

With 2026 just around the corner, NATRA is excited to head into our 25th year of running together on Saturdays! Registration opens for the October 10th, 27th running of the Jackie Weintraub Memorial Soulstice Mountain Trail Run at 6 PM on New Year's Eve and you save \$10 thru Jan. 7th when you register at <https://runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Flagstaff/SoulsticeMountainTrailRun>. Thanks to Lui Yanzi, you can relive last year's Soulstice race and post-race party on [Yan's Youtube Channel](#).



Last year at this time, we were lamenting the loss of our community's High Country Running column. Thanks to Olympian Rachel Smith who stepped up last January to continue the legacy of past volunteer editors Karen London, Myles Schrag, and Julie Hammonds, HCR barely missed a beat. To celebrate its return, NATRA volunteers created a history of all the columns ever written. You can follow and read them all at natra.org/hcr. If you enjoy the column, to keep it alive, the 500 word column needs your submissions! Please do so by sending your 500 words or less story to rachschnaid18@gmail.com

We kicked off the year with another freezing New Year's Day run. By year's end, our Sedona group runs had welcomed more newbies and visitors than ever. NATRA's 51 group runs covered over 350 miles on more than 60 trails and we visited many historic sites from Flagstaff to Sedona and west to Williams. Most notable this year was the increase in participation as our Saturday group adventures averaged 23 participants, up from 19 last year.



NATRA continued coordinating the Northern Arizona online racing calendar, and its record 36 events. We shared social media posts about all local races, and as always, organized the 21st Annual Loven Contracting Flagstaff Running Series. Much thanks to Run Flagstaff's team of Vince Sherry and Gail Hughes who helped us time and track runners' participation, especially with the new Badges and Hoses Challenge. We were again thankful that Loven Contracting Inc. sponsored the Series, its colorful yellow socks, and provided volunteers at each race. Caleb Schiff stepped to the plate again offering a Pizzicletta pizza to a record 109 participants who completed four of the five races. Stay tuned to natra.org for forthcoming registration details of the 22nd Annual Summer Running Series value package.

For the 5th straight year, we engaged runners across the country on a virtual 950 mile challenge along the historic 1928 Transcontinental Footrace course. With Route 66's 100th anniversary this year, you can be sure we will celebrate it with special runs on abandoned sections of the Kaibab National Forest.

In February, NATRA and Verde Valley School staff supported the Sedona Half Marathon and won best aid station again with our "Let's Get Physical," theme, decked out in spandex clad outfits while rocking out to 80s music. This year's race is on February 7th and NATRA will again be there with an aid station that will leave runners in stitches. Register soon at <https://runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Sedona/SedonaMarathonEvent> as a sellout of all races is expected.



NATRA was thrilled when Caleb Schiff opened Sosta Flagstaff in the spring. This became a new favorite spot for our Flagstaff post-run brunches. In September we partnered WildernessVolunteers.org and Sosta to bring the Trail Running Film Festival to town. Also in September, we partnered with the Orpheum Theater that brought the Monkey Wrench Films Double Feature to town and showcased the Badwater 135 and Ritual Mountain Bike films.



NATRA helped promote FlagstaffBiking.org's National Trails Day in June at Rogers Lake and co-sponsored the food for their Pedals vs. Pistons vs. Horseshoes vs. Hiking Boots challenge in September on the Kelly Multiple Use Trail System. Dozens of NATRA runners volunteered for both events that drew 117 participants!

In July, we hosted the 17th Annual Randy Wilson Memorial 4 on the 4th, honoring the memory of the run's founder and former Arizona Daily Sun managing editor Randy Wilson and Jack Welch. 40 folks participated and we collected 200 pounds of canned food for the Flagstaff Family Food Center.



On August 9th, NATRA provided aid station volunteers and course marshals for the 48th Annual Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff Dave McKay Memorial Half Marathon and 5K. Flagstaff's oldest trail race annually raises over \$40,000 for the agency that helps children succeed by matching them with adult mentors.

In September, NATRA and friends again staffed the Hull Cabin aid station at the Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Ultra Marathon and Mountain Bike Races. Our volunteers had a blast supporting exhausted runners and bikers with quesadillas, tomato, vegetable, and chicken soup all night long. Registration opens New Year's Day so click <https://ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=133764> for all the details, and NATRA will see you at historic Hull Cabin on September 19th-20th.



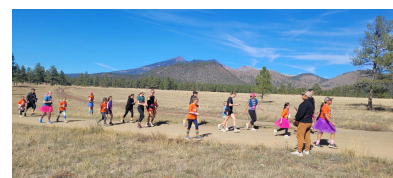
On the first Sunday in October, 20 runners, walkers and one Wardog did variations of the 45th annual Wardog Peaks group run. It was a blast with so many past veterans mixed in with newbies from Flagstaff, Sedona, and Australia. About half the group stumbled their way to the top and back, ascending 3000 ft to Doyle Saddle.

Despite the heavy rains that wreaked havoc with the 26th running of Soulstice, and forced us to postpone the race for 24 hours, participants were treated to picture perfect conditions on Sunday, October 12th. With the great success of our 30K distance that saw Olympian Rachel Smith win the race while nearly breaking 2 hours, I expect that the new “Longer Long Course” will become the most popular of the our three race distances. We were also thrilled to see our youngest and oldest participants ever go head-to-head when [9 year-old Max took on 84 year-young Nat White in the 10K distance](#).



There will also be 25 guaranteed spots for runners who wish to donate their \$495 (individual) or \$987 (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 for FREE!!!! 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.

In November, NATRA again provided our annual volunteer support of the Girls on the Run 5K, managing the parking, course marshalling, and several served as running buddies!

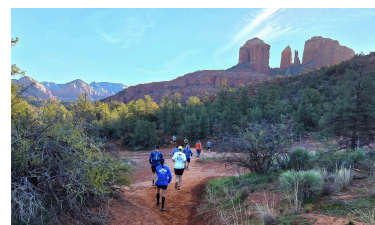


On Thanksgiving, NATRA and the old Flagstaff Road and Track Club's (FRATC) former president Nat White organized FRATC's 45th Annual 2-mile Turkey Predictor Run. We honored the memory of longtime Flagstaff runner, Physician and a founding member of the Save Buffalo Park Committee, [Dr. Carl Shrader](#) who passed away at 94 a few days before Thanksgiving. With dozens of families present, many of the kids walked away from

the table of tasty Thanksgiving treats and thanks to Andy White, some serious hi-tech prizes!

We closed out December by returning to the trails surrounding Sedona with polar plunges, lots of visiting runners, and soaking up the joy of running in one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world!

Finally, thanks to the many of you who have stepped up to lead a group run, participated in Soulstice, or volunteered for an aid station at local races. We hope to celebrate with many of you on a Saturday group run soon, like this Thursday's New Year's Run at 9 AM at Marshall School!



Best, Neil Weintraub, Director and Co-founder NATRA LLC, 25 years of putting a little Soul in your stride!