



Wednesday July 6th 2011

TO: Friends / Volunteers of the 2011 Afton Trail Run | **RE: Another Successful year**

To Our Friends:

The 2011 edition of the Afton Trail Run 25K and 50K is officially in the books! If you would have asked me a year ago how I thought this years race would go, my response would have been “smoothly” or “without a hitch” - after all we have done this together plenty of times and usually know what we are doing! However, nobody could have predicted that for the first time in its 18 year history, that the Afton Trail Run would not be held at Afton State Park due to an unsettled state budget, a Minnesota state government shutdown and ultimately a complete closure of all Minnesota State Parks just one day before the race!

As a result of unsuccessful negotiations in the state legislature, uncertainty loomed in the weeks leading up to this years event. This uncertainty made those final days expectedly stressful and created additional planning and work - yet things on our end remained calm and under control throughout. Any worries we had were tempered knowing that when race-day arrived, we would have a top-notch team of volunteers there to make sure that the race would go seamlessly. As the race began, there were still a number of unknowns regarding how things would work at the new venue and we held our breath until all the runners were through the first loop and their reports from the battle-ground started rolling in. The verdict was that we had created a “sick, twisted, and a sadistic course” but that it was perfectly marked, there was plenty of aid, tons of great volunteers and it was a lot of fun. As the temperatures rose throughout the day, the concern that the course might be too difficult started to cause some concern but unsurprisingly our runners were up for the challenge and settled into the stifling 85+ degree Minnesota summer heat. Runners remained patient and worked through the long challenging day, which for the 50K included a whopping 8700 + FT. of elevation change.

For you the volunteers, the nature of all the changes, the shorter loop course and all the unknowns that came with new format meant that extra hours and responsibilities were levied on the entire team. Without surprise everyone rose to the occasion with optimism and smiles on their faces. Over 85 of the best volunteers anywhere; arrived earlier, stayed later and worked harder than ever to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the runners.

As race-day came to an end, Cheri and I stood looking out over the ski hills and I wondered whether or not we had been successful and pondered how we would measure success this year. Typically, if we perform in the same fashion of the previous year we know we have nailed it - this year with a hundred new variables it was far more complex to quantify. We lost our venue just a day before the race, we started 430 runners on a 100% trail course just minutes away from the state park and still in Afton / within the St. Croix River Valley, the course was well marked with nobody going off course, everybody stayed safe, the runners had fun and were pleased with the race and best of all, we made it happen together as a team. To me that sounds like compete undeniable success.

So, thank you for the incredible amount of effort, the time you give freely, your attention to detail and your ongoing support for the Afton Trail Run and your fellow runners – it could never be done alone, you guys make it happen each and every year. As always, should you have any comments, questions, concerns, complaints or compliments please feel free to contact me day or night. I look forward to next years race, no matter where it takes place.

Thank You,

John Storkamp
Race Director
Afton Trail Run