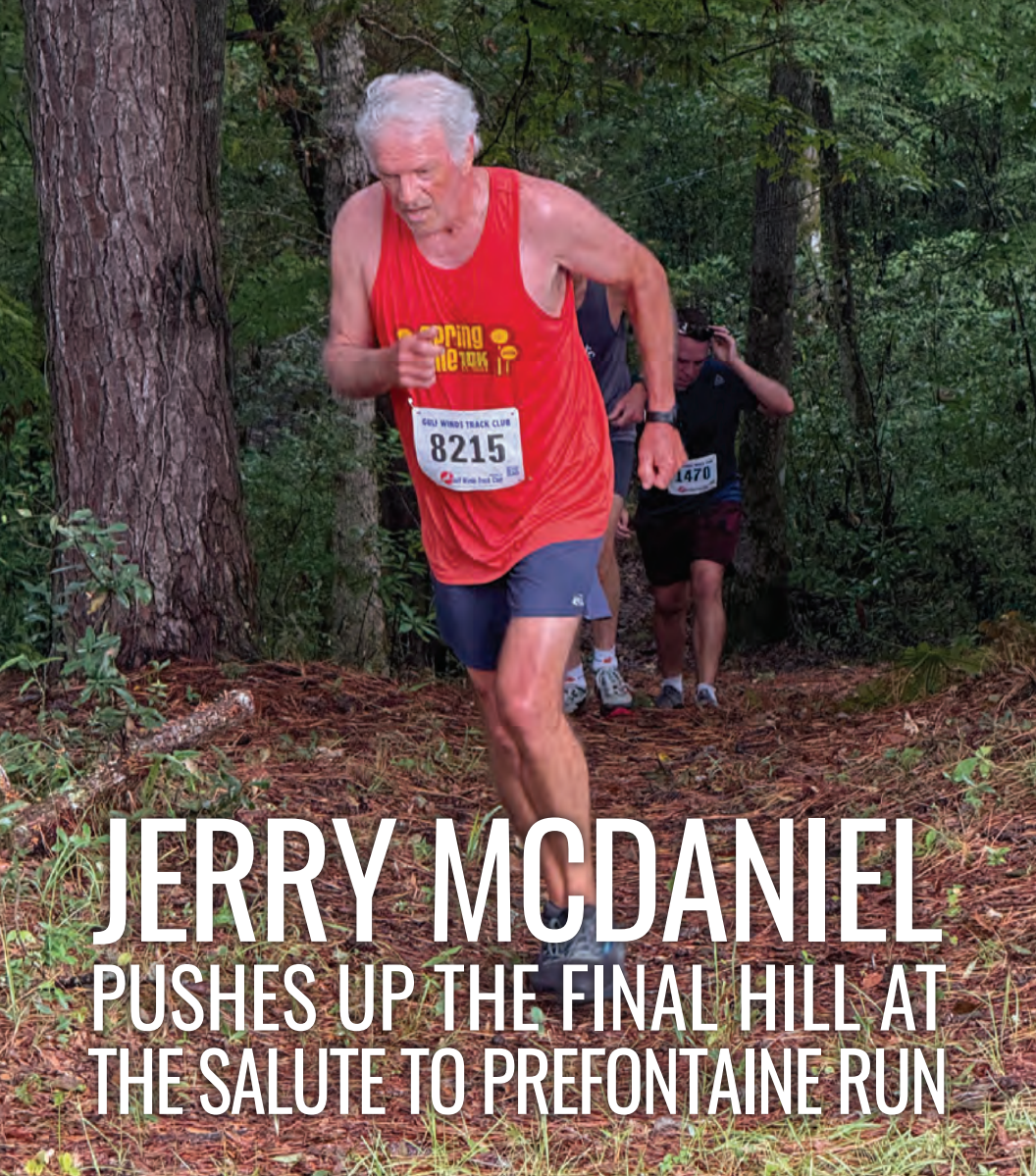


THE FLEET FOOT

NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB | NOVEMBER 2025



JERRY MCDANIEL PUSHES UP THE FINAL HILL AT THE SALUTE TO PREFONTAINE RUN

Photo credit: Allen Blay

THE FLEET FOOT

NEWSLETTER OF THE GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB | NOVEMBER 2025

VOLUME 50 | ISSUE 10

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.

Advertising Payments.:

Full Page-\$50, Half Page – \$28, Run twice, no changes – \$46, \$25 each yearly rates. \$400, \$225, \$125. Letter-size centerfold race flyer, check with editor.

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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.

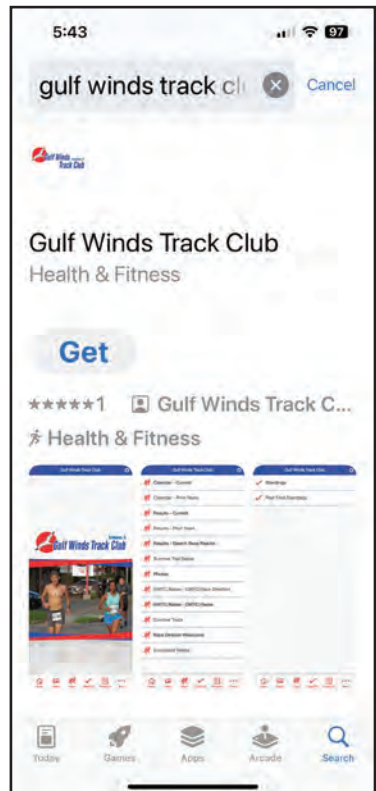
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The GWTC App Has Been Discontinued

As of August 8, 2025, the Gulf Winds Track Club app is no longer 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. It's just as easy and keeps you connected with all things GWTC.



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SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING RECAP

Here is a Gulf Winds Track Club Board of Directors meeting briefing about the meeting held September 10, 2025, hosted by Tina Bahmer. The full meeting minutes are available at gulfwinds.org/minutes. To learn about future board meetings and their locations, visit 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.

Lifetime Membership Now Available The Board unanimously approved the creation of a Lifetime Membership option for individuals. The one-time cost will be \$500, based on multiplying the current annual individual membership fee by 25. This new membership category does not apply to family memberships.

Trademarking “Run TLH” The Board approved moving forward with securing a trademark for the popular “Run TLH” logo used on GWTC shirts, stickers, and other items. Jerry McDaniel has consulted local attorneys and is now working with Rob McNeeley, a trademark specialist. The projected cost is \$1,500–\$2,000. The club is now confirming usage history, original design details, and trademark class (e.g., apparel, promotional items).

New Club Podcast Nearing Launch The club's new podcast, We Run This Town debuted in October. Allen Blay and Mickey Moore are co-hosting the first two episodes. The opening episode, Bring on the World, highlighted the 2026 World Athletics Cross Country Championships with guests Amanda Heidecker and Taylor Wheaton from Leon County Parks & Recreation. Episode two, Oh the Places You'll Go, featured Tallahassee's best running routes.

Improving Group Run Liability Protection The Board reviewed liability and insurance procedures for GWTC-organized group runs. While enforcing individual waivers for informal runs may be impractical, the club will explore whether its RRCA insurance covers these runs. David Yon will investigate adding a general waiver clause to the club's standard membership agreement. Allen Blay, Jennifer Hay, and Emily Webster will assist with the review.

Breakfast on the Track This summer's Breakfast on the Track generated \$3,849.78 in revenue and \$1,785.42 in net proceeds. Half of the net proceeds—\$892.71—will be donated to Maclay School, with the remaining portion going to GWTC.



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Miller Landing Madness Despite posting a loss of \$1,187.64, the Miller Landing Madness event contributed significantly to charitable causes. The race brought in \$180 in direct donations to the Chenoweth Fund and \$1,016.92 to Second Harvest. In addition, participants donated 1,517 pounds of canned goods for Second Harvest's food programs.

Summer Trail Series The four-race Summer Trail Series wrapped up with \$12,565.27 in revenue and \$2,998.35 in net proceeds. Bobby York, the series' race director, will be relocating and is seeking someone to take over both the Summer Trail Series and Swamp Forest races. Interested volunteers should reach out to Bobby.

Chip Timing GWTC's chip timing team reported another active stretch of events this season. In August, the team provided timing services for one non-club race—the Tallahassee Beer Festival Beer Mile—and three club events: Breakfast on the Track 1 Mile, Miller Landing Madness 8K/5K/3K, and the fourth race of the Summer Trail Series at Maclay Gardens. September continued the busy pace, with chip timing support for the non-club Bluebird Run for Brookie B 5K, along with three GWTC events: the Sickle Cell 5K and Tim Simpkins 1 Mile, the Women's Distance Festival 5K, and the Salute to Prefontaine 5K and 1 Mile Forest Run. Looking ahead, the October lineup includes the Boston Half Marathon and 5K among non-club events, and the Pine Run 20K and Ruck 14K at Tall Timbers for GWTC. As of the end of August, chip timing revenue for the fiscal year totals \$2,015, reflecting the steady demand and continued success of the club's timing operations.

Director of Communications Jennifer Hay is redesigning the club's website and collaborating with Matt Hohmeister to launch a club-wide text notification service using Twilio. Members will be able to opt in or out of receiving race or weather alerts.

Education and Socials Tina Bahmer announced the GWTC Holiday Party is scheduled for December 6, 2025, at Shiloh Farms. Suggestions are being collected for a live band or DJ. The recent lecture with Abigail Crowe was well received, and more speaker suggestions are welcome.

Triathlete Club The Tri-Club is searching for board candidates, a Duathlon race director, and a venue for their holiday party. They held an open water swim at Wade Wehunt Pool.

School Grants The Board approved \$300 grants for the School for Arts & Sciences and Florida High School.

Director of Race Directors Mary Jean Yon confirmed the next race directors meeting will be October 12, 2025.

FEAR NO DISTANCE

A group of runners is silhouetted against a bright, hazy sky at sunset or sunrise. They are running on a road that stretches into the distance. The overall mood is one of determination and health.

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RACE CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 2025



02 Marching Chiefs 5K, 9 a.m. Bill Harkins Field (Chiefs Field), located next to the Flying High Circus, FSU Campus. Additional information and online registration available at www.marchingchiefs5k.com. Ethan Bell at racedirector.mc5k@gmail.com; or Max Kazmierski at coracedirector.mc5k@gmail.com.

08 BFD Catfish Crawl 5K/1M, 8 a.m. (CT) 5K; 9 a.m. (CT) 1M. M & B Depot Park, 16977 NE Pear St., Blountstown, FL. Online registration available at ItsYourRace.com. Ben Hall at blountstownfire@gmail.com or (850) 674-4988.

11 Memorial to Memorial Veterans Day 5K, 8 a.m. Cascades Park, 1001 S. Gadsden St. (start at Florida Vietnam Veterans' Memorial - enter from Calhoun St.; finish on Suwannee St. near Korean War Memorial in Cascades Park). Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Bob Asztalos at Bob.Asztalos@FDVA.FL.GOV.

14 NCAA Division I South Region Cross-Country Championships, TBA. XC Course at John Hunt Park, 2151 Airport Rd., Huntsville, AL. Visit www.ncaa.com.

21 NAIA Cross Country National Championships, TBA men's 8K; TBA women's 5K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit www.naia.org.

22 FHSAA Cross-Country State Championships, TBA. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit www.fhsaa.org.

22 Fur Fest 5K, 8:15 a.m. J. Lewis Hall Park, 1492 J. Lewis Hall Sr. Ln., Woodville, FL.

Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Nancy Stedman at nancystedman@gmail.com.

22 NCAA Division I Cross-Country National Championships, TBA men 10K; TBA women 6K. Gans Creek Recreational Area, 3350 E. Gans Rd., Columbia, MO. Visit www.ncaa.com.

15 Pavement for Polio 5K, 8 a.m. Davis Park, 223 3rd St. NE, Cairo, GA. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Chip Wells at cwells@fnbdc.com or (229) 378-7648.

22 Art Fest Half Marathon/10K/5K/1M, 8:30 a.m. half marathon; 9 a.m. 10K; 9:30 a.m. 5K; 10 a.m. 1M. The Arts Center of Moultrie, 401 7th Ave. SW, Moultrie, GA. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Krysta Porteus at programs@moultriearts.org.

27 GWTC Tallahassee Turkey Trot 15K/10K/5K/1M, 8 a.m. 1M; 8:30 a.m. 15K/10K/5K. Southwood State Office Complex, 4055 Esplanade Way. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Visit <http://tallyturkeytrot.com>; or David Yon at david@radeylaw.com.

DECEMBER 2025

06 GWTC 10M/5M Challenge, 8 a.m. Hawks Rise Elementary School, 205 Meadow Ridge Rd. - use Meridian Rd. parking lot entrance. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Visit www.GulfWinds.org; or Mark Tombrink at marktombink@gmail.com.



Half Marathon Training Program

POWERED BY



12 week training program for Tallahassee Half Marathon

Training begins 11/18

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**SIGN UP
TODAY**



06 FSU College of Medicine 5K, 9 a.m. Integration Statue on Woodward Plaza, behind Oglesby Student Union, 91 N. Woodward Ave., FSU Campus. Anna Lu at awl24b@med.fsu.edu.

06 Jingle Bell Run, 6:15 p.m. Corner of S. Monroe St. and Park Ave. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Visit www.tal.gov.com; or Tallahassee Parks & Recreation at 891-3866 or 891-3860.

13 GWTC Tallahassee Ultra Distance Classic 50M/Bill Hillison 50K/Manatee Marathon, 7 a.m. 50M/50K; 7:10 a.m. marathon/marathon rucking division. Wakulla Springs State Park, 15 miles south of Tallahassee on SR 267. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Visit www.TallahasseeUltra.com; or www.GulfWinds.org; or Jack or Laura McDermott at marathonjack@comcast.net.

20 GWTC Tannenbaum 6K Cross-Country Run, 9 a.m. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Visit www.GulfWinds.org; or Herb Wills at hwills@gmail.com; or Judy Alexander at jalexander98@comcast.net.

JANUARY 2026

01 32nd Annual Wilde Mountain Scramble (approximately 5M, unless you cheat), 8:30 a.m. SHARP!!! Forestmeadows Park and Athletic Center, 4750 N. Meridian Rd. Don't forget state park pass or entry fee. Race entry fee: \$2 or \$2 of scratch-off lottery tickets, and a gift you don't mind pawning off on a fellow runner. As always, whining, fussing or even the slightest grumble gets you disqualified. Pre-race contact forbidden.

03 GWTC Swamp Forest Trail Run (Quarter Marathon/Half Marathon/20.4M), 8 a.m. 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. Bobby York at byorkjr@msn.com.

10 World Athletics Cross Country Championships, 9:45 a.m. Mixed Relay; 10:20 a.m. U20 women's 6K; 10:55 a.m. U20 Men's 8K; 11:35 Senior Women's 10K; 12:20 p.m. Senior Men's 10K; 2 p.m. Community Races: Kids (12 & under) 2K; Open 2K; High School (ages 13-18) 4K; Open 4K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit WXCTallahassee26.com.

11 USATF Club Cross-Country National Championships, 8:15 a.m. masters women 6K; 9:15 a.m. masters men (60+) 6K; 10:15 a.m. masters men (40-59) 8K; 11:15 a.m. open women 6K; 12 p.m. open men 10K. XC Course at Apalachee Regional Park, 7550 Apalachee Pkwy. Visit www.usatf.org/events.

17 GWTC 30K/15K, 8 a.m. The Retreat at Bradley's Pond, 9002 Bradley Rd. (across from Bradley's Country Store on Old Centerville Rd.). Online registration available at RunSignUp.com. Visit www.GulfWinds.org; or Zach DeVeau at zach.deveau@gmail.com.

17 Arbor Day 5K Trail Race and Native Tree Giveaway, 9 a.m. Bear Creek Educational Forest, 8125 Pat Thomas Pkwy., Quincy, FL. Online registration available at Eventbrite.com. Genevieve Printiss at (850) 597-6501.

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SPORTS



5 & 10 MILE CHALLENGE

Saturday, December 6, 2025

Get those miles in before the year wraps up.
Join us for a race that's fast, friendly, and a little bit fierce.

Race Options:

5 Mile or 10 Mile – both start at 8:00 a.m.

Location:

Hawks Rise Elementary, 205 Meadow Ridge Dr. 32312

Registration:

\$30 without shirt | \$40 with shirt
(Register by November 29 to guarantee your shirt
and early registration price)

Packet Pickup:

Thursday, December 4, 5–7 p.m.
at Momo's Pizza (1641 W. Pensacola St.)
Race morning beginning at 7:00 a.m.

Awards:

Top 3 Overall Male & Female in both distances
Male and Female Master

Push your pace. Test your limits.



**Take the Challenge: [RunSignUp.com/
GWTCTenMileChallenge](https://RunSignUp.com/GWTCTenMileChallenge)**

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48 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE - LOCAL SINCE FOREVER



PRESIDENTS COLUMN

By: Allen Blay, GWTC Vice President

If you're a runner, you probably have mixed feelings about the track. It's where we go to chase speed, suffer through intervals, and push ourselves to the edge. But it's also where we find rhythm, precision, and the kind of progress that can only come from deliberate, focused work. The track humbles us and rewards us - often in the same workout. The opportunity to run on a track is important. I can remember when my kids were younger driving to a high school track down the block from my mother-in-law's house so that they could do their workout over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Unfortunately, in recent years, finding a track that's open to the public has become a bit of a workout in itself.

Since the COVID pandemic, many local high school and university tracks that were once community staples quietly closed their gates, and a lot of them have stayed that way. During the height of the pandemic, schools limited access because of public mandates. But years later, those gates remain locked, and the reasons are less clear.

That's why it's great news that Leon County Schools recently reopened the tracks at Leon High School and Chiles High School. They're now open at various times when school isn't in session, giving runners, walkers, and families a chance to enjoy these excellent community resources again. It's a big step in the right direction, and I'm grateful to the district and the wonderful principals of those schools for making it happen. I'm also thankful to Marc Anthony Weeks for all his efforts to push this message to school boards and others who made this decision. As I told Marc, now I can torture myself at my own will.

Unfortunately, our two local universities - Florida State and Florida A&M - have not followed suit. Their tracks remain closed to the public, even though both used to be popular spots for runners of all ages and speeds. For many of us, the FSU track was a second home on Tuesday nights with Gary Droze and Bill Lott. It was part of the rhythm of Tallahassee running life. It was also a safe space for students who didn't want to venture off campus for their runs.

So why keep them closed?

There are a few possible reasons, and they're not without merit. Universities worry about liability if someone gets injured. They want to protect their facilities from wear and tear. And sometimes, security or logistical concerns - like unauthorized group use or conflicts with student-athlete training - make open access seem complicated. In short, it's easier

PRESIDENTS COLUMN CONT.

to keep the gates locked than to manage access responsibly, and the universities argue that there is no requirement to open them.

But here's the thing: community access to tracks is good for everyone, including the schools.

Open tracks promote public health. They encourage exercise, connection, and a sense of community. They provide safety for students who want to get their exercise outside. I know several of the young women on FSU's Club XC team and even they aren't allowed to use the track! They express concerns about safety running around and off campus. I've always thought the claim of "they can just use the gym treadmills" is ridiculous. Frankly, that's even worse than the torture of the track. Tracks also serve as visible reminders that running is one of the most democratic sports - anyone with a pair of shoes and some determination can take part.

Reopening also strengthens relationships between schools and the broader community. These are our public institutions, supported by our tax dollars, and when they share their facilities, it sends a powerful message: we're in this together. It shows that fitness, wellness, and community engagement are values that matter.

And there's a practical side too. Public access brings positive visibility. When local runners and families use a university track respectfully, it builds goodwill and pride in the institution. It's also inspiring for young athletes to see college runners training - it connects the dreams of middle school track kids to the possibilities ahead. Further, I can't actually recall a single instance where someone damaged the track, either intentionally or unintentionally.

That's why Marc has moved on from his quest to reopen the high school tracks and has started a new petition to ask FSU and FAMU to reopen their tracks to the public during designated hours, much like Leon County's model. We're not asking for full access 24/7, just reasonable, managed availability that benefits the entire community.

The running community in Tallahassee has always been strong, inclusive, and supportive. We share trails, cheer each other on, and volunteer for races that make this one of the best running towns in the country. Having access to a safe, high-quality track should be part of that story too.

So, if you haven't already, consider signing and sharing the petition. Here's a link to it: <https://www.change.org/p/reopen-fsu-and-famu-track>

Note that this is not coming from GWTC - this is entirely coming from me and does not represent anyone else on the board or the club. I just feel strongly about the need for an open track on college campuses. Let's show our local universities that there's a real and respectful demand for access - and that we're willing to be good stewards of these shared spaces.

PRESIDENTS COLUMN CONT.

The track will always be a place of sweat, struggle, and speed. We'll always have that love-hate relationship with 400 meters of honesty. But we'd love the chance to experience it again - together, in the heart of our running community.

See you out on the trails (and maybe the tracks!)



Tallahassee, FL
Gulf Winds Track Club
GRAND PRIX

2025 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Members aged 15 and older must perform volunteer service for at least one GWTC race.

Document your volunteer service here
<https://tinyurl.com/GWTCVolunteer>



HOLIDAY PARTY
DECEMBER 6
6-10PM



MAINSTREAM

We're celebrating! Join fellow runners and their families at Shiloh Farm, 1500 Benjamin Chaires Rd., for food, activities, and live music from the Mainstream Band. **All ages are welcome.**

Need to volunteer to get your Grand Prix award? contact Tina Bahmer, 307-286-3725.

FEATURED FEET

HILMAR SKAGFIELD



Childhood ambition: One more cookie.

Current Occupation: Director of Sales and Marketing at Skandia Window Fashions

If money were no object, what profession would you choose:
Writer/Director

Favorite running memory: Realizing I needed to be at conversational pace for Zone 2 training. Life felt like it went from black and white to living color. Been running ever since.

Indulgence: Too many to name.

Non-Running hobbies: The News, theatre, and restaurants

Favorite Reads: The Devil in the Kitchen, Mastery, The Infinite Game, Zero to One, Creativity Inc., The Dilettante, Post Office

Best place to run in Tallahassee: The Greenway, hands down.

Preferred Running Technology: Garmin Forerunner 955

Perfect day: Waking Up. After that it gets pretty easy after an espresso.

Biggest challenge: See answer to Indulgence. 🍪



GWTC member Kevin Langston, who lives in Jacksonville, ran a mile in each of Florida's 67 counties to celebrate his 67th birthday. He shared stories from his journey and his book *Run 67@67* with club members during an Education and Socials session organized by volunteer Judy Alexander.

GULF
WINDS

TRACK
CLUB 20
25



2025 Tallahassee Turkey Trot

Thursday, November 27, 2025

The Tallahassee Turkey Trot is a Thanksgiving tradition for thousands of runners and walkers each year.

DISTANCES

1 Mile Fun Run
5K
10K
15K

START TIME

8:00 a.m.
8:30 a.m.
8:30 a.m.
8:30 a.m.



Sign up or learn more at
www.TallyTurkeyTrot.com

The races begin on Esplanade Way between Merchants Row and Shumard Oaks Blvd. All races except the 1-mile share the same start and finish line.

- 5K splits from the 10K and 15K on Grove Park Drive just past the water tables and the 2-mile mark.
- 10K splits at School House Road at Terrebonne Drive, turning left on Terrebonne.
- 15K continues straight on School House Road until it becomes Biltmore Avenue.

All races are chip-timed, so you don't have to worry about when you cross the start line.

Packet Pickup & Registration

PLEASE plan to pick-up your bibs and shirts before race day.

Sunday, Nov. 23 – Turkey Trot Festival at Goodwood Museum & Gardens (1600 Miccosukee Road) from 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Mon-Tue, Nov. 24-25 – Premier Health and Fitness Center, 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Wed, Nov. 26 – Premier Health and Fitness Center, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Race Morning – Limited registration and pickup near the flagpole.

Registration

To get the best pricing and guarantee your shirt size, register on or before Sunday, November 16.

The Legend Lives On

SALUTE TO STEVE PREFONTAINE 5K AND MILE



Some races are about speed. Others are about fun. The Salute to Prefontaine run somehow manages to be both. Hosted at Wallwood Scout Reservation in Quincy, the course winds through the woods, where the trails twist and the hills test your legs.

Race Director Allen Blay knows that better than anyone. "It's not your standard 5K," he said. "We're not closing streets or hiring off-duty police. We're out in the middle of the woods marking turns with 68 directional signs and more than 200 pink flags. It takes three of us over half a day — and a golf cart — to get it ready."

But what really brings this race to life isn't the course, it's the people who show up for it.

This year, like most, the Prefontaine Look-Alike Contest stole the show. "That's always my favorite part," Allen said. "This year, women's race winner Cathy Bond brought her daughters and a niece to run the mile race, and they showed up with their best Prefontaine mustaches. One of them ran so hard she sweated hers right off. I couldn't help but give two awards for that one."



But not everything went as planned. The race had been canceled last year because of a hurricane, and when Allen opened the box of leftover awards the night before the race, he realized there weren't nearly enough medals. "Bigtime pivot," he laughed. "So I thought about what Steve Prefontaine would do and I decided he'd give runners something they actually need."

That's how Nerd Clusters became the official age group prize of 2025. "If Steve were alive today, I'm convinced he'd fuel on Nerd Clusters," Allen said.

"When I handed them out, everyone cracked up. It just felt right."

Of course, every good race has a few curveballs. This year, Wallwood had a brand-new ranger and program director, and the scout troop that usually volunteers had a big Eagle Scout project that same day. "Luckily, we had an amazing crew who stepped in," Allen said. "Greg Greer and Justin Feld from Wallwood were incredible, and Mr. Dan, one of the longtime volunteers, helped with parking and safety. I also had huge help from Lisa Unger, Geb Kiros, my wife Kristin, and our friend Matt Minno. The race wouldn't have happened without them."

For those who ran, you might have spotted Allen perched on the infamous hill near the end, camera in hand, catching shots of every runner as they powered up the steep final stretch. "That hill is ridiculous and hardly runnable," he said. But it's part of what makes this race so fun. It's tough, unpredictable, and a little bit wild, just the way Steve would've liked it.



Gulf Winds Track Club We Run This Town

EPISODE ONE Inside the 2026 World Cross Country Championships

Host: Mickey Moore

Featuring: Amanda Heidecker, Director of Parks and Recreation for Leon County and Taylor Wheaton, Senior Sports Director for Visit Tallahassee



Tallahassee Welcomes the World

When the starting gun fires on January 10, 2026, thousands of spectators will line the rolling hills of Apalachee Regional Park to witness something that's never happened in Florida before—the World Athletics Cross Country Championships. It's the 46th edition of the event, but only the second time it's ever been held in the United States—and the first time ever in Tallahassee.

That's right. The world is coming to our backyard.

How it started

The idea for hosting an event like this started more than 15 years ago, when Leon County and local running groups set out to build a true cross-country facility. Amanda Heidecker, Director of Parks and Recreation and a former Division I runner at FSU, remembers it well.

"Our goal from the start was to host every championship level possible," she said. "We've done NCAA, USATF, NJCAA—all of them. This is the final step."

With support from Visit Tallahassee, Florida State University, and Gulf Winds Track Club, the community built something special. In 2022, after a long bid process and plenty of competition from around the world, Tallahassee officially won the chance to host the 2026 World Championships. When the World Athletics team visited Apalachee Regional Park for the first time, they were blown away. "They said, 'Why haven't we been here before?'" recalled Taylor Wheaton, Senior Sports Director for Visit Tallahassee.

The course

Apalachee Regional Park already has a reputation as one of the best cross-country venues in the country—but for this event, it's getting a full Florida makeover.

Runners will start with the State Capitol behind them, then wind through a course that celebrates the state from start to finish. Think of it like a tour of Florida on foot: roller-coaster hills for Orlando, white-sand beaches with lifeguard chairs and surfboards, a stretch called "Alligator Alley," and a muddy swamp section that's sure to test everyone's balance.

Podcast



“We wanted the course to feel like a living reel of Florida,” said Heidecker. “It’s going to be fun, fast, and unforgettable.”

Even the pedestrian bridge—now a permanent feature over the course—was built with the event in mind.

Spectators will be able to look straight down as runners fly beneath them.

More than a one-day race

Hosting an event like this isn’t just about the race itself. It’s about what it leaves behind. The championships are expected to bring in over \$4.3 million in local impact, but the real win is the long-term benefit.

A portion of ticket and registration sales will go toward Leon County Schools’ track and cross-country programs. “We want this to be more than a one-time event,” said Wheaton. “We want to inspire the next generation of runners right here at home.”

And the excitement is already spreading—more than 500 volunteers have signed up, and that number’s still growing. “The response has been incredible,” Wheaton said. “People want to be part of this.”

Everyone gets to join in

You don’t have to be an elite runner to be part of it. After the championship races wrap up, locals will get their turn. There’ll be four community races—a youth 2K (free for Leon County students), a community 2K and 4K, and a high school 4K. Each participant gets a replica medal and the bragging rights of running the same course as world champions.

Tickets to watch the main event are \$10, and kids 12 and under get in free. Expect about 10,000 people out there that day—cheering, running, and celebrating something that started as a local dream.

A team effort

For Heidecker and Wheaton, co-chairing the event is more than a job. It’s a full-circle moment. Both are former athletes, both love this community, and both understand what it took to get here. “We built a facility for runners,” Heidecker said. “That’s not something you see everywhere. And now, we get to show the world what it means to run in Tallahassee.”

To learn more, register for community events, or grab your ticket to the big day, visit wordathletics.org

Listen to this full episode and future stories from our running community on the We Run This Town podcast—available on the [Gulf Winds website](http://GulfWinds.com), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...) and wherever you listen to podcasts.

Gulf Winds Track Club We Run This Town

EPISODE TWO

Oh, The Places (and Trails) You'll Go!

Host: Mickey Moore

Featuring: Tom Parker, an ultra-runner and healthcare advocate and Doug Bell, a lawyer-lobbyist turned mountain biker and president of the Tallahassee Mountain Bike Association



Meet the guys

In this episode of We Run This Town, host Mickey Moore talks trails with two locals who spend a lot of time on dirt. Tom Parker is an ultrarunner who first ducked into the woods near Tom Brown Park on a hot lunch break and never really went back to the roads. Doug Bell is a former serious runner turned mountain biker who now leads the Tallahassee Mountain Bike Association. Different sports, same obsession: finding good miles in and around Tallahassee.

How they ended up on dirt

For Tom, trails started as shade and turned into sanity—fewer trucks, more birds, softer ground when the long runs got longer. His routine shifts with the season: Miccosukee Greenway when it's hot (water stops, straight path, hard to get lost); Fipps/Forest when it cools off and the bugs die down (Swamp Forest, Oak Hammock, Bottom—quiet, singletrack, lots of wildlife).

Doug's back didn't love pounding, so the bike took over. Picking one favorite is tough because time, weather, and mood matter, but he'll grab Red Bug behind Forest Meadows for a quick, technical lap—roots, tight lines, a few built features. After rain, he heads south to Munson and Twilight. Munson's clay cap runs smooth and fast; Twilight's natural sand winds through open longleaf and feels great at sunrise.

Places you don't want to miss

Around Lafayette Heritage and Piney Z, East Cadillac is fast and fun. The trail is narrow in spots, so respect the edges. The multi-use path and boardwalks give beginners room. Orchard Pond is an old road turned remote out-and-back on hardpacked clay with some honest rolling hills. Bradley's/Old Centerville Road is classic North Florida—

Podcast



red clay, big oaks, Spanish moss, and, yes, deer flies in summer. It's also home to Gulf Winds' winter races, where "peanut-butter mud" has ruined many clean shoes.

If you're new (or want a challenge)

Runners just starting out do well on the Greenway and the wider paths at Lafayette Heritage—open sightlines and gentle rollers. When you're ready for more, try Swamp Forest and the nearby singletrack out at Fipps. On the bike, learn the basics on doubletrack first—braking, cornering, shifting—then move to flowy singletrack like Munson before you tackle Red Bug's roots. You can make any trail hard by going fast, but Red Bug is the most technical of the bunch.

Trail etiquette

Keep it easy and obvious. Riders: wear a helmet, use a bell or call out early, slow for blind corners, and don't buzz runners. Runners: if a group of bikes is coming fast, step aside for a second and let them roll through. Everyone: don't hike four-wide on singletrack, and try not to wear both earbuds at full blast—hearing each other prevents collisions. If you see horses, make eye contact with the rider, follow their lead, and give plenty of space.

Who keeps the trails rideable and runnable

There's a lot of behind-the-scenes work. The Tallahassee Mountain Bike Association partners with land managers (city, county, state, federal) to trim corridors, clear drains, and add features that prevent washouts. It's not flashy, but it's the reason your favorite loop is still there after a storm.

Why keep going back

Mornings are hard to beat. Headlamps for the first mile, birds waking up, a deer crossing the ridge, that first light sliding through the trees. You might run for ninety minutes and see two people. Post-run or ride, it's nothing fancy: Tom wants coffee and a burger after big efforts; Doug's happy with avocado toast, a protein shake, and more coffee. During long days, they're both practical—Pop-Tarts and Little Debbie oatmeal pies work just fine.

Listen to this full episode and future stories from our running community on the [We Run This Town](#) podcast—available on the [Gulf Winds website](#), [YouTube](#) and wherever you listen to podcasts.



Tallahassee Ultra, Bill Hillison 50K & Manatee Marathon

WHEN Saturday, December 13, 2025

START TIMES

Bill Hillison 50 Miler – 7:00 a.m.

Bill Hillison 50K – 7:00 a.m.

Manatee Marathon – 7:10 a.m.

Manatee Marathon Rucker Division – 7:10 a.m.

WHERE Wakulla Springs State Park, 550 Wakulla Park Dr., Crawfordville

RACE DETAILS

USATF-certified marathon that's Boston-qualifying

Flat, fast, paved 10K loop course

Great volunteer support, plenty of on-course aid, and runner-friendly weather

Open to runners 16+

Awards to top overall male and female, top masters, and top grandmasters in each race

Proceeds support local running activities & Friends of Wakulla Springs

**Finish up, then soak your legs in the spring
and look for manatees.**



**Registration fees increase after October 31.
Save your spot early at runsignup.com**

FEATURED FEET

CATHY BOND



Childhood ambition: I have always wanted to be a Nurse. I thought I would be a Labor & Delivery nurse but ended up doing Intermediate Care and ultimately Hospice nursing.

Current Occupation: CEO of a large corporation made up of occasionally irrational and often times demanding subordinates. My daily tasks include: crowd management, nutrition and culinary consultation, deescalation counseling, transportation logistics, communication specialties, in-house medical expert and professional booboo kisser. I receive no pay but the benefits are amazing and they last a lifetime and beyond. So, basically I'm a stay at home mom to 10 AMAZING CHILDREN. Their ages range from 6 year old twins to 28 years old. I can honestly say there is never a dull moment in our home!

If money were no object, what profession would you choose: I truly believe I am right where I'm supposed to be. Even on the most difficult days, I wouldn't trade it for anything except maybe being a surf instructor in Hawaii...which becomes a little complicated because I don't know how to surf.

Favorite running memory: Running took on a deeper meaning for me when I lost my brother Shawn in 2021. He was a gifted Collegiate All American and national champ runner at Tulane University and then Adams State College. I've had a lot of consolation and truly felt his presence while running ever since. Also, EVERY race I get to run with my kids is another beautiful memory made. My 5 youngest girls have been running races with me quite a bit lately and it makes my heart soar.

Indulgence: I enjoy a glass of Prosecco and any chocolate that I have hidden away.

Non-Running hobbies: I enjoy attending my kids sporting events, swimming poolside or playing at Cape San Blas Beach. I also like spending time at our Pecan Farm in Cairo, GA.

Favorite Reads: I don't have tons of time to read these days, but two books that have had a powerful impact on my life are: The 5 Love

Languages by: Dr. Gary Chapman, and Be Healed by: Dr Bob Schutchts. Both books have been instrumental in helping me to understand and love myself and the amazing people that God has placed in my life with greater authenticity.

Best place to run in Tallahassee: I love running in Killearn Lakes but Tall Timbers might be my new favorite.

Preferred Running Technology: It's not running tech but more of a great piece of gear that I really like...It is called a Wet-sleeve hydration system... sleeve worn on the forearm— holds water, hands-free and NO sloshing.

Perfect day: A perfect day would start with an early morning run and coming back to enjoy a cup of coffee with my husband on the front porch. I would love to waste time together with the family playing in the pool or in the yard...(no fighting amongst the kids because it's my perfect day). Maybe ending the day with a movie and pizza or a date night.

Biggest challenge: My biggest challenge is remembering that, although the days are long, life really does go by so fast. There are so many sweet moments that slip through my fingertips. I have to remind myself to hold onto these sacred times even when I feel pulled in every direction. Living life is a lot like running a race...there are times when you feel great and you feel like you could go on forever...and there are also times when you feel like you can't take one more step. When you push through those moments of difficulty, that's when we are truly strengthened because giving up is never an option. In the end, if you persevere and you push through adversity, that feeling of crossing through the finish line is so sweet! I feel blessed that my family gets to be a part of the Gulf Winds Track community. With each long run or race that we compete in, we are learning perseverance and resilience. My hope and prayer is that we can run the race of life strong and finish well. 🏃‍♀️

GWTC Half Marathon Training Group

November 15, 2025 - January 31, 2026

Saturdays at 7:15am

Cascades Park, by The Edison

Ready to Run Your First Half Marathon?

Whether you're a beginner or getting back into running, join our supportive training group and prepare for the Tallahassee Half Marathon on February 8, 2026!

GWTC running groups are free for club members.

We plan to offer three pace groups:
9–10 min/mile, 11–12 min/mile, run/walk intervals.

Training kicks off with a 3 mile run and increases weekly.
Routes to be posted on GWTC Group Runs Facebook page and in the RunGo app.

For additional information or to volunteer contact:

Monica Judd at monicamjackson@gmail.com

Geoffrey Adams at gadams52@gmail.com

Visit www.gulfwinds.org to complete the "GWTC Training Groups Waiver" under the Training section. Consider joining the club or renewing membership while visiting the site!

Visit www.TallahasseeMarathon.com to sign up for the race!

