

On the Run: A running club grows in Dover

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(Photo: John Morris/Courtesy photo)

The term “running community” is bandied about quite a bit — in this column, in running magazines and elsewhere.

The “community” part of that term is crucial. We’ve all heard about the “loneliness of the long-distance runner,” and we know that at its core running can be a solitary pursuit.

But when we share our individual running in the form of informal training groups or formal running clubs, the experience becomes enhanced and performance improvements usually follow. Whether we are running personal-best times, aiming for Boston Marathon qualifying marks or simply trying to stay in shape, training and racing together forms bonds that lead to permanent friendships.

The Dutchess County area is a rich “running community” in every sense of the phrase. Mostly stemming from the Mid-Hudson Road Runners Club, there are several different spinoff training groups. Social media certainly helps in cultivating these connections. But there’s always room for more, so today we’d like to introduce you to the newly formed Dover Plains Running Club.

For those who are not familiar with local geography, Dover Plains is a relatively small hamlet in eastern Dutchess County; according to a quick internet search, the hamlet’s population is around 1,000 folks. That’s pretty small. So the idea of a Dover Plains anything club is a bit dubious at best!

I used to joke with my friend Krys Wasielewski, who has lived there for 30 years, that he was the “finest marathoner in Dover Plains,” the assumption being he was the ONLY marathoner there!

But alas, there is now enough interest and groundswell of support for not only a running club but also a road race in Dover Plains. That’s pretty neat.

John Morris, 42, is the unofficial “founder” of this still-growing club. He provided this back story via email:

“A little over two years ago my wife (Holly) and I were at a point in our lives where we needed a change: Me being a cancer survivor and now my wife coming down with diabetes, it was a wake-up call. We were both overweight and out of shape, so we decided we needed to start eating better and start working out. We went to our local gym and got a membership. We started working out and progressively worked our way up to doing some running.

“We both dropped our weight and now my wife is no longer diabetic. Sometimes it was tough for me to stay motivated, so I looked to running with a buddy of mine who is an avid runner. During one of our runs, we toyed around with the idea of starting a club in our town. I didn’t know if it was even possible so I just threw together a Facebook page just to see if there was any interest. Over the last year, the numbers started to grow and it looked like we might have something here.”

The Dover Plains Running Club was born, but they wanted it to be more than just a name. They researched the formulation of running clubs and that directed them to the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA). “After going through all the hard work associated with building a club,” Morris said, “we needed to do something big.”

That something big is the upcoming Dover Dragon Dash, a 5K run and walk on Saturday, Sept. 10. All proceeds will benefit the Dover High School cross country and track teams. Talk about forming a “running community” ... a new club is formed in a small town, a road race is formed to support school-age runners, who then in turn may grow to be adult runners like the ones who formed this club in the first place. Good circular thinking, folks!

At the risk of sounding like an infomercial: But wait! There’s more!

“During all this craziness, I started thinking we could really use a coach to help our members,” Morris said. Again, he went to the internet, and whose name popped up? Krys Wasielewski! You know, Dover Plains’ finest ... who also happens to be a certified running coach.

Wasielewski loves to run, and he loves to preach the gospel of running through coaching at all levels. Now, he was asked to share that expertise with his longtime neighbors.

“All of a sudden,” he said, “running and promoting running as a style of life took a new turn close to home. As a longtime member of this community, I am so glad to see first fruits of the hard work of Holly and John to make this running club a reality as a great venue for local runners.”

Morris said at first he was reluctant to contact Wasielewski, wondering if such a fledgling club would garner the interest of a coach with such wide-ranging

expertise.

"When we finally met up, I was so glad I contacted him," Morris said. "He's an inspiration to all that meet him. Within seconds of meeting him, you feel like you knew him for a lifetime. I watched him take members that said 'I can't do this' and when he was done had them wanting more. We are so fortunate to have him in our town and in our club."

Morris said that right now the club is still in its formative stages, with about 25 members. That should grow quickly, as he said the race is on target for at least 100 entrants, most of whom will surely be recruited to join the ranks of this new club.

"I am so happy I did join this club," Wasielewski said. "I have met fantastic runners of all levels and I'm looking forward to our first race. The race will benefit young runners of this community. Such a goal is very close to my heart."

For more information, go to doverplainsrunningclub.com (<http://doverplainsrunningclub.com/>).

Mid-Hudson Road Runners Club member Pete Colaizzo, the track coach at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, writes on running every week in Players. He can be reached at runhed246@hotmail.com.

