

# THE FLEET FOOT

NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB | AUGUST 2025



## RUNNING THE WALL SOMKIT THOMPSON'S UNFORGETTABLE MARATHON IN CHINA

Photo credit: Somkit Thompson



VOLUME 50 | ISSUE 7

Tallahassee, FL  
**Gulf Winds Track Club**

# THE FLEET FOOT

NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB | AUGUST 2025

VOLUME 50 | ISSUE 7

**Editor:** Robert and Kory Skrob with Alex Baglietto, FleetFoot@GulfWinds.org

**Columnists:** Jane Johnson (Featured Feet), Allen Blay and Jerry McDaniel (Presidents Column), Bill Lott (Race Calendar).

**Advertising Copy:**

The maximum print size of our page is 4.75 in. by 7.75 in. If possible, ads should be sent as MS Word files, will look best with standard fonts (Arial, Times New Roman), and formatted to fit the desired size. A simple way is to use 2 inch margins on 8.5 by 11 paper. Deadline: 10th of month previous to publication. Questions, contact the editor.

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Payment in advance/checks payable to:

GWTC-Fleet Foot and sent to, PO Box 3447, Tallahassee, FL 32315

### Submissions/Contributions:

Submissions for publication are strongly encouraged, the preferred format is Microsoft Word. If you have pictures or stories about your running group, don't be shy, photos should be in jpg format. Contact us if you have questions.

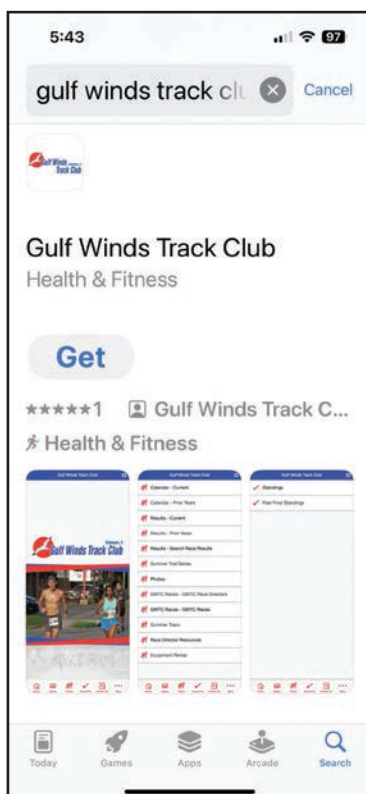
Robert & Kory Skrob, (850) 270-8295, FleetFoot@GulfWinds.org

**Change of Address:**

The US Post Office will not forward your newsletter; you must update your new address and phone number. With RunSignUp.com you now have complete control of your preference and address. Log in anytime, change/update your preferences, and be in total control of your personal information.

## The GWTC App Has Been Discontinued

As of August 8, 2025, the Gulf Winds Track Club app will no longer be available in the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. After reviewing usage and costs, the GWTC Board made the decision to discontinue the app. The good news? You can still access everything you need, from race results, updates, the event calendar, and more, right from your phone by adding a shortcut to [www.gulfwinds.org](http://www.gulfwinds.org). It's just as easy and keeps you connected with all things GWTC.



# DIRECTORY

PO Box 3447, Tallahassee, FL 32315

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Road Runners Club of America Member Club • USA Track & Field Member Club #14-1275

# Join us as we Welcome the World to Tallahassee!



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CROSS COUNTRY  
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**Apalachee Regional Park • January 10, 2026**

Stay tuned for updates along with  
opportunities to be a part of history.

**WXCTallahassee26.com**



Visit  
*Tallahassee*  
SPORTS

## 5K for Sickle Cell Anemia & Tim Simpkins 1 Mile

**Saturday, September 13, 2025**

Jake Gaither Community Center  
801 Bragg Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32305

**Register by August 28th at 11:59 pm to save \$10**

Tim Simpkins 1 Mile Race starts at 8:00 a.m. | 5K for Sickle Cell Anemia starts at 8:30 a.m.

Featuring a Team Race Competition in 5 Divisions:

Men's, Women's, Co-Ed, Middle School, Elementary

Run through the historic Jake Gaither neighborhood, a course that's flat, fast, and  
lined with enthusiastic volunteers.



*Sign Up Here!*

[https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Tallahassee/  
RunWalkforSickleCellAnemia5K](https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Tallahassee/RunWalkforSickleCellAnemia5K)  
TimSimpkins1MileFunRunforAll

# MAY 2025 BOARD MEETING RECAP

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Here is a Gulf Winds Track Club Board of Directors meeting briefing about the meeting held May 14, 2025, hosted by Jerry McDaniel. The full meeting minutes are available at [gulfwinds.org/minutes](https://gulfwinds.org/minutes). To learn about future board meetings and their locations, visit [gulfwinds.org/business-meetings](https://gulfwinds.org/business-meetings). All GWTC members are welcome to attend any board meeting. Please join us if you are interested or curious about the work happening behind the scenes.

## **Board Discusses ARP Bridge Donation for 2026 World Cross Country Championships**

Amanda Heidecker presented plans for a permanent bridge at Apalachee Regional Park (ARP) to enhance the experience for runners and spectators during the 2026 World Cross Country Championships. The bridge, estimated to cost over \$120,000, would allow for safe crossing over the course. The Board discussed a potential donation from GWTC but deferred a decision pending further information and an email vote.

## **Springtime 10K/5K/1M and Palace Saloon 5K Budget Closeouts Approved**

Jackie and Jerry McDaniel presented the budget closeout for the Springtime 10K/5K/1M event, which had 1,835 finishers. The Board approved the distribution of proceeds: GWTC - \$18,000; NAMI - \$5,805 (including direct donations); Holy Comforter Episcopal School (HCES) - \$14,365.

Bill Lott reviewed the budget closeout for the Palace Saloon 5K. The race generated \$61,036.43 in revenue and \$24,859.88 in expenses, yielding a net profit of \$36,176.55. The Board approved donations of \$10,500 to the Oasis Center for Women and Girls and \$9,900 to the Tom McHaffie Memorial Scholarship at FSU's Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship, with the remaining \$18,088.28 retained by GWTC.

## **Budget Proposals for Upcoming Events Approved**

Lauren Stanley presented the budget proposal for the Breakfast on the Track 1M event, projecting revenue of \$2,713.58 and expenses of \$2,365.38, for a net revenue of \$348.20. The proposal was approved.

David Yon discussed the budget proposal for the Great Potluck Bash 4-Miler 2025, with anticipated revenue of \$747.00 benefiting the Chenoweth Fund. The proposal was approved, and volunteers are needed to help mark the trails.

## **Townhall Meeting and 50th Anniversary Celebration Planned**

The Board approved holding a Townhall Meeting to discuss club activities and educate members about GWTC's philanthropic efforts. Additionally, a 50th-anniversary party is planned for August 3, 2025.





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## **Discussions with HCES for Track Access**

Jerry and Jackie McDaniel are in discussions with Holy Comforter Episcopal School to allow club members access to the track for activities like speedwork, Summer Track, Breakfast on the Track, and possible community use on weekends.

## **SMIRFs Program Funding and Volunteer Support**

Allen Blay highlighted the need for increased funding for the SMIRFs youth running program. Suggestions included hiring students to assist with course setup. Volunteers are being recruited via RunSignUp.

## **Girls on the Run as Potential Beneficiary**

Jeanne O'Kon reported on behalf of Lisa Unger that Girls on the Run expressed interest in becoming a beneficiary of the Women's Distance Festival 5K.

## **Race Directors Handbook to Be Updated**

Mary Jean Yon announced plans to update the Race Directors Handbook and will seek feedback from several race directors. She also mentioned that Bobby York will retire in a year, and a new race director is needed for the Swamp Forest and Summer Trail Series.

## **Communications and Membership Growth**

Jennifer Hay reported efforts to coordinate with the IT Coordinator regarding RunSignUp and plans to have a presence at summer events. Membership numbers as of May: 1,315 individual members and 753 family memberships, both increased from the previous year.

## **RACER Committee Leadership Transition**

Chika Okoro has taken over as chair of the RACER Committee, with Dan Manausa assisting.

## **Equipment Maintenance and Updates**

Bill Lott reported that battery replacements are needed for two clocks, estimated at \$50 each. The GWTC trailer's tag registration has been renewed for two years at a cost of \$46.15.

## **Chip Timing Services Update**

In April, GWTC timed one non-club race (Cornerstone Learning Community Hawk Run Jubilee 5K/1M) and one club race (Palace Saloon 5K). In May, two non-club races (Tails and Trails Half Marathon/10K/5K/1M and NeSmith Way 5K) and one club race (Summer Trail Series Race #1 – Oak Hammock) are scheduled. Upcoming in June: one non-club race (Monticello Kiwanis Club 5K Watermelon Run) and two club races (Great Potluck Bash 4-Mile Prediction Run and Summer Trail Series Race #2 – Redbug Trail). Chip timing revenue from non-club races since July 1, 2024, totals \$4,281.00.

## **Grand Prix Scoring Up to Date**

Jeanne O'Kon reported that Grand Prix scoring is up to date, including results from the Palace Saloon 5K.

## **Training Groups Continue at Maclay School**

Thursday interval sessions are being held at Maclay School at 6:30 p.m.

# FEAR NO DISTANCE

A group of runners in silhouette are running on a road towards the horizon. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden glow. The runners are in various stages of their stride, and their shadows are cast on the road surface.

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# RACE CALENDAR

## AUGUST 2025

**08** Tallahassee Beer Festival Beer Mile, 6:30 p.m. Donald L. Tucker Civic Center, 505 W. Pensacola St. Visit Tallahassee Beer Festival at <https://tlhbeerfest.com>; or Mickey Moore at [mickey@mooretobusiness.com](mailto:mickey@mooretobusiness.com).

**09** GWTC Breakfast on the Track Mile, 7:45 a.m. Maclay School Track, 3737 N. Meridian Rd. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com). Chris or Lauren Stanley at [ctstanley800@gmail.com](mailto:ctstanley800@gmail.com).

**16** GWTC Miller Landing Madness 8K/5K/3K XC Run, 8 a.m. 8K/5K; 9 a.m. 3K. Elinor Klapp- Phipps Park, Gate B, 1775 Miller Landing Rd. (1.3 miles west of Meridian Rd. on Miller Landing Rd.). Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com). Tom Perkins at [tomperkinsfsu@gmail.com](mailto:tomperkinsfsu@gmail.com) or (850) 264-4595; Jeanne O'Kon at [okonj@tsc.fl.edu](mailto:okonj@tsc.fl.edu) or (850) 264-4903; or Bill Lott at [blott@nettally.com](mailto:blott@nettally.com) or (850) 656-1273.

**23** GWTC Summer Trail Series Race #4 - Maclay Gardens (~6M), 8 a.m. Maclay Gardens State Park, 3540 Thomasville Rd. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com). Bobby York at [byorkjr@msn.com](mailto:byorkjr@msn.com).

**23** Dueling Summits XC Invitational, 7:15 a.m. community 5K; 8 a.m. girls high school 5K; 8:40 a.m. boys high school 5K; 9:30 a.m. girls middle school 3K; 10 a.m. boys middle school 3K. Elinor Klapp-Phipps Park, Gate B, 1775 Miller Landing Rd. (1.3 miles west of Meridian Rd.). Online meet information and registration available at <http://fl.milesplit.com/>; or Jose Fernandez at [multijumps@gmail.com](mailto:multijumps@gmail.com).

## SEPTEMBER 2025



**01** Bluebird Run for Brookie B. 5K/1M - 8 a.m. 1M; 8:30 a.m. 5K. J.R. Alford Greenway, 2500 S. Pedrick Rd. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com). Visit [www.bluebirdrun.com](http://www.bluebirdrun.com). or Bill Bowers at [bill@bluebirdrun.com](mailto:bill@bluebirdrun.com).

**07** Imitation Adults Fat Ass 2, 3 or 4 Hours - 7 a.m. Optimist Park, 1800 E. Indianhead Dr. Nancy Stedman at [nancystedman@gmail.com](mailto:nancystedman@gmail.com).

**12** Hoka Nights of Thunder XC Fest (College) - 8 p.m. college men 8K/college women 5K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Additional information and registration available at [www.NightsofThunder.com](http://www.NightsofThunder.com).

**13** GWTC 5K Run/Walk for Sickle Cell Anemia/Tim Simpkins 1M Fun Run - 8 a.m. 1M; 8:30 a.m. 5K. Jake Gaither Community Center and Golf Course, 801 Bragg Dr. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com). Visit [www.sicklecellfoundation.org](http://www.sicklecellfoundation.org); or Sickle Cell Foundation at [sicklecellfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:sicklecellfoundation@gmail.com) or 222-2355.

**13** Hoka Nights of Thunder XC Fest (Middle School/High School) - 6 p.m. middle school 3K; 7 p.m. open 5K; 8 p.m. HS JV 5K; 9 p.m. HS varsity 5K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Additional information and registration available at [www.NightsofThunder.com](http://www.NightsofThunder.com).



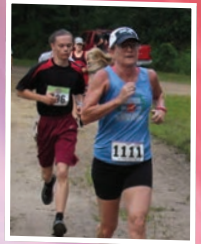
GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB PRESENTS  
**MILLER LANDING  
MADNESS**

**8K/5K/3K CROSS COUNTRY RUN  
TO BENEFIT SECOND HARVEST OF THE BIG BEND**



**WHEN:** AUGUST 16, 2025

**WHERE:** GATE B, ELINOR KLAPP-PHIPPS PARK  
(1.3 MILES WEST OF MERIDIAN ROAD  
ON MILLER LANDING ROAD)



**TIME:** 8K/5K START AT 8:00 A.M.; 3K STARTS AT 9:00 A.M.

All monetary proceeds benefit the GWTC Chenoweth Fund.  
All canned food donations go to Second Harvest of the Big Bend.



**Online registration available  
at RunSignUp.com.**



**EARLY PACKET PICK-UP:**

Register, pick up your packet, & drop off food items early:  
Wednesday, August 13, 2025 Cadence Running,  
2743 Capital Circle NE #101 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.



**Race Day Registration and Packet Pick-Up:** Begins at race site at 6:30 a.m.

Ages 18 and Under and under: Free with four cans of food.

Over 18 years of age: Pay registration fee and minimum of two cans of food.

High School age and Middle School age Club Teams may compete for team awards in the 5K and 3K races, respectively. Team members must enter team name when registering.  
Each team participant is required to register and submit a signed, completed waiver.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHENOWETH FUND  
OR GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB, VISIT [WWW.GULFWINDS.ORG](http://WWW.GULFWINDS.ORG).**

**FOR RACE INFORMATION**

**CONTACT TOM PERKINS AT (850) 264-4595;  
JEANNE O'KON AT (850) 264-4903; OR  
BILL LOTT AT (850) 656-1273.**



**20 GWTC Women's Distance Festival 5K**

- 8 a.m. women; 8:05 a.m. men. Optimist Park, 1800 E. Indianhead Dr. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com). Visit [www.gulfwinds.org](http://www.gulfwinds.org); or Lisa Unger at [lisa.s.unger@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.s.unger@gmail.com).

**26 FSU Cross Country Open - TBA. XC**

Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit [www.seminoles.com](http://www.seminoles.com).

**27 GWTC Salute to Steve Prefontaine**

**5K/1M Forest Run** - 8:30 a.m. 1M; 9 a.m. 5K. Wallwood Scout Reservation on Lake Talquin, 23 Wallwood BSA Dr., Quincy, FL. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com). Visit [www.gulfwinds.org](http://www.gulfwinds.org); or Allen Blay at [allen.blay@gmail.com](mailto:allen.blay@gmail.com).

## OCTOBER 2025

**08 Corporate Cup Challenge - 7:30 a.m.**

(teams of 4 with one each completing in a 5K run, 9K bike, 5-minute rowing, and 3-phased strength/conditioning). XC course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Online registration available at [Eventbrite.com](http://Eventbrite.com). Visit [www.workingwelltoday.org](http://www.workingwelltoday.org); or Christine Cox at (850) 570-3327 or [cjwellnesswoman@gmail.com](mailto:cjwellnesswoman@gmail.com).

**11 GWTC Pine Run at Tall Timbers 20K**

- 7:30 a.m. Tall Timbers Research Station, 13093 Henry Beadel Dr. off CR 12. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com). Visit [www.GulfWinds.org](http://www.GulfWinds.org); or Carter or Jennifer Hay at [GWTCpinerun@gmail.com](mailto:GWTCpinerun@gmail.com).

**24 NJCAA Region 8 Cross Country Championships** - 8 a.m. men 8K; 9 a.m.

women 5K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org).

**24 FSU Cross Country Invite/Pre-State**

(Middle School) - 5 p.m. middle school girls 3K; 5:25 p.m. middle school boys 3K; 5:50 p.m. high school girls JV 5K; 6:20 p.m. high school boys JV 5K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit [www.visittallahassee.com](http://www.visittallahassee.com).

**25 FSU Cross Country Invite/Pre-State**

(High School) - 7:40 a.m. high school girls elite; 8:05 a.m. high boys school elite; 8:30 a.m. high school girls select; 8:55 a.m. high school boys select; 9:20 a.m. high school girls varsity A; 9:50 a.m. high school boys varsity A; 10:20 a.m. high school girls varsity B; 10:50 a.m. high school boys varsity B. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit [www.visittallahassee.com](http://www.visittallahassee.com); or Bob Thomas at [bttrackguy@outlook.com](mailto:bttrackguy@outlook.com). XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park - 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit [www.visittallahassee.com](http://www.visittallahassee.com).

**25 Boston Half Marathon/Relay/5K Run/5K**

**Walk** - 8 a.m. half/relay; 8:15 a.m. 5K run; 8:30 a.m. 5K walk. Start at 118 E. Jefferson St., Boston, GA. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com). Visit [www.bostonga.com](http://www.bostonga.com). Jerry Maginnis at (229) 516-5193.

**25 Quail Trail 5K** - 8 a.m. Pebble Hill

Plantation - 1251 U.S. Hwy. 319 South, Thomasville, GA. Online registration available at [RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com). Visit <https://pebblehill.com/quail-trail-5k>; or Lori Everett at [leverett@pebblehill.com](mailto:leverett@pebblehill.com).

**27 Southwestern Athletic Conference**

(SWAC) Cross Country Championships - 8 a.m. men 8K; 9 a.m. women 5K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit [www.swac.org](http://www.swac.org).

# BREAKFAST ON THE TRACK

*is back!*

**SATURDAY  
AUGUST 9TH • 8AM  
MACLAY SCHOOL TRACK**

Races include a competitive mile, youth heats, and fun runs for all ages. Whether you're chasing a PR or just here for the pancakes, this 1-mile race is the perfect way to start your day. Run fast. Eat well.



**ONLINE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE AT**  
<https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Tallahassee/BreakfastontheTrack>



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# PRESIDENTS COLUMN

By: Jerry McDaniel, GWTC President

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## GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB ANNUAL MEETING – JULY 19, 2025

The Gulf Winds Track Club held its annual meeting on July 19 at Momo's Pizza on Market Street. Based on last year's member survey feedback requesting more social gatherings, we again combined the annual meeting with a casual social event, just like last year, with free pizza and a drink for attendees. While attendance was solid, I wanted to share this written recap to ensure all members stay informed, especially those who couldn't make it in person.

If you're interested in learning more about any specific topic, I encourage you to reach out directly to the speakers who shared updates during the event. Special thanks to Judy Alexander for her help in organizing and managing logistics for the evening.

I invited ten members, including several Board members, to give brief presentations on different areas of the Club's work. All credit for the detailed summary below goes to Robert Skrob, who graciously took notes during the event and compiled the information that follows.

While many of us are aware that GWTC is a dynamic and active club, it's gatherings like this that really showcase the depth and breadth of our impact. From schools, youth programs, and nonprofit partnerships, to beginner runners, seasoned athletes, and even hosting a world-class event in 2026, our Club continues to serve as a powerful force in the Tallahassee community. It's truly inspirational.





# YEAR ROUND RUNNING GROUPS

Learn a lot more about  
running groups by visiting  
[www.gulfwinds.org/training](http://www.gulfwinds.org/training).

## **TUESDAY MORNING INTERVALS**

Tuesday, 6:30am at Maclay School Track

## **TUESDAY EVENING INTERVALS**

Tuesday, 6:00pm at Railroad Square (by skate  
park/rattler snake)

## **MIDTOWN MIDWEEK MILES**

Wednesday, 5:30am at Whole Foods Market

## **WEDNESDAY EVENING INTERVAL WORKOUT GROUP**

Wednesday, 5:30pm at Harriman Circle Park

## **OPTIMIST PARK THURSDAY NIGHT GROUP RUN**

Thursday, 6pm at Optimist Park

## **SUNDAY AT FOREST MEADOWS TRAIL RUN**

Sunday, 7:30am at  
Forest Meadows Tennis Complex

## **REFLECTION TRAIL RUN**

Every Sunday EXCEPT for the last  
Sunday of the month. Tom Brown's Lafayette  
Heritage Trail (501 Easterwood Dr). Meet at  
the West Cadillac Trailhead signpost.

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Photo credit Keith Rowe

At the Gulf Winds Track Club Summer Social held on Saturday, July 19 at Momo's Pizza, members came together to enjoy pizza, connect with fellow runners, and hear exciting updates about upcoming events and club initiatives. From major race news to community projects, the gathering served as a lively touchpoint for members to celebrate the club's momentum and consider new ways to get involved.

### **Elections Coming Soon – Consider Running for the Board**

Past President Mark Priddy encouraged members to consider running for one of 15 elected officer and director positions this November. The election period opens November 1 and runs for about two weeks. Mark emphasized that no prior board experience is necessary and that all members bring valuable skills to the club. He also recommended attending a board meeting to get a feel for how they work. Meetings are open to everyone and rotate between locations. Jerry McDaniel noted he will not be running again, so the president's role will be open.

### **World Cross Country Championships Coming to ARP in January 2026**

Judy Alexander shared that the World

Cross Country Championships will take place at Apalachee Regional Park on January 10, 2026. In addition to elite international races, the event will feature mass participation and kids' races, with plenty of exciting activities for spectators and participants alike. Major course upgrades are underway to highlight unique features of Florida, as the park prepares to represent the state on a global stage. For updates, follow the event on Facebook, Instagram, and X, or reach out to Judy with any questions.

### **Gulf Winds Track Club Supports ARP Bridge Project Ahead of World Championships**

Bill Lott shared the club's longstanding involvement with the development of Apalachee Regional Park, including an original \$10,000 contribution alongside FSU to help launch the facility. With the upcoming World Cross Country Championships attracting runners from approximately 55 countries, the course is undergoing several temporary changes, but one major permanent addition is a new \$120,000 pedestrian bridge near the Corbett Trail. Gulf Winds Track Club is contributing \$40,000 toward its construction. In recognition, the club's name will be featured on the bridge with

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Photo credit Keith Rowe

final signage details still to be determined. During the World Championships, runners will cross over the bridge while spectators pass underneath. After the event, the bridge will be used in reverse—spectators will cross above while runners go below. A community race on championship day will allow local runners to experience the new layout firsthand.

### **Treasurer Peg Griffin Shares Financial Overview and Invitation**

Peg Griffin, Gulf Winds Track Club Treasurer since 2021, shared a strong financial report and encouraged members to consider stepping into the role next year, offering her full support for a smooth transition. The club currently manages \$316,200 in assets, including reserved funds such as the \$80,800 equipment account, \$13,680 from the Gulf Winds Triathletes, \$8,035 in the Chenoweth Endowment Fund, and \$14,400 remaining from a Community Thrives grant used to support youth running programs that address social issues. After earmarked funds, the club maintains around \$200,000 in its operating account to fund races, socials, training programs, and awards. Key revenue sources include memberships, donations, sponsorships, equipment

rentals, and proceeds from large races like the Turkey Trot, Marathon, Palace Saloon 5K, and Springtime 10K. Notably, GWTC has contributed over \$310,506 in race proceeds to nonprofits over the past four years, with an additional \$74,200 donated directly by members at registration. Peg emphasized transparency and fiscal responsibility, noting that detailed financial reports are available on the club's website and she welcomes any questions.

### **Emily Webster Encourages Runners to Join or Start Group Runs**

Emily Webster, one of the four coordinators for Gulf Winds Track Club's training group runs, highlighted the variety of weekly and seasonal group runs available across Tallahassee ranging from morning meetups to evening trail and track runs. She invited anyone looking to join or start a new group to connect with her, especially if interested in leading the beginner group launching Wednesday evenings in late September. The club also hosts seasonal challenges and holiday-themed activities, often with prizes, to keep things fun and inclusive. Members are encouraged to join the "Gulf Winds Track Club Training Group Runs" Facebook group to stay connected and find running buddies.

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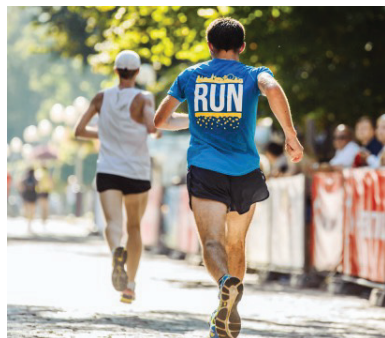
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## **Jeane O'Kon Celebrates 50 Years of Summer Track**

Jean O'Kon shared that the Gulf Winds Summer Track program is now in its 50th year, originally started by Coach Perry Shaw and currently held Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. at Maclay School. The program runs for eight weeks, kicking off each evening with a crowd-favorite Diaper Dash. Jeane emphasized the joy of watching kids grow up with the program and highlighted how the program helps teach kids how to run while keeping the atmosphere fun with snow cones and an end-of-season ice cream social. With two weeks remaining, Jean invited all to join this free, family-friendly tradition that continues to support and inspire young runners.

## **Haythorne Hay Shares the Joy of SMIRFs**

Board member Haythorne Hay spoke about SMIRFs, Summer Mornings Include Running Fun, a weekday youth running program held at 7:45 a.m. at Forest Meadows' soccer fields. Open to kids ages 5 to 13, SMIRFs combines running with games like relays and sharks and minnows to help kids build a love for the sport. With around 120 participants registered this summer and peak days drawing 50 to 60 runners, the program continues to thrive. Haythorne, a former SMIRFs participant himself and now a coach for four years, shared how meaningful it is to give back to a program that inspired him.

## **Jennifer Hay Highlights Club Communications and Calls for Input**

Jennifer Hay introduced her new role as Communications Director, emphasizing the importance of keeping members informed and connected. She encouraged schools to apply for \$300 youth running program grants available through the

club. Members were invited to pick up club t-shirts and stickers to help spread the word and recruit new members and volunteers. Jennifer also highlighted the club's growing digital presence, Instagram, Facebook, and now Strava, along with email communications like Fleet Foot and Running Shorts. She reminded everyone to check their spam folders and ensure club emails are marked safe. Most importantly, Jennifer stressed that communication goes both ways and invited members to share feedback and ideas with board members. Lastly, she's seeking a volunteer or intern to help with the website, web-savvy members or students interested in gaining experience are encouraged to reach out.

## **Tallahassee Marathon Updates from Robert Skrob**

Robert Skrob shared exciting updates for the upcoming Bank of America Tallahassee Marathon and Half Marathon, scheduled for February 8, 2026. Last year, the event drew 2,300 runners from 36 states and 40 Florida counties, with strong participation from young runners and women. Bank of America is once again the title sponsor, one of only three marathons they sponsor worldwide, alongside Boston and Chicago.

Packet pickup will be at Dunlap Champions Club, with photo opportunities at the newly renovated stadium. Organizers are working closely with city police to design a scenic, minimum-elevation route that's efficient for public safety and fun for runners. The finish line at CollegeTown will again feature a festive atmosphere, and sponsors are invited to get involved.



# RUN & WALK for BROOKIE B

Labor Day, September 2, 2024

at  
J.R. Alford Greenway

**1M Fun Run/walk** over the scenic  
Lafayette Heritage Trail Canopy Walkway

8:00am  
START TIME

**5k trail run/walk** in the  
J.R. Alford Greenway with chip timing

8:30am  
START TIME

for suicide awareness  
and prevention

Full details and registration at  
[www.BluebirdRun.com](http://www.BluebirdRun.com)

Brought to you by NAMI Tallahassee,  
the National Alliance on Mental Illness





A highlight this year is the launch of a premium clothing line designed by a professional apparel designer and priced affordably. Runners can choose from tanks, tees, jackets, and more, with try-on events planned before race day.

Robert also called for volunteers, especially for food service, aid stations, and course traffic management. With the entire event volunteer-run, community involvement is essential to its success.

### **Podcast Proposal from Allen Blay**

Allen Blay shared a new idea aimed at reaching younger runners: launching a Gulf Winds Track Club podcast. Inspired by a suggestion from Mickey Moore, the podcast would target a younger audience. This demographic often listens to podcasts while exercising and may not engage with emails or the Fleet Foot newsletter.

The podcast would feature local stories, race highlights, and club updates, helping to grow awareness and connection, especially with those not yet club members. Allen and Mickey are exploring a partnership with a professional podcast production company to ensure distribution across all major platforms.

Estimated cost: \$750/month, with Mickey volunteering as host. The team is currently evaluating success metrics (like listens and subscribers) before deciding to move forward. Feedback and ideas are welcome.

### **Summary of Jerry McDaniel's Comments**

Jerry McDaniel shared an exciting update: a new community track is nearly complete at Holy Comforter School. The track, funded in part by Springtime race proceeds, is expected to open by September or October 2025 and will be available to the public on weekends, a major win given most school tracks are closed to the community.

Gulf Winds Track Club will also gain access for key programs, including Tuesday speed sessions, Summer Track, and Breakfast on the Track. Jerry also made a call for younger volunteers to shadow him and Jackie in 2026 and eventually take over directing the Springtime races in 2027. He emphasized how much the club contributes to the community and how important it is for a new generation to step up and lead.

### **Reflection Run at Tom Brown Park**

Rick Miller invited members to join the Sunday evening Reflection Run at Tom Brown Park, held at 6:30 p.m. every Sunday (except the last Sunday of each month). He shared that the run started casually—"maybe over a beer or two"—but has become a meaningful, weekly moment of reflection and connection. He thanked volunteers like Will, Sarla, Katie, and Bho for helping build momentum and encouraged others to come out, even in the warm weather, to enjoy a peaceful and welcoming group run. 🏃🏻‍♂️

## FEATURED FEET

# MATT VERMEER



**Childhood ambition:** I went through a phase in elementary school after reading a series of books on horse racing where I decided I wanted to be a racehorse jockey when I grew up.

**Current Occupation:** I'm a family medicine physician and I also do sports medicine, specializing in non-operative orthopedics.

**If money were no object, what profession would you choose:** I would be a professional amateur triathlete full time. Train all day. Take naps to recover. Train again.

**Favorite running memory:** Running in a park during a 10K in Edinburgh. They were playing Queen's "Don't Stop Me Now".

**Indulgence:** Trying different types of bourbon when we travel.

**Non-Running hobbies:** I'm a triathlete, so obviously swimming and cycling. Also, I'm a big Liverpool fan and I like

watching soccer. I like hiking in new places with my wife and my dog.

**Favorite Reads:** I like historical fiction. The most recent book I read was *The Forest*, by Edward Rutherford, and I've read all Ken Follett's books.

**Best place to run in Tallahassee:** I like the trails at Phipps and Forest Meadows, but mostly I run a loop around my house called the "Treetop Track."

**Preferred Running Technology:** I really like the Stryd foot pod and the endless amount of data it gives me, like running power and race prediction times.

**Perfect day:** A long morning run at 48°F, an afternoon nap in a hammock, and a nice mountain sunset.

**Biggest challenge:** Ironman Arizona and overcoming 59°F water that nearly froze me to death. 🌪️

# *Somkit Thompson* **CONQUERS THE GREAT WALL MARATHON**



**“THE COURSE WAS CHALLENGING, WITH  
OVER 5,000 UNEVEN STEPS, BUT THE  
BREATHTAKING SCENERY AND CHEERING  
LOCALS MADE IT WORTHWHILE.”**



# RUNNING THE GREAT WALL MARATHON HAD BEEN ON MY BUCKET LIST FOR YEARS.

In 2024, I registered and trained diligently, only to have my plans derailed when my Chinese visa didn't arrive in time. Lesson learned: apply for your visa early. Once approved, it's valid for ten years, so it's worth the effort.

## Fast forward to May 2025, I

finally made it to China. I opted for a six-day tour package with Albatros Adventure Marathons, which took care of everything from airport pickup to hotel accommodations and race logistics. Upon arrival in Beijing, I

was greeted by a guide holding a Great Wall Marathon sign. She directed me to a cab that took me to the hotel, where I picked up my bib and settled in.



## The next day was “Inspection Day.” We boarded a tour bus

with runners from around the world and headed to the Great Wall. Climbing the Wall during the inspection was both exhilarating and humbling. No two steps are the same, and the terrain is unforgiving. It's nearly impossible to capture the Wall's grandeur in photos; it wraps around mountains and stretches as far as the eye can see.

**Race day arrived with perfect weather:** sunny, cool, and slightly breezy. After a hearty breakfast, we gathered at the starting square, energized by music and warm-up dances. The race began with a steep hill leading into the Great Wall. The course was challenging, with over 5,000 uneven steps, but the breathtaking scenery and cheering locals made it worthwhile. Running through villages, I was moved by the children's smiles and high-fives.

**Completing the marathon was an incredible experience.**

The sense of accomplishment was overwhelming, and I would do it again in a heartbeat. The following days included tours of the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven, culminating in a farewell dinner with fellow runners.

**Reflecting on the race,** I can't emphasize enough the importance of preparation. You need to do a variety of leg workouts to tackle the Wall's terrain. My Rocket X2 HOKAs performed exceptionally well. Among 128 U.S. participants from 59 countries, I proudly represented Tallahassee and Florida.

**Now that I'm back and recovered,** the Great Wall Marathon feels like a dream. It was an amazing experience, and I look forward to doing it again one day. Perhaps we can get a group together?



**I rank the Great Wall Marathon among my favorite races,** alongside the Rome, Vienna, Warsaw, and Reykjavik Marathons. My next challenge is the Mont Blanc Marathon in Chamonix, France, on June 29, followed by the Helsinki Marathon in August and the Authentic Marathon in Athens, Greece, in November.

## FEATURED FEET

# BRITTANY BEVIS VERMEER



**Childhood ambition:** I probably wanted to be a marine biologist or a veterinarian, something with animals.

**Current Occupation:** I've been a freelance writer and editorial consultant for 17 years. The majority of my work these days is focused on triathlon and running! I currently write for IRONMAN, Outside Run, Triathlete Magazine, XTERRA, and more. I also have a blog-(thetripthreatlife.com) where I send out a weekly newsletter with training tips, expert interviews, and mindset techniques for athletes.

**If money were no object, what profession would you choose:** I would likely run some type of animal-related charity. We have a 12-year-old dog named Ellie Mae and two rescued kittens we found on a bike ride just north of town! They're named Jasper and Monty.

**Favorite running memory:** My favorite part of any Ironman triathlon happens on the run when I cross paths with my husband, Matt. Looped courses are the best, because we get to see each other and share a high five. He always runs back out after the finish to find me in my last mile and run in with me.

**Indulgence:** Dark chocolate, cinnamon coffee cake, and chocolate chip cookies. Any dessert basically!

**Non-Running hobbies:** I'm a triathlete, but that's still 1/3 running... I love swimming and cycling, of course, but Matt and I also enjoy hiking, kayaking, and exploring the outdoors, especially

National Parks. I also like photography, drawing, painting, and reading.

**Favorite Reads:** I enjoy fiction set in other countries or time periods, typically with an element of mystery. Recently I've read: The Stolen Queen, To Catch a Thief, and The Confidence Games. Sport-related titles I love include: The Genius of Athletes and Endure: Mind, Body, and the Curiously Elastic Limits of Human Performance. And we read a daily devotional in the Bible.

**Best place to run in Tallahassee:** There are so many! We love the clay road out by Bradley's Country Store. We actually own property out there as well. Phipps Park is great, as is Tom Brown Park and the Greenway.

**Preferred Running Technology:** I use a Garmin Forerunner 945 watch and a Polar OH1+ arm band heart rate strap.

**Perfect day:** It would probably include a long bike ride followed by brunch and an afternoon hike in the mountains, somewhere cool and incredibly beautiful, followed by a pasta dinner.

**Biggest challenge:** My biggest challenge with running thus far was being diagnosed with iron-deficiency anemia in 2019. My ferritin levels were so low I needed two iron infusions at the hospital. These days, I take an iron supplement. It's very important for runners, especially women, to ask their doctor to run a CBC with ferritin annually. Nearly 1/3 of female athletes have some level of iron deficiency. 🩸



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# LAURA DENNIS



**Tell us briefly about your running experience.** Apart from the occasional 5K, I really started running after law school. I was inspired by my dad running the Tallahassee Marathon. Shortly thereafter, I joined the local Moms Run this Town group and then began running consistently (as well as found an amazing group of women to run with). I have since run many races, including about ten half marathons, and three full marathons, and I look forward to running many more.

**How long have you been a member of GWTC?** Oh goodness! For at least a decade I think, maybe even longer. My whole family are members - including my young daughters!

**How did you first get involved as a volunteer?** A few years ago, David Yon asked if I was interested in helping with the Tallahassee Marathon/ Half Marathon. I can never say no to David, but I told him I still wanted to be able to run the Half Marathon. He put me in charge of coordinating the expo, a position I have held since. It was a really exciting way to contribute behind the scenes for an event that means so much to our community. Organizing vendors, coordinating logistics, and helping create a welcoming atmosphere for runners and their families, including those that travel from out of town, gave me a deeper appreciation for all of the moving parts that make a race

successful.

I quickly realized how essential volunteers are to making it all happen and being part of that effort was incredibly rewarding.

**What do you enjoy most about volunteering?** What I enjoy most about volunteering is the sense of community and shared energy. There is something special about being part of a team that works together to support runners. It is also inspiring to see people challenge themselves and reach their goal, and I like to cheer on my friends!

**Why do you volunteer?** I volunteer because I believe in giving back to the running community that has shaped and supported me. Running has had such a positive impact on my life, and volunteering is one way I can help make that experience possible for others. I enjoy knowing that my time and effort to contribute to something bigger. Volunteering also gives me a chance to connect with others who share a love for the sport and to be part of the behind-the-scenes teamwork that brings races to life.

**What is your next volunteer project?** I will be helping David Yon with the Great Potluck Bash 4 Miler. I will also be working the water table with a significant group of ladies for the Summer Trail Series! 🏃‍♀️



## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

1800 E Indianhead Drive, Tallahassee, FL US 32301 Race starts at 8:00 a.m.

Run through Indian Head Acres, a paved, USATF  
-certified course that starts and finishes at Optimist Park.

Women start at 8:00 a.m., and men start five minutes later.  
And most years, the women outnumber (and often outrun) the men.

**Sign Up  
Here!**



All proceeds go to The Oasis Center for Women & Girls, a local nonprofit that supports women and girls through counseling, mentoring, and leadership programs.

**Register by September 17 to save \$5.** Online Registration Available At: <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Tallahassee/GWTCWomensDistanceFestival>

SALUTE TO

*Steve Prefontaine*  
5K AND MILE

## Saturday, September 27, 2025

Wallwood Boy Scout Reservation: 23 Wallwood BSA Dr., Quincy, FL US 32351

Mile starts at 8:30 a.m. | 5K starts at 9:00 a.m.

*Celebrate the legacy of Steve Prefontaine, one of the greatest American distance runners, who held every national record from 2000m to 10,000m at the time of his death in 1975.*

*Both races are part of the GWTC Grand Prix for adults and youth. The 5K course will take you through sandy trails, past campsites, a rifle range, and a footbridge inspired by the Scout Law.*

**Stay after the race for awards, a post-race party, and the popular Steve Prefontaine dress-alike contest. Prizes will also be awarded to the Scout Troop and Pack with the highest turnout.**



**Scan to Register. Registration is online only. There will be no race day registrations.** <https://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Quincy/PrefontaineForestRun>

