

September 2021 - Harley Eisenberg

Congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to Harley Eisenberg, our September 2021 Volunteer of the Month! Harley has been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club for 13 years and devotes much of his free time volunteering as a Run Lead for Atlanta Track Club, serving 50 to 60 times per year! His long-time support of training participants has helped many cross their finish lines and he continues to inspire many more.

How long have you been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club?

I have been volunteering for approximately 12-13 years. My first volunteer experience was as a Run Lead (RL) for In-Training for Peachtree (ITFP) at the Alpharetta location and I have returned every year since. After a couple of years of being a RL for Peachtree, I also become a RL for Half Marathon Training and then a couple years later I became a RL for the Marathon. I volunteered because I was a participant in the program for a couple years and wanted to "pay it forward" to newer runners.

What is your favorite Atlanta Track Club event?

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race. It was my first race as a participant. For three years, it was the only race I did each year. I was very much an occasional "runner." I walked as much as I ran, not because I was following an interval method, but because that was all I was able to run without having to take a walk break. I still remember my first training run. I could barely run 1/8 mile without stopping.

My first Peachtree, I started in Corral W and was very intimidated. I had trained by doing loops around my neighborhood but I feared I would be last and would be taken off the course for being too slow. But after a mile, I realized that everyone near me was doing the same pace. I had found "my people."



What is one of your best memories from volunteering at any race?

I have paced several events for Atlanta Track Club, including the Invesco QQQ Thanksgiving Day Half Marathon and the Publix Atlanta Marathon in the spring. The best memory is when we are at the last mile and someone who has run the race with me realizes that they are going to complete their first race at that distance. They have typically doubted their ability to finish for the entire race and now after several hours of running/walking (I always do intervals), they realize that they are going to finish. They are always very tired and sore at this point of the race but you can see the change in their expression when they realize that they have done more than they believed they could.

What is your favorite thing about volunteering with Atlanta Track Club?

Helping people achieve goals that they doubted they could accomplish.

What brings you back?

Seeing the same people every year and how they have improved. Also, how their lives have changed over time... marriages, kids, job changes, etc.

Do you have a favorite volunteer assignment?

Run Lead. When you run with someone for several hours each week for 10-16 weeks (depending upon the program), you get to know them. You become not only their Run Lead, you become a friend and a counselor. We have a saying "what is said on the long run, stays on the long run" for a reason. We tend to over share events in our lives during our long runs.

Do you do any volunteering in the community beyond Atlanta Track Club?

I am a push-assist volunteer for Kyle Pease Foundation. I push in-chair athletes in 10K and half marathon races.

How many Atlanta Track Club events do you typically volunteer at during the year? How many events outside of Atlanta Track Club?

I typically volunteer 50-60 times a year as follows:

Peachtree: number pickup at expo; start wave C; Run Lead 2x/week for 10 weeks
Fall: In-Training for Fall Marathon or Thanksgiving Half number pickup at expo; start wave volunteer; Run Lead 2x/week for 12-16 weeks

Spring: number pickup at expo; pacer for Publix Atlanta Marathon; In-Training for Spring Marathon: 2x/week for 16 weeks

What do you do for a living?

I am a Service Delivery Manager for Ericsson. My team's responsibility is to ensure that your cell phone network is operational (so that you can post all your race pictures on social media).

Do you have any advice or words of wisdom for any new Atlanta Track Club volunteers?

Just do it! All volunteer positions are so rewarding to the participants. A friendly smile and word of encouragement is all someone needs to push thru the next mile, even experienced runners/walkers.



Tell us something interesting about yourself - an interesting fact or story that will help us get to know you...

I am very much an average runner. Atlanta Track Club is not just for Elites and fast runners. I consider it a personal victory if I finish a race in the top 50% of the participants. I've never won an age group award and most likely never will. But, I've managed to complete Peachtree for 18 consecutive years, run dozens of half marathons, and even 23 marathons. I am on a quest to complete all 6 World Major Marathons (NYC, Chicago, Boston, Berlin, Tokyo and London). I have completed 5 of the 6. Due to COVID, my last race to complete the series, London, has been postponed until April 2023, but I am determined to complete it! I am also on a quest to complete a half or full marathon in all 50 states. I think it'll take me 5-10 more years to complete that objective, as I'm only halfway complete.

I am a cardiac surgery survivor, having had a stent inserted in my "widow maker" vein in 2016. Doing my next "race" was very emotional as I was one of the last 10 people to cross the finish line of a four miler. My cardiologist told me that running could literally be life threatening for me and if I was determined to participate in the race then I needed to slowly walk the entire distance. Sixteen months later, I ran the Boston Marathon, raising money for the American Heart/Stroke Association (thank you to everyone who donated to my fundraiser).