

As 2016 comes to a close, I realized it is almost time to open registration for the October 14th **Soulstice Mountain Trail Run**. This will be the 18th running and 20th anniversary of Soulstice #1! Beginning late evening on December 31st, you can register for the lottery at <https://register.chronotrack.com/reg/form?eventID=18550>.

It is hard to believe that Soulstice was less than 3 months ago. On a cloudy cool overcast day, not only did runners smash the **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff fundraising record at nearly \$10,000**, but Mike Popejoy set a new course record! Special thanks to David McKee for his masterful poster artwork and of course to all of our amazing sponsors.



As I am again holding the **Soulstice "Legacy" qualifying mark at 7 years, there are 89 runners** that qualify (up from 80 last year). Legacy runner or not, you must register before the lottery held on April 1st. **This year, you will be able to guarantee entry by taking the Arizona Tax Credit by donating \$400 or \$800 per couple to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff. This is a line item credit so you get it ALL back from the State after April 17th; you read that correctly, you and/or spouse can basically run Soulstice for free!** There are only 20 spots for this amazing deal. If you'd like to do this before the end of the year to take the donation on your 2016 federal return as well, contact me ASAP!!!! [Click here to learn more about the Tax Credit](#). In 2017, **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flagstaff will celebrate 50 years of helping children succeed by matching them with appropriate adult mentors.** Help us smash last year's Soulstice fundraising record!

Many of you tolerated my experimentation with **Photospheres, Tiny Planets, and Wormholes**, and as a result of our 360 degree photographs, I created a presentation so runners can get a better idea of the landscape where we run. If you have not done so, you can download "[Oh the Places You Will Go with NATRA](#)" and check out our new web page at <http://www.natra.org/npp>

NATRA again organized the **Northern Arizona Racing Calendar** consisting of 23 race events. Look for the calendar at Run Flagstaff in mid-January.



Our **special FREE events** continued their popularity, including the New Year's Day Run, Saint Patrick's Day Lap the Leprachaun 5K, July's Four on the Fourth, Fall's War Dog Run, Winter Solstice Survivor and Christmas Day Runs. We continued to support and spread the word about the 35th Annual Flagstaff Road and Track Club's Thanksgiving Day Predictor Run. We were also happy to partner with **Team Run Flagstaff and the Run Flagstaff Summer Series** to bring you the 4th annual Flagstaff Running Community Picnic, attended by more runners than ever.

NATRA also supported the **Arizona Trail Association** and its fundraiser, the **Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stage Coach Line Ultra Marathon and Relay**. We supplied runners at Hull Cabin Aid Station throughout the night, giving tours of the oldest cabin maintained on the Grand Canyon's south rim, and where the Forest Service first managed the Canyon's ever growing tourism. If you have never participated in the event, you can pull together a team and register for the September 23rd -24th epic fun at <http://www.aztrail.org/ultrarun/>.





NATRA's crazy antics continued for the 11th straight year at our **Sedona Marathon infamous Aid Station 5**. The "Runners Against Humanity" table kept many laughing all the way. You can now register for the February 4th most scenic race you don't have to travel far for at <http://www.sedonamarathon.com>. If you'd like to join the NATRA aid station contact me as soon as possible!

NATRA again coordinated the **12th annual Run Flagstaff Summer Series**. While participation dropped a bit to 218 registrants for the six race series value package, the **exciting news is that for 2017's Series we have added the Team Run Flagstaff July 4th Downtown Mile**. This marks the first time we have had a July race, and adds variety with its speed component. Congratulations to Chris Gomez and Michelle Wesson, our overall champs. **Nestle Purina registered 30 runners** to once again claim the business participation award! Do you work for a company in town with a wellness program? Encourage your employer to try and get their employees running in the Series! **AVDomotics, Flagstaff Design Center, Run Flagstaff and Salomon sports** continued their amazingly generous support. Registration is open for the 13th annual Flagstaff Summer Series at our new dedicated web page designed by Jen Rosario at <http://www.flagstaffsummerseries.com>



The **11th Annual Salomon Mountain Trail Sprint Championship** had seven runners complete the trio of grueling trail races that combines times of Gaspin in the Aspen, Flagstaff Marathon races, and the Soulstice Mountain Trail Run. Congratulations to Mark Thurston (4:27:52) and Janel Lanphere (4:53.50) for winning the long course race titles. This was Thurston's first long course victory while Janel defended her last year's title, winning her third overall championship. Tom Viskocil won his third straight sprint course title and sixth overall.



Of course at the core of NATRA are the weekly **free Saturday group runs** which averaged 14 runners per outing. With 50 group runs averaging about 6 miles, we clocked in well over 4,000 trail miles!

I also increased incorporating archaeology and history lessons into our trail runs as we often follow prehistoric and historic travel routes. Highlights this year included visits to the petroglyphs in Picture Canyon, the abandoned Johnson Canyon Tunnel west of Williams, Old Town Flagstaff, the 1863 Overland Wagon Trail, early 20th century logging railroad grades, and several abandoned Historic Route 66 segments.

Thanks to those of you who have helped me maintain our **streak of never cancelling a group run in our 15+ years** of Saturdays together, no matter how brutal the weather or trail conditions. 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.

Finally, thanks to my wife Diana, Myles Schrag, and Sara Wagner who year round help edit my columns and annual reports!

As always, Happy Trails to the New Year!

Neil Weintraub, Director Northern Arizona Trail Runners Association



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