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Equinox spirit alive and well

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The Spirit of the Equinox — not easily defined, but easily detected when seen or heard.

This year's event — as it is every September — was full of worthy examples. A sampling:

- Here's to Oklahoma City couple Kamala Gamble and Lance Cornman, who together completed their 50th marathon in 50 states, intentionally saving an Alaskan vacation for the finale. Their finishing time — 5 hours, 44 minutes, 8 seconds — was more than 90 minutes slower than usual, but the pair savored every minute, complimenting the race at the awards ceremony for its unparalleled organization and hospitality.
- To the band Yellowjackets in the Outhouse, for raising people's spirits all day at Liz Pawelko's aid station at Mile 21.8, located on the short but cruel hill on Goldhill Road. Thanks, also, for the "Chariots of Fire" rendition as Yours Truly went by with a slim lead.

Kudos to Liz and her hardy band of volunteers as well, along with everyone else who handed out food, drink and encouragement along the way.

- To Keith Pollock, winner of the actual Spirit of the Equinox Award. Pollock, a longtime Running Club North volunteer, was humbled and at a loss for words upon receiving the honor, given annually since 1986.
- To the relay team Knocked Up, comprised of Linda Hay, Linda Musatano and Ellen Lyons. All 6-8 months pregnant, they plugged along to finish in 8:45:55, with no reports of exercise-induced labor.
- To Andrew Roberts and the rest of the Lymphoma and Leukemia Society's Team and Training program, which raised \$101,000 to fight cancer. Roberts, now cancer-free, finished in 4:08:35 about two years after being stricken with lymphoma. David Monson, fittingly awarded bib No. 1, first suggested the Equinox become a TNT event.
- To David Jacobson of Fairbanks, a visually impaired TNT runner who completed the third relay leg in 1:48:57. Jacobson can't see in his right eye and has only some straight-ahead "tunnel vision" in his left eye. With Susan Faulkner helping guide the way, the 57-year-old Jacobson walked down the Alder Chute, then ran the rest of the way without incident. He also works at Access Alaska to improve the lives of those with disabilities.



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- To the Tsigonis family, for hearkening back to the early years of the Equinox, when entire families ran and walked the route. Noah, 10, was the youngest male finisher in 7:11:10 while sister Rebekah, 14, was the youngest female in 7:51:32.
- To the dozens of high school volunteers, who hopefully were inspired enough to attempt the Equinox in the not-to-distant future.
- To Rocky Reifensuhl, who didn't let severe cramping deter him from continuing forwards. After lying face down on Ester Dome while friends helped stretch his legs, Reifensuhl reportedly passed runners on Goldhill Road — while running backwards. The 55-year-old still finished in 4:07:12, then planned to recover the next day by leading a mountain biking mission to clean up the course.
- To the weather gods, for the glorious summer and for postponing the forecasted downpour just long enough for most everyone to stay dry.
- To Benji Uffenbeck of Eagle River, who lost 50 places after reaching the top of Ester Dome last year. He not only returned to Fairbanks but recovered to take home an awards plate with a fifth-place time of 3:12:24.
- To the eccentric Eric Skidmore, the 1977 champion who ran one of the fastest times ever for 60+ year-olds and certainly won't wait 27 more years to return.
- To Detroit Metropolitan Airport, for cell phone service that enabled Yours Truly's parents to receive a phone call with the men's result just minutes before boarding an 18-hour flight to China.
- And finally, to Dave and Clodagh Thompson, for a post-race soak in their Chena Ridge hot tub, replete with a champagne celebration Yours Truly will never forget.

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