

Behind every great event are volunteers working to make sure everything goes according to plan. For the Star City Half Marathon and 10k, Andrew Parkins is one of those people.

For about 10 years, Parkins estimates, he has been marking the course, starting when the Star City Striders were in charge of the race. He stayed on as a volunteer when Virginia Amateur Sports took over in 2021. The race starts at River's Edge and follows the greenway east to Fallon Park where it doubles back. The course has been the same for years, but it still needs to be marked and have mile markers placed. Parkins is happy to be part of the effort.

He was an integral part of registration and social media promotion for the Striders, but VAS has that covered. Course marking is still a need, however, so look for Parkins in the hours leading up to the race to be out there. Posting signs to make sure the runners have the info they need.

"I still promote the race on my own social media. I'm an unofficial ambassador," he says.

The Star City Half Marathon and 10k will be the morning of Saturday, Nov. 18. Once again there is the option of running the race virtually, although virtual race participants are not eligible for group or overall awards.

Parkins found the Striders when competing in the Star City Half Marathon soon after his 2006 graduation from Roanoke College. An Albemarle County native, the chance to compete for Roanoke College attracted him to the Roanoke Valley, then meeting his future wife, Bridget, kept him here. Bridget is also a runner who competed for the Maroons.

Parkins says the Striders have dwindled a bit, no longer managing races or timing local events, but the group is still a special community for runners.

"I used to help them out with their timing, since they timed all the local events," he says. "When I got to know the Striders, they were friendly and welcoming. I'm happy to be part of them and I help them with online club registration."

As for VAS working as race administration, Parkins is happy with the arrangement. "I plan on helping as long as they need help," he says.

He ran the race in 2020 when the virtual race was the only option. He completed the Roanoke Triple Crown – the Star City Half, the Salem Half, and the Blue Ridge Marathon or Half Marathon. While Parkins has not run this race in recent years, he does run one or two marathons a year – twice completing the Boston Marathon, most recently in 2022 -- and averages about one short race a month, competing in most of the 5k races around Western Virginia. He competing in the 5000 meter race in the Commonwealth Games twice but doesn't care for running on the track.

"I'm more of a road race guy," Parkins says.

He can still be seen running the streets of Salem and taking part in races around the area.