

Message from the President:

“It’s Great to be a Steeplechaser!”

As we came through the holidays, I thought about how many people are filled with the “spirit” of the season. Whether it’s the Christmas spirit of giving, or the reverie and optimism that New Year’s brings, we often wonder why we can’t keep that spirit alive in our society all year round.

Now, we’ve been preparing for this banquet and it’s given me reason to further reflect on our activities and what I’ve seen in the club over the past year. I’ve observed people pitching in to help with a myriad of athletic, social, and benevolent activities and events that have benefitted the running community and made a significant contribution to the quality of life here in Frederick County.

It was certainly a busy year! Overall, we helped to coordinate the running schedule in the local area that included over 60 running related events. Of those, the Steeplechasers played a primary role in race support for 43 of them. Incredibly, we provided finish line/timing support for 35 events (nearly twice the number of events that we were doing 3 years ago). Most of those events were charity or school fundraisers. Some of these events raised over \$30,000 for their causes. I think it’s feasible that our little volunteer organization played a key role in events that likely raised half a million dollars for charities in the local area this year.

In addition, we put on several of our own events. In all, Steeplechasers were the actual race directors for 14 races in the local area. We put on our traditional Summer Decathlon Series that drew more people than ever. Steeplechasers also staged an estimated 500 training runs open to whomever wanted to participate, and we accommodated people of all abilities from those wanting to do their first 5K’s to people training for ultra-marathons. We also became increasingly involved with youth running. We have a host of members that are coaches both in the school system and working privately developing programs that benefit hundreds of new young runners throughout the area. Steeplechasers are doing all of this, in addition to providing the normal club duties of managing a website, keeping runners informed about races and running related events throughout the region, and hosting social events like this banquet that enable runners to come together and get to know each other better..

How did we do all of this? With smiles on our faces and love in our hearts! Love of what we’re doing. Love of the benefit of good health and fellowship that we know we are sharing. Love of the very act of running and the feeling it brings of being alive in the moment. Whenever I cross paths with you club members that are participating in all of this, it evokes a smile in everyone. That’s the spirit that comes from a shared sense of giving and the resulting warmth of coming closer together and sharing our passion. Isn’t that just like having the holiday spirit? If you use the club to channel your energy and share your passion for running, **you can have the holiday spirit all year round!**

How’s that for a reason to get involved? The next time someone asks about why they should join the club, tell them about some of the things we do, and then just smile and say **“IT’S GREAT TO BE A STEEPLCHASER!”** Maybe they’ll catch the spirit too.

Mark Lawrence