

# 2021 NATRA LLC Annual News letter



As 2022 fast approaches, I am excited to open registration for the October 8<sup>th</sup> **23rd running of the Jackie Weintraub Memorial Soulstice Mountain Trail Run** at 9 PM New Year's Eve at <https://runsignup.com/Race/AZ/Flagstaff/SoulsticeMountainTrailRun>. For those who register for the lottery/legacy between New Year's Eve and January 2<sup>nd</sup>, you will have an added bonus, a \$10 discount. Also, the earlier you register the more chances you will have to win a free guaranteed spot as I will randomly choose 5 spots ahead of the April 1<sup>st</sup> lottery. There will be 25 guaranteed spots for runners who wish to donate their \$400 (individual) or \$800 (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 Soulstice for free! See more details on the registration page.

In 2021 NATRA not only **celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> year**, but we also remarkably **held our 1000<sup>th</sup> Saturday group run no matter the weather**. Most notable is that in 20 years of running together, we have never had the same combination of folks. For me, that is what keeps NATRA fun and lively. This year we were regularly joined by Verde Valley High School students and the Northern Arizona University Running Club, reducing our average age by over 20 years keeping us old timers feeling young at heart and energized by their youthful enthusiasm. When we reopened group runs to the public on April 10<sup>th</sup>, we were surprised how the group nearly doubled in size from about 14 runners to 25 per outing. With a much hotter than normal June, we even split the group into a 6:30 AM and/or 8 AM start. Many did both.



In late August, NATRA was also honored to appear on the [\*\*Beyond the Pines Podcast\*\*](#). The podcast created by Soulstice devotee Dr. Cody Bayles and Dr. Dan Phillips explores the evolution of NATRA and the role we have played in making connections far beyond the Flagstaff running community.



While the pandemic of 2020 required almost all of our races to convert to virtual events, 2021 proved even more challenging for me as many runners wished to have virtual options for our traditional in person events. As a result we had mixed virtual and in person events for the entire **17<sup>th</sup> annual Flagstaff Running Series**, and tracking this was an overwhelming task. Much thanks to **Run Flagstaff's team of Vince Sherry and Gail Hughes** helped me navigate the challenges of tracking "hybrid" races. We

were also thrilled to have **Loven Contracting Inc.** sponsor the Series, its shirts, and provide volunteer support at each race. **Caleb Schiff** also stepped to the plate again offering a **Pizzicetta Pizza to participants who completed 4 of the 5 races**. Stay tuned to [natra.org](http://natra.org) for forthcoming details of the **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Running Series value package**.



NATRA continued to engage runners throughout 2021 with our free and fun events. In early 2021 we created the yearlong **"Take a Walk in the Woods Virtual Challenge"**. This was a virtual 800 mile running/walking/biking/crawling challenge where 240 participants tracked their progress on the southern 800 miles of the Appalachian Trail. What was even more fun was that many participants journaled their virtual adventures in our Facebook Group. As many of you have expressed interest in continuing to virtually hike/run the AT, in 2022, we will continue northwards from Front Royal, Virginia for the next 800 miles. In June, when the forests closed due to extremely high fire danger, NATRA set up the free **"Buffalo Park Challenge"** for local runners. 30 participants including Boy Scout Troup #31 logged over 700 miles during the short-lived closures.



In July, NATRA hosted a hybrid **13<sup>th</sup> annual Randy Wilson Memorial 4 on the 4<sup>th</sup>**, with 53 participants showing up in person to do the traditional run with head starts for younger and older age divisions, raising \$300 and hundreds of pounds of canned food for the Flagstaff Family Food Center. NATRA once again supported the **40<sup>th</sup> annual Flagstaff Road and Track Club, Turkey Predictor Run** where 60 volunteers and participants braved the bitterly Thanksgiving morning cold wind chills to predict their 2 mile time around Buffalo Park. This past November we



hosted our first ever virtual **"Chanukah Chustle Challenge"** where 62 participants raised over \$1500 for Flagstaff Shelter Services and the event was highlighted by a menorah lighting in Buffalo Park by Chabud of Flagstaff on the last night of Chanukah.



In September, NATRA and friends again **staffed the Mile 80 Hull Cabin Aid Station at the Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Ultra Marathon and Mountain Bike Races**. With a record number of ultra-marathoners, NATRA volunteers had a blast supporting exhausted runners with our tasty quesadillas and tomato, vegetable, or chicken soups all night long. Ian Torrence just opened registration at <http://ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=81922> so sign up ASAP before it sells out and NATRA will see you at historic Hull Cabin!

It was a picture perfect fall day to party like it was 1999 for our return to normalcy at **the 22<sup>nd</sup> running of Soulstice**. All were thrilled to be back on the traditional courses after the changes required by the Museum Fire in 2019 and last year's virtual event. The king of Soulstice, Chris Gomez, captured his fifth overall Long Course title in 1:16.59, with his wins now spanning a decade races (2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2021). On the women's side Team Run Flagstaff coach Leah Rosenfeld won her first title in 1:27.39 and most notably joins the ranks of Sara Wagner (2012), and Soulstice record holder David Sinclair (2017) who have won both the Imogene Pass Run and Soulstice in the same year (the races are held 4 weeks apart). On the Master's side, Will Drexler won his 5th straight title in 1:21.08 while Dawn Greenwalt took her



first victory in 1:35.40. Janet Bain won her incredible 10th overall Sprint Course title since 2008 in 56.55 while John Dailey took the men's race in 48.45. On the Master's side, Mackenzie Lurie took her first title in 59.35, with 61 year old Tom Viskocil winning his fourth title in 58.20. Tom is also the first 60+ age division to win the Sprint Course. Not to be outdone, Soulstice also had its first two 80 year olds in the Sprint course; Flagstaff running guru Nat White who finished in 1:16.13 AND Marilaine Jones who finished in 2:30.52 These are likely records to stand for some time to come.



A very special shout out to **Aspen Sports** new owners Rich and Heather Reading alongside former store partners Jerry McLaughlin and Dave Barnett; their amazing raffle coupled with the generosity of runners broke a new Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff fundraising record of \$5714! Including the runners who raced Soulstice for free by donating their \$400 Arizona State Charitable Tax Credit to BBBSF, Soulstice once again raised just over \$15,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff mentoring programs. Finally, much thanks to Jay Carnes, Grant Dunstan, Scott Miller, and Jennifer Phillips for organizing such an amazing post-race party.



As always, happy trails to 2022, and we hope to see many of you on a Saturday group run soon!

Neil Weintraub, Director NATRA LLC