

Column continues strong run into new year

BY RACHEL SMITH
Special to the Daily Sun

After an impressive 15-year run, the High Country Running column — first published on May 10, 2009 — had come to a finish at the end of 2024. With a hope to keep the legacy and community spirit of this column running, I decided to step up as the volunteer coordinating editor and reignite the column at the end of February 2025. Reflecting on the year, I am proud to say that in the 10 months of its return, the High Country Running column published 43 articles written by 26 different contributors, spanning an array of topics.

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impossible for me to pick a top-10 highlights from the year, as I truly enjoyed getting to read (and occasionally write) and help bring each story

to the paper — here is a brief overview of what the column covered in 2025.

In a few articles, readers heard about what makes our be-

loved mountain town so uniquely special for runners of all levels. Stephanie Bruce reflected on 10 of her

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favorite things about Flagstaff after living and running here for 15 years. I did my best to describe what makes Flagstaff such a running mecca. Jennifer Higgins discussed the power this community had on her, while many others alluded to that exact sentiment within their articles. I think it's fair to conclude that many runners from all walks of life feel so lucky and grateful to call Flagstaff home!

Many of this year's articles recapped specific events or personal running/racing experiences. With too many to shout out, this column was a great place to learn about different community events, a variety of race recaps and hear

personal stories of why running is very often more than just the act of movement. I, personally, felt inspired by each contributor's story and grateful for the people who bring races and community events to life.

A handful of articles shared lessons on how running reaches into other aspects of life. Kathy Schneider shared how running has been a helpful constant for her in periods of change. Chris Gomez wrote on how his journey with running has given him the gifts of joy, connection and health. Neil Weintraub, Andrew Brooks and others highlighted how running and mentoring complement each other in powerful ways. Sara Hall shared wisdom on how running has helped her redefine

success. I tried to articulate the overlaps of running and parenting in an article for Mother's Day, and Karen London gave great advice on how to be a track and field parent.

Two beautiful articles — Neil Weintraub's ode to Erin Strout's community legacy and Janet Cherobon-Bawcom's tribute to Jack Daniels' — praised people who had a massive impact on Flagstaff. While other articles shared important information about community happenings and others were silly and light-hearted in nature.

Reflecting on this past year of High Country Running columns, I feel immense gratitude to each contributor, and to Arizona Daily Sun's

Mike Hartman, who believed in its return and has worked with me each week to bring every article to press. While I'm very much an amateur coordinating editor, it has been a gift to share each story, and I'm excited to continue to grow in this role and bring more running stories to life.

To help keep us running strong through the column's 17th year, I implore you to add: "I will write a column for High Country Running" to your 2026 resolutions!

Rachel Smith is a mom of two amazing daughters, a professional runner and the coordinating editor of this column. She wishes you all the best in 2026 and asks you to share your running-related story to the column by emailing her at rachschneid18@gmail.com.