



As 2018 departs, I am getting set to open the October 12<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> running of **Soulstice** before midnight New Year's Eve at <https://register.chronotrack.com/r/46926>. If you register by the end of New Year's Day, you will have a special 10 dollar discount! Last year, 183 Soulstice runners faced extraordinary challenges; a monster cold storm rolling in threatened to make the race a very cold wet one; a rampaging Sasquatch on the loose, and then there was the attack of the stinging yellow jackets on Upper Brookbank where 85% of runners had multiple stings. For the third year in a row, a newcomer to Soulstice won

the race. This time, Grinnell College Men's Cross Country alum Adam Dalton won the race clocking in at 1:13.39. On the women's side, Rachel Schneider smoked the women's side with her first Soulstice title in 1:19.16, the second fastest women's time ever. On the Master's side, Will Drexler ran to the title in 1:19.36 while Michelle Wesson came in at 1:35.38. The Sprint Course saw its first women's outright champ as Janie Bohn raced to a 52.53. Slightly behind her was men's champ Howard Brown who finished in 53.06. In fact, women took 4 of the top 5 spots in the Sprint Course! In the Master's division, Megan Gavin ran a 55.36 and Tom Viskocil ran a 57.42. We also held our first ever kid's trail dash with 6 entrants grinning ear to ear, and also began a new non-competitive early 7 AM start for Long Course runners who want to maximize their time at the post-race party! Finally, the biggest winner of Soulstice is Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff mentoring programs. The Aspen Sports raffle eclipsed last year's record by over \$300, raising \$5307. Twenty one Arizona Tax Credit entries, other donations, and sponsorships brought the overall total to \$16037, a new record! As a Big Brother in the Williams School based mentoring programs this money goes a long way towards helping kids succeed across Northern Arizona.



NATRA again organized the **Northern Arizona Racing Calendar** and its incredible listing of 30 events. Look for the calendar at Run Flagstaff in early February, but know ahead of time that your favorite races will be back on the same weekends they always have been.



Our **special FREE events** continued their popularity, including the New Year's Day Run, Spring's Saint Patrick's Lap the Leprachaun 5K, Summer's Four on the Fourth July 4<sup>th</sup> Run. We were shocked and saddened when shortly after the 10<sup>th</sup> annual 4 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, founder and master of ceremonies Randy Wilson suddenly passed away. We will however carry on his great July 4<sup>th</sup> tradition in his memory. This early Fall's War Dog looked more like winter, and our Winters Solstice Survivor run felt more like Spring! Our Christmas Day run was almost white as flakes started flying before the end of the run. We continued to support the 38th Annual Flagstaff Road and Track

Club's Thanksgiving Day Predictor Run. We were also happy to partner with **Team Run Flagstaff and the Flagstaff Summer Series** to bring you the sixth annual Flagstaff Running Community Picnic, attended by nearly 200 runners this year!

We also continued our support the **Arizona Trail Association** and its fundraiser, the **Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stage Coach Line Ultra Marathon and Relay** that sold out this year for the first time. NATRA supported runners during the busiest night ever at Hull Cabin in its illustrious 131 year history, giving tours of the oldest cabin maintained on the Grand Canyon's south rim. If you have never participated in the event, you can pull together a team and register for the September 21 -22nd epic fun at <http://www.aztrail.org/ultrarun/> . Don't wait as it will sell out even earlier this year!

NATRA's crazy antics continued for the 13<sup>th</sup> straight year at our **Run Sedona infamous Aid Station 5**. This past year students from the Verde Valley School joined us in our "Greatest Show on Earth" themed aid station. You can now register for the February 2nd most scenic race you will ever run in your own backyard at <http://www.sedonamarathon.com>.



NATRA again coordinated the **14<sup>th</sup> annual Flagstaff Summer Series**. 172 runners participated in the Series. Once again the price will remain the same for the package of Flagstaff's most iconic races in 2019! Congratulations to Will Drexler and Stephanie Hunt for their overall victories! **Flagstaff Design Center, NATRA, Run Flagstaff, Mike Thomas and Ryan Stevens** pooled resources to create new caps for all Series participants. Registration opens for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Series on January 1! Prices will rise in mid-February, so make sure you register at [Flagstaffsummerseries.com](http://Flagstaffsummerseries.com)! As always, thanks to Gail Hughes for continuing to voluntarily score our Series!

The **14th Annual Salomon Flagstaff Mountain Trail Champions** were Michelle Wesson (4:32:11) and Mark Thurston (4:49.09) who had the fastest combined times at Gaspin in the Aspen, Flagstaff Half Marathon, and Soulstice Long Courses. Tom Viskocil (2:15.32) won his fifth straight sprint course title and his 8th overall. As the Flagstaff Marathon races are taking a hiatus, we will add the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff Half Marathon to the Series. Just register for all three races and you will be part of the series automatically.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff Half Marathon will once again partner with the ever growing **Arizona Half Marathon Series**. If you love Half Marathons, you can visit <http://arizonahalfseries.com/> and win medals and prizes just for registering for 4 or 7 race series statewide. There is no cost other than registering for the individual half marathons events.

Of course at the core of NATRA are the weekly **free Saturday group runs** which averaged about 15 runners per outing. Thanks to those of you who have helped us maintain our **streak of never cancelling a group run in our 17+ years** of Saturdays together, no matter how brutal the weather or trail conditions. Special thanks to David Blanchard and Bruce Higgins for leading runs when I cannot be there. Make it your New Year's resolution to join NATRA on our Saturday runs, as they are fun, free, and after all, we are really just a coffee drinking club with a running problem.



As always, Happy Trails to the New Year.

Neil Weintraub, Director NATRA LLC