



Sunday, April 19th, 2015

2015 Zumbro Endurance Run Volunteer Thank You

Dear Friends,

Recently it has been noted ad nauseam in magazines, online and on many a Saturday morning long run that trail / ultrarunning is a rapidly growing and changing sport. This is often times accompanied with the implication that it is not necessarily for the betterment of the activity we care so much about. Synonymous with this change is a fear that our community could loose its way, its heart and its soul somehow diminished by this increase in popularity. Might everything we hold so dear come toppling down because more people are learning what we knew all along - that running in the woods is a blast, that pushing ourselves in this environment feeds our soul and renews the spirit!? Sometimes when you love something so much, you fear anything that might come along to change or alter it - sadly skepticism becomes the default. I think about what at its core makes our community so special and the words that come to mind are HEART: *The innermost or central part of anything: spirit, courage, or enthusiasm*, and SOUL: *The animating principle; the essential element or part of something*. And what comprises this heart and soul? People of course.

As race weekend unfolded I started to view this years Zumbro Endurance Run as a litmus test for all this recent discussion - looking for clues that might suggest that the aforementioned growth and change is having a negative impact on our sport, our community. It didn't take long and I was already drawing conclusions - I simply couldn't see any sign of wholesale changes for the worse. To the contrary here is a short list of the things I witnessed bolstering confidence in everything that is good about our sport offered as evidence that the heart and soul of our pursuit remains in tact;

- New ultra / trail-racers toed the line with great humility, reverence, respect and excitement
- Elite and middle-of-the-pack runners still stood side by side on the start-line all sharing a common bond
- First-time volunteers, many runners themselves, helped runners with exquisite skill and care
- Veteran ultrarunners finished yet another difficult challenge and grateful to still be among the running
- Experienced volunteer leaders worked autonomously and guided others, making sure the event was a success
- A past Zumbro 100 mile winner sat this one out and volunteered all day and all night to the benefit of others
- A finisher of last years 50 mile race and his two young daughters volunteered late into the night
- HAM radio operators (most of whom are not runners) gave freely of their time to ensure the safety of runners
- Young, old, runners, non-runners, pacers, crew, family, volunteers, dogs all came together in one place

What I saw was a group of people coming together for a common goal just as I have seen in years past. Elated runners crossed the finish line signing the praises of the volunteers, the event and our community, souls fed, spirit renewed and hearts full. Sure there are some people that will try our sport and never fully get involved but overall I saw the thriving, growing and expanding heart and soul of our community - I saw a bright future. I leave this years race with renewed confidence that we are headed in the right direction and as a testimony to that conclusion I offer a few words from one of our runners...

I just wanted to thank you all for the most amazing event I have ever participated in! It was so well planned, thought out, covered, and just amazing! It was my first Ultra and by far my favorite race to date. A huge thank you to all the volunteers for all their hard work and dedication in staying there all day, night, and day again! Amazing! I just had the best time on the most difficult course! Mother Nature helped too, but you guys are simply awesome! Thank you again and hope to see you all sometime in the future.

I thank you all for being a part of the Zumbro Endurance Run - I thank you veteran volunteers who are mentoring the new volunteers. We have a really special thing going and I see no end in sight - we could not and would not want to do it without you - you are the heart and soul of our event and our community. As always, if you have any questions, comments, concerns, suggestions, compliments or complaints, please feel free to drop me a line.

Sincerely,

John Storkamp - Race Director