

2019 NATRA LLC Annual News letter

As we get ready to say hello to 2020, I am about to open the October 10th 21st running of **Soulstice** before midnight New Year's Eve at <https://register.chronotrack.com/r/56153>. If you register by the end of New Year's Day, you will have a special 10 dollar discount! Last year, 196 runners had a picture perfect day to take on the new 8 and 12 mile courses. See Sam McManis' race story is in [the Daily Sun](#).



As most know, first due to logging and then the Museum Fire, we had to make multiple drastic changes to the course. You can read my [Soulstice Abides column in the Arizona Daily Sun](#) about what was by far the most challenging in my 18 years directing the race. While the new courses had less climbing, they were every bit as challenging. There were more falls and blood left on the course than ever before, but not one bee sting. Olympian Janet Cherobon-Bawcom in her first appearance smoked the new course in 1:26.34 and Mike Popejoy became a two-time winner breezing through the race in 1:14.50. On the master's side, Sara Wagner won in 1:38.15 while Will Drexler claimed the men's title in 1:24.05. Run Flagstaff's Vince Sherry won this year's inaugural "not so short" 8 mile course in 58.32 while Janet Bain won her 9th overall title in 1:01.08. On the master's side Megan Gavin won the women's title in 1:04.47 and Geordie Beck won the men's side in 1:03.27. We also broke a record with 33 non-competitive early 7 AM starters for both long and not so short course runners who wanted to maximize their time at the post-race party!

The big winner of Soulstice was Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff mentoring programs. The Aspen Sports raffle eclipsed last year's record by nearly \$100, raising \$5405. Arizona Charitable Tax Credit entries, other donations, and sponsorships brought the overall total once again to over \$15,000. As a Big Brother in the Williams School based mentoring programs, I see firsthand how this money goes a long way towards helping kids succeed across Northern Arizona.



NATRA coordinated the **Northern Arizona Racing Calendar** with its listing of 30 events. The 2020 calendars are available earlier than ever at Run Flagstaff and Run Sedona. Our **special FREE events** continued their popularity, including the New Year's Day Run, spring's Saint Patrick's Day Lap the Leprechaun 5K, and summer's Four on the Fourth July 4th Run. After the unexpected passing of the 4 on the 4th's esteemed race director Randy Wilson, we passed the torch on to his daughter Caroline and designed a special memorial bib in Randy's memory. We were also happy to partner with **Team Run Flagstaff and the Flagstaff Summer Series** to bring you the seventh annual Flagstaff Running Community Picnic, attended by more than 200 runners this year! In the fall, we had a picture perfect year for War Dog and continued our support of the 39th Annual Flagstaff Road and Track Club's Thanksgiving Day Predictor Run. Rounding out the year, we had snowy white Christmas Day run.



We also continued our support the **Arizona Trail Association** and its fundraiser, the **Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stagecoach Line 100 Mile, 55K, & Relays, and 100 Mile Mountain Bike 100 race** that sold out. NATRA volunteers gave tours and provided aid all night long during the busiest night ever at Hull Cabin in its illustrious 132 year history. If you have never participated in the event, you can pull together a team and register for the September 19 -20th epic fun at <https://runazt.org/flagstaff-to-grand-canyon-stagecoach-line-100/> We were also thrilled to see so many NATRA runners pace Helen Galerakis' during her 17+ day 800 mile fastest known supported time run on the Arizona Trail.



NATRA's zany costumes continued for the 14th straight year at our infamous **Run Sedona Aid Station**. Once again, students from the Verde Valley School once again join us, this time with a "Beach Party" theme. You can now register for the February 1st and most scenic race you will ever run in your own backyard at <http://www.sedonamarathon.com>.

NATRA again coordinated the **15th annual Flagstaff Summer Series**. We saw an increase to 180 runners. Congratulations to Will Drexler and Stephanie Hunt for their overall victories! **Orange Theory, Flagstaff Design Center, NATRA, Run Flagstaff, Mike Thomas and Ryan Stevens** pooled resources to create the blue race caps for all Series participants. Next year, as we say

goodbye to the Mountain School Run (on a hiatus), the price will drop for the package of six of Flagstaff's most iconic races. Registration is already open for the 16th annual Series. Prices will rise in mid-February, so make sure you register at Flagstaffsummerseries.com. As always, thanks to Gail Hughes for continuing to voluntarily score our Series!

The 15th Annual Salomon Flagstaff Mountain Trail Champions were Missy Verhaeghe (4:30.43) and Mark Loeffler (4:03.16) for having the fastest combined times at Gaspin in the Aspen 15K, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff Half Marathon, and the new Soulstice Long Course (12 miles). Tom Viskocil (2:07.42) won his sixth straight "not so" sprint course title and his 9th overall while Brenda Geise won her first women's title in 2:42.45. Overall winners gained free entry into the Series next year (nearly \$200 value), and Long Course winners won \$150 Salomon Shoe certificates and Not So Sprint course winners received \$135 hydration running packs. We had a record number of finishers (12), and thanks to Salomon all won prizes!



Every fall NATRA helps sponsor Flagstaff Biking Organization's (FBO) **Pedals vs. Pistons vs. Horseshoes vs. Hiking Boots** trail maintenance/construction day. This year, nearly 60 members of NATRA, FBO, Coconino Trail Riders and Coconino Horsemen's Alliance teamed up to construct a new section of the Kelly Trail System.

At the heart 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 18+ 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 NATRA LLC

