

UPF Yekaterinburg, Russia Peace Road Remembers Leningrad Blockade

Evgeniy Skvortsov
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Yekaterinburg, Russia -- A Peace Road event honored the 75th anniversary of Leningrad's liberation from a Nazi blockade that lasted more than two years.

"Remembering the Strong in Spirit" was the theme of the January 27, 2019, event, in which participants completed a run of 7 kilometers (more than 4 miles) through Yekaterinburg's Victory Park.

Fifteen participants took part in the run, despite the bitter cold. Gathering in the hall of the hospitable AVS Hotel, the participants tied a green ribbon with a dark green stripe as a symbol of this memorable day before proceeding to the run.

The theme of the run was not competition but rather solidarity -- a trait that helped the residents of Leningrad (today's St. Petersburg) to survive the difficult blockade months from 1941 to 1944.

At the end of the run, the participants gathered to drink tea and to chat. One of the participants read the famous "Joyful Letter" of the elderly Vera Alekseevna Vecherskaya, who did not survive the blockade but with this last letter to her son inspired the residents of Leningrad to maintain hope of victory and to continue living. In conclusion, the participants decided to make the run an annual tradition.

On the same day, the 50th Road of Life marathon, dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Leningrad, was held in St. Petersburg. The first running of this legendary marathon took place at the end of January 1970, when the super-marathoner and trainer Grigori Kolgashkin ran on his birthday with four friends a distance of 39 kilometers (more than 24 miles). Now the strongest athletes, winners of international and domestic competitions, take part in the marathon.

Several Yekaterinburg runners went to the St. Petersburg marathon, and the world champion in two-day running, Gennady I. Valugin, came to our city from St. Petersburg. Mr. Valugin, a representative of the NGO Super-Marathoners for a Healthy Lifestyle, was the person who a year ago offered to hold such a race in Yekaterinburg. In this jubilee year he again insisted on holding the race, acting as a hands-on organizer along with the Hour of Running club and the Ural branch of UPF.

Gennady Valugin brought with him memorable ribbons and a symbolic pennant, specially made by KLB Dynamo and the social movement Will of Petersburg, which the marathon runners and blockade runners signed. For their part, the participants from Yekaterinburg signed the pennant and transferred the electronic version back to St. Petersburg.

This kind of communication between runners strengthens the friendly relationship between the cities, which is not accidental, because Gennady Valugin is a UPF Ambassador for Peace and carries the ideas of the international Peace Road initiative. Before his arrival in Yekaterinburg, he participated in the Peace Road event in St. Petersburg for lovers of Nordic walking.

The Hour of Running club expressed great gratitude to Gennady Valugin, since regular runs were started in Victory Park after last year's run and an active branch of the club appeared in the Uralmash residential community. Mr. Valugin, as a super-marathon runner, spoke at the club meeting, giving tips on training, preparing for long starts, and in general maintaining a positive attitude toward life.

The younger generation and their parents were present at all meetings with the champion, which gives hope for increasing the values of a healthy lifestyle and true patriotism.