future Plans

Continuing with the Adventure Camp partnership with OUB seems like a no brainer. Gwen does the heavily lifting of hiring a staff and recruiting kids for the camp, and I help with the planning and financial support, plus host a portion of the camp. It's a great fit. If I keep the Charlevoix property, I would like to consider hosting an smaller weekend adult camp up there once a summer. Hosting 6-8 people would be about the max that my place on Charlevoix could handle at this point. Labor Day might be a good fit including a guided walk on the Mackinaw Bridge, which is always fun on a nice day.

If we could secure more stable funding, we could consider trying to grow our paired running program, and use our large list of potential guides, or United in Stride or other means to find small groups of guides to pair with blind runners that need support. Given the amount of effort it takes to create and maintain a successful pairing, this would require someone other than just myself to orchestrate this effort. Possibly it would be a good fit for Abby and Osman, but that remains to be seen. Expanding this portion of our mission is a significant challenge. (Geri has suggested giving this up. I'd rather not.)

My cancer diagnosis definitely could also play into future plans at some point, but for now it shouldn't affect my life for the next couple of years, but after that who knows.

Summary

2018 was a good year for Running Blind in some ways, with the adventure camp, and the upgrades to the website and a new fundraising platform (PayPal). But it was a very challenging one with my cancer diagnosis, and the difficulties at the camp with Becca, and our fundraising difficulties. We also need to try to find a mass e-mail service to replace StreamSend. Finding one we can afford to send 1-2 large audience notes per year will be a challenge. (Constant Contact is a lot more expensive.) So, some things went well in 2018, but there is a lot of work to do and many challenges looming.

Hal Wolfe

Running Blind President, chief cook and bottle washer

December 2018 donation campaign stats (Mail Chimp & PayPal):

	Size	Open	%	Clicks	unsub
Donors	178	65	35%	12	0
Guides	382	137	38%	5	6

PayPal Donations: 9 for a total of \$785 (7 of 9 were people I know personally)

While support of friends and family is wonderful, in the long run the base of support must be broadened.

As to my efforts this year in December, a whole lot of work went into the 1) writing of the trip report, 2) writing the annual report, 3) creating lots of photo collages, 4) the Mail Chimp note formatting, 5) downloading and 6) updating the two mailing lists that I used, 7) updating the RB website, and 8) choosing and setting up the PayPal donation link.

I still need to consider setting up a mass e-mail service such as Constant Contact but if I only send 1-2 notes per year to the large list, paying a monthly fee wouldn't make sense.