

Dover running club begins indoor winter program; adds Friday night workout

Although the weather lately has been a bit more conducive to winter running, in general this has been a challenging winter for training outside. We can all whine about this — and trust me, we do! — but that's not all that productive.

For a more proactive approach, we turn to our friends out in eastern Dutchess County. The Dover Plains Running Club, formed in 2015 and organized by Dover Plains residents John and Holly Morris, has grown by leaps and bounds in the short time it has been in existence.

The club will be organizing three races in 2018 and is in serious negotiations with the Junk Yard Dogs in an effort to take over the organization of the JYD's Hilltopper Half Marathon, a fine (and free!) summer tradition in east central Dutchess County.

"Over the last couple of years," John Morris said, "the club has grown into something I only dreamed of." Indeed it has, and now, the Dover Plains Running Club has added another element to its growing arsenal of fitness activities.

A few weeks ago, the club initiated a Friday night running club workout — inside! No wind chill advisories, winter storm warnings or black ice to worry about at Windgale Elementary School!

Under the watchful eye of longtime Dover Plains resident Krys Wasielewski, a noted running coach and stalwart of a road racer, word of the Friday evening program has already spread quickly. "We are always looking to grow the club and give back to our members and the community," John Morris said.

He explained the genesis of this newly formed program: "As you know, this winter hasn't given us the best running conditions, which has made it tough to get people out to run. During one of our runs, my running partner Marylu Williams and I kicked around an idea to bring the running inside. We contacted the local elementary school and booked the gym till May.

"We thought just running alone would be great but let's step it up with some exercise stations. So, we put together a program consisting of running and 12 different exercises — for example squats, lunges and suicides, in intervals over 40 minutes. We plan on mixing it up from week to week to keep it interesting. We opened it up to members and non-members at no cost. The thought is to give everyone a place to run, build strength in a safe environment and to recruit some new members."

On the first night, 14 people showed up, clearly suffering from "cabin fever" and raring to go. That number nearly doubled for the second week.

Prior to the inaugural workout, John Morris was asked if being a runner was a requirement to join in. His response: "No, but we're going to make you one!" He added: "People were excited about the opportunity to get fit and learning to run in a comfortable, non-intimidating environment."

With regard to Morris' comment about making newbies into runners, no one is better equipped to do this than the enthusiastic and ebullient Wasielewski.

"I reached out to coach (Wasielewski), explained to him what we had planned and like always he said, 'Yes, I'll be there to help!' It was great to have coach there to advise everyone on the proper way to stretch and assist with demonstrating the correct running form," John Morris said.

While he refers to himself as an "old, retired coach," Wasielewski remains an active and enthusiastic runner. "My thing is to get people active and by staying active to join our club and fuel our friendships while running," he said.

Wasielewski said his program consists of "many elements of a great running plan." They include: Dynamic warmup; walking and running itself; cooldown and static stretching. He said he was encouraged by the positive early response to the program.

"It was, in fact, a genuine idea of getting people active during the most adverse weather conditions and win their hearts for our running club so that would run with us the rest of the year," Wasielewski said.

John Morris and Wasielewski noted that they were hoping to add a second practice session each week and then carry it over to outdoor practices once the winter weather turns to springtime warmth.

Wasielewski has been a Dover Plains resident for the past 32 years and has been an active runner for most of that time. "I've seen a lot in this great village," he said. "Unfortunately, running here was never an epic story." He noted several attempts at organized runs and races, but none got traction until John and Holly Morris formed the Dover Plains Running Club.

"It is a pleasure to meet with them and all involved and share my running passion with them all," Wasielewski said. "(the club) is great for our running community. It is great for the local high school running program. I'd like to be part of it as long as I am able to stand on my feet and move my legs!"

For more information on the indoor workouts in Wingdale, check out Dover Plains Running Club's Facebook page.

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. For more club information, go to www.mhrrc.org