

As 2017 comes to a close, I am getting set to open the October 13th **Soulstice** before midnight New Year's Eve at <https://register.chronotrack.com/r/36368>. Last year we saw David Sinclair set a new course record in a blazing 67.02 and Emily Harrison Torrence took her 4th straight title. As most of you know, the big winner of Soulstice is Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff mentoring programs. The Aspen Sports raffle smashed last year's record by nearly \$750, raising \$5005. Twenty one Arizona Tax Credit entries, other donations, and sponsorships brought the overall total to \$16,000! As a Big Brother in the Williams School based mentoring programs this money goes a long way towards helping kids succeed across Northern Arizona. You can again secure a spot in Soulstice by donating your Arizona Tax Credit, \$400 or \$800 per couple, to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff prior to Tax Day.



NATRA again organized the **Northern Arizona Racing Calendar** and its incredible listing of 32 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 Leprechaun 5K, Summer's Four on the Fourth July 4th Run, Fall's War Dog, Winter's Solstice Survivor and Christmas Day Runs. We continued to support the 36th 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 Flagstaff Summer Series** to bring you the fifth 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**. NATRA supported runners at Hull Cabin Aid Station throughout the night, 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 22 - 23^h epic fun at <http://www.aztrail.org/ultrarun/>.

NATRA's crazy antics continued for the 12th straight year at our **Sedona Marathon infamous Aid Station 5**. This past year students from the Verde Valley School joined us in a Grease Lightning themed aid station. You can now register for the February 3rd most scenic race you will ever run in your own backyard at <http://www.sedonamarathon.com>.





NATRA again coordinated the **13th annual Flagstaff Summer Series**. This year we added the Team Run Flagstaff Downtown Mile to create the largest series ever! 182 runners participated in the Series and while this was a drop from the previous year, I fully expect to see a major upward bounce in the number of participants this year as the price will remain the same for the package of Flagstaff's most iconic races! Congratulations to Chris Gomez and Michelle Wesson for their overall victories!

AVDomotics, Flagstaff Design Center and Salomon sports

continued their amazingly generous support of the Series. Registration opens for the 14th annual Series on January 1! Prices will rise in mid-February, so make sure you register at Flagstaffsummerseries.com ASAP! As always, thanks to Gail Hughes for continuing to voluntarily score our Series!

The **12th Annual Salomon Mountain Trail Sprint Championship** saw Joel Axler (4:22:54) and Myra Popejoy (5:13.43) earn the fastest combined times at Gaspin in the Aspen, Flagstaff Half Marathon, and Soulstice Long Courses. These are Axler's and Popejoy's first long course titles. Tom Viskocil won his fourth straight sprint course title and his 7th overall. All have won free entry into the 2018 trail race series and Salomon Trail running shoes.

Of note in the coming year, the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff Half Marathon, Sedona Half Marathon, and Brian Mickelson Half Marathon are three of a growing list of Northern Arizona races who have partnered with the **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. There are currently 9 partner races to choose from!

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 16+ 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 Northern Arizona Trail Runners Association