

This past October marked the lucky **13<sup>th</sup> year of NATRA**. The heart of NATRA is still the FREE Saturday group runs, which amazingly have never been cancelled to cold, snow, or rain. We continue to keep the outings lively by adding new runs such as last weekend's Slim Shady and Made in the Shade trails in Sedona. Special thanks to the core of NATRA Saturday runs, Bruce Higgins, and Susan and David Blanchard for holding down the fort when I have had other commitments.



In 2014, the **Run Flagstaff Summer Series finished its first decade!** This past year we had 217 runners participate and more kids than ever. **Run Flagstaff's** donation of timing services helped keep the Series at an amazing value and for the 5<sup>th</sup> straight year, the 2015 package value price will be exactly the same. Special thanks again to **Gail Hughes** for voluntarily tracking the standings. In addition, **Salomon Sports** continued their generous donations to Series awards. We were so honored to have marathon extraordinaire Nick Arciniaga win his first title **AND** compete in all 6 races sandwiched between his 7<sup>th</sup> place finish at Boston and his 10<sup>th</sup> place finish at New York. How exciting was it to see our Series champ

briefly jump into the lead of the NYC Marathon? Sara Wagner kept her incredible streak alive winning her 8<sup>th</sup> straight title, once again finishing narrowly ahead of Michelle Wesson. Not to be outdone, Nestlé Purina committed 17 runners to the Series as part of their wellness program, and they won the inaugural Team Participation Award, a plaque on display at Run Flagstaff. Series registration opens January 1<sup>st</sup> at <https://register.chronotrack.com/reg/form?eventID=12032>. The early registration (through February) is once again only \$180 for the package of 6 of Flagstaff's longest standing race events, and includes guaranteed entry into the always sold out Gaspin' in the Aspen! For kids 18 and under, the Series is only \$120.



**Social Networking** continues to increase our visibility. The NATRA page on Facebook continues to be popular with 1680 likes and the group page now has 890 members, both up more than 30% from last year. While web page and blog visits have been down significantly the past few years, both surpassed major milestones. Natra.org broke the 300,000 views barrier while flagstafftrailrunning.blogspot.com exceeded the 50,000 hits plateau while sharing 40 stories about our weekly Saturday adventures. Early in 2015, NATRA will unveil a new Web design for the first time since 2002! Thanks to Chris Johnson's Northern Arizona University Graphic Design Class, natra.org will be much improved.



Our **special FREE events** continue to be a smash hit, 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, Fall's War Dog, Winter's Solstice Survivor and Christmas Day Runs. Thanks to Sara Wagner taking my place, we continued to support the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Flagstaff Road and Track Club's Thanksgiving Day Predictor Run (FRATC disbanded in the early 1990s but their legend continues with their annual purchase of the winning Turkey each year). We were also happy to partner with **Team Run Flagstaff and the Run Flagstaff Summer Series** to bring

you the second annual Flagstaff Running Community Picnic, attended by more runners than ever.

The **9<sup>th</sup> Annual Salomon Mountain Trail Sprint Championship** had the slimmest of margins with Tom Viskocil's 2:03:10 enough to take his title back from Mark Thurston by just 1 minute 15 seconds. The series of 3 races consist of Gaspin in the Aspen, Flagstaff Marathon races, and Soulstice. Emily Harrison set a new women's Long Course standard of 3:44:49, while Al Hendricks' youthful 63 year old legs carried him to the men's Long Course title with a combined 4:52.31.



For the first time in recent memory, we held the **15<sup>th</sup> running of the Soulstice Mountain Trail Race** under picture perfect conditions. 183 runners finished the race and enjoyed the mildest event ever. Chris Gomez defended his title on the way to tying Jared Scott with three Soulstice wins. In her first Soulstice, Emily Harrison set a new course record with what may be an unbreakable 1:17.57. Runners and the Aspen Sports Raffle again raised well over \$5000 on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff, and towards helping Northern



Arizona children succeed by matching those in need with an appropriate adult mentor. Thanks to David McKee, the Pay n'Take, Aspen Sports, Salomon Sports, Coconino National Forest, Jim Driscoll of the Coconino County Sheriff's Department, Run Flagstaff, Fratellis Pizza, Dr. Amber Randall, Northern Arizona University Parks and Recreation Management program students, the Coconino Amateur Radio Club, my many friends, and wife Diana who continue to support the event. Following last year's registration format, I will not accept transfers and absolutely no refunds. When lottery registration opens, many of you will be pleased to know that I held the "Legacy status" steady at 7 years (now 72 legacy runners up from 61 last year); visit [http://www.natra.org/Soulstice\\_Legacy\\_2015.pdf](http://www.natra.org/Soulstice_Legacy_2015.pdf) for the full list. Also, based on the discussions at the Knights of the Soulstice Round Table immediately after the race, I also lowered the price of the Long Course while keeping the Short Course the same. Legacy runners are guaranteed entry as long as you register for the Lottery by March 31<sup>st</sup>. If you register for the Long and later switch to the Short, you will still have to pay the difference. I will again have 10 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff funding raising spots available. A \$250 donation to BBBSF will guarantee your spot at Soulstice, just contact me at [natraneil@gmail.com](mailto:natraneil@gmail.com) if you wish to do so. When you register for Soulstice, please be committed to the race. Registration for the lottery opens January 1 at <https://register.chronotrack.com/reg/form?eventID=12020>.



As many of you know, my mother Jackie passed away unexpectedly on November 19<sup>th</sup>. Mom supported all my race event endeavors from my first 15K to helping out with last August's Big Brothers Big Sisters Half Marathon. She was a huge fan of Soulstice and loved helping out with registration, timing, and especially photography. She was looking forward to her retirement in Flagstaff and being an even bigger part of our running community. Here is my tribute to her if you have not read this yet - [http://azdailysun.com/sports/columnists/high-country-running-ode-to-natra-jackie/article\\_c1afc277-c77d-5ce4-afc2-29759d9eb940.html](http://azdailysun.com/sports/columnists/high-country-running-ode-to-natra-jackie/article_c1afc277-c77d-5ce4-afc2-29759d9eb940.html) - While mom will no longer be at the finish line toting her camera, she will certainly be with

us in spirit at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Soulstice Mountain Jacqueline Weintraub Memorial Trail Run on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Happy Trails, Neil W.