

With 2023 just around the corner, registration opens for the October 14th, 24th running of the Jackie Weintraub Memorial Soulstice Mountain Trail Run at 9 PM New Year's Eve, and save \$10 thru Jan. 2nd at <https://runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Flagstaff/SoulsticeMountainTrailRun>.



2022 not only marked NATRA's 21st year, but we kept alive our streak of never missing a Saturday adventure, no matter the weather. We kicked off the year with another sub-freezing New Year's Day run and never looked back. We saw record attendance at our group runs and we welcomed more newbies and visitors than ever before. Thanks to Alain Soutenet, Bruce Higgins, and Howard Brown for leading runs when I haven't been able to be there.

NATRA's 50 group adventures covered over 300 miles on more than 60 trails and we visited many historic sites from Flagstaff to Sedona and west to Williams which included the following trails and places; the Karen Cooper FUTS, Hangover, Schultz Pass Road, Buddha Beach, Baldwin, Templeton, McMillan Mesa, Aeries, Cockscomb, Submarine Rock, Chicken Point, Jacks Canyon, Little Rock, Dairy Springs, Adobe Jack, 1882 Johnson Canyon Tunnel, Sycamore Rim, Dow Springs, Garland Prairie, Walnut Canyon North, Little Elden Springs, Mars Hill, Observatory Mesa, Buffalo Park, Lower Oldham, Rocky Ridge, Walnut Canyon Overlooks, Waterline, Aspen Corner, Bismarck Lake, Sandy Canyon, Fischer Point, Mormon Lake, Flim-Flam Railroad Grade, Flagstaff Loop, Government Knolls, Spring Valley, Soldiers, Fort Tuthill, Highland, Kachina Wetlands, Kendrick



Mountain, Beale Wagon Road, Government Prairie, RS Hill, Eagle Rock, Sitgreaves Mountain, Railroad Springs, Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve, Skywalker, Secret Slickrock, Herkenham, Bell, Wet Beaver Creek Wilderness, Transept, Hiline, Marj's Draw, Huckaby, Munds Wagon, Long Canyon, Campbell Mesa, Sinclair Wash, Munds Wagon, and Merry Go Round, Schnebly Hill, Pipeline, the historic Elden Homestead, and Forces of Nature.



NATRA helped coordinate the Northern Arizona online racing calendar of 28 events and as always, organized the 18th annual Flagstaff Running Series where we were thrilled to see a 20% increase in participation. Much thanks to Run Flagstaff's team of Vince Sherry and Gail Hughes who helped us time and track runner's participation. We were once again thankful that Loven Contracting Inc. sponsored the Series, its caps, and provided volunteer support at each race. Caleb Schiff again stepped to the plate again offering a Pizzicletta pizza to 80 participants who completed four of the five races. Stay tuned to natra.org for forthcoming details of the 19th Annual Summer Running Series value package.



In February, NATRA and Verde Valley School staff and students supported the Sedona Half Marathon as we have done since its inception, this time with our "Best Aid Station in the Wordle" theme. This year's race is on February 4th, so register ASAP at <https://runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Sedona/SedonaMarathonEvent> and NATRA will be there to keep you entertained with our funniest table ever!



Throughout the year, we engaged runners across the country with our “Take a Walk in the Woods Virtual Challenge; Katahdin Or Bust” where 120 participants track their progress on the northern 1000 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Many participants journaled their virtual adventures in our [Facebook Group](#). In 2023 we will begin a special two-year long challenge by getting our kicks on the 2,448 miles of historic Route 66 from Santa Monica to Chicago. You can register for free as an individual or two-person team at <https://runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Flagstaff/kicksonroute66>

In July, we hosted the 14th annual Randy Wilson Memorial 4 on the 4th. While we changed the format to simply hold a group run in honor of Randy's memory, 60 folks still participated and we collected 200 pounds of canned food for the Flagstaff Family Food Center.



NATRA and friends again staffed the Mile 80 Hull Cabin Aid Station at the Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Ultra Marathon and Mountain Bike Races in September. Our volunteers had a blast supporting exhausted runners and bikers with quesadillas, tomato, vegetable, and chicken soup all night long. Ian Torrence just opened registration at <https://ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=100752> and limited relay teams have returned, so sign up ASAP before it sells out and NATRA will see you at historic Hull Cabin on September 16th/17th.



On Thanksgiving morning, we also supported the 41st annual Flagstaff Road and Track Club Turkey Predictor Run where 59 participants braved bitterly cold wind chills to predict their 2 mile time around Buffalo Park.

Keeping NATRA Saturdays fresh and lively, we recently turned Soulstice Publishing's latest book, ***The San Francisco Peaks and Flagstaff Through the Lens of Time***, into a series of runs. On our last week, author John Vankat led NATRA on a journey to the past by meeting up with us and discussing the history of each late 1800s photo point. The book is available at several local book sellers or visit <https://soulsticepublishing.com/product/time-book/> to order a copy.



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On the Winter “Soulstice,” we combined our 10th anniversary of the Mayan Apocalypse celebration with our second annual “Chanukah Chustle”; 35 attendees and 16 NATRA runners were treated to a Chanukah menorah lighting in Buffalo Park by Chabad of Flagstaff.

Of course the highlight of any NATRA year is always Soulstice, and its myriad of challenges we continue to face. As fires and flooding once again adversely affected our ability to hold the run on its traditional course, we relocated westward to Government Prairie. Despite the drastic last minute move, the top of the leaderboard was Soulstice deja vu all over again. In the 10.3 mile long course, Chris Gomez won his record 6th overall title since his first in 2011, in a blazing 1:01.03, while not far behind (and 3rd overall) was Olympian Rachel Smith who ran a 1:05.52. Will Drexler (4th overall) defended his master's title for the sixth straight year in 1:06.01 while Valerie Cross took her first women's master's division in 1:17.01. Dylan Quinn won our first ever non-binary division in 1:27.18. In the short course, John Dailey defended his title by racing the 5.5 mile out and back course in 36.59 not far ahead of second place overall, Eric Bohn won his first master's title in 37.53. On the women's side, Janie Goldsworthy (3rd overall) also defended her title in 43.01 while Grace Daiy took the master's title in 47.02.



The race was followed by an epic Pay N' Take party at the Langner Ranch that included the Aspen Sports raffle, and our first ever live music featuring guitarist Paul Webber. However, the biggest winners were all the kids that benefit from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff mentoring programs. Thanks to our many shirt sponsors, the Aspen Sports Raffle and runners who guaranteed themselves a spot in the race by donating their Arizona Charitable Tax credit of \$400 to BBBSF, we raised over \$15,000 to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

Because the traditional Soulstice course will continue to face the hazards of falling trees and floods that will likely cause unexpected road and trail closures, we will continue to host the race in the Government Prairie/Spring Valley area for the immediate future. Last year's stunningly beautiful location proved that no matter where we hold Soulstice, runners will rise to the occasion to support it, and Chris Gomez, no matter how old he is, will likely win it!



Getting into Soulstice will be even more competitive as we have reached 134 legacy runners who have run the race at least seven times and are guaranteed entry prior to the April 1st lottery for 225 spots. .

While most will get a spot, the earlier you register the more chances you will have to win a refundable guaranteed entry when I randomly draw 5 runners ahead of the lottery. There will also be 25 guaranteed spots for runners who wish to donate their \$400 (individual) or \$800 (per couple) Arizona Charitable Tax Credit to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff. [For those unfamiliar with the tax credit](#), if you make the donation before you file your state taxes on April 15th, it is a 100% line item credit so you run. Simply [choose Soulstice in this drop down menu](#), make the donation, email me a copy of the receipt and I'll send you a code to register.

As always, happy trails to 2023, and we hope to see many of you on a Saturday group run soon! Neil Weintraub, Director NATRA LLC