



# The StrideRight

Club #229 Vol. 45 No 10 Jul – Aug 2024

[www.floridastriders.com](http://www.floridastriders.com)

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 Co Vice President: Kelly Lomax and  
 Josué Velázquez  
 Secretary: Kim Rife  
 Treasurer: Adam Cross

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 Nina Kammatt  
 Savannah Landis  
 Bryan Boyer  
 Ellen Boyer  
 Mike Tibble

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 Track Coordinator: Mike Tibble  
 Membership: Eugene Biala  
 Social: TBD  
 Scholarship: Kim Lundy  
 Race Volunteer: TBD  
 Registration: Kathy Murray  
 Equipment: Mike Tibble  
 Race Advisor: Bill Krause  
 StrideRight Editor: Michelle Colina  
 StrideRight Proofreader: TBD

## President's Corner

By Joni Neidigh



"Begin with the end in mind" – Stephen Covey

Hello Strider Family!

As I return from working with athletes at the U.S. Olympic Swim Trials, I reflect on

the journey that these athletes have had from the time they set their goals to qualify for the meet, make the team, or both. Developing clear goals was something they all had in common and ultimately landed all of them at a competition that represents the top 1/2 percent of all U.S. swimmers.

Understanding the importance of goal setting is at the forefront of your new Board of Directors. With only a little over 2 months in together, we have been making changes to better support our club mission and goals. While our stated mission is to educate our community about the benefits of running and walking, and to provide opportunities to support those benefits, one of our most important goals is to provide ongoing support to our Children's Running Program. Starting this fall, I will be highlighting our Children's Running Program, and showing all of our members a closer glimpse into exactly what goes on within this wonderful program. Learning more about our program made wanting to become your president a clear goal for me. Communicating with our wonderful director, Carol McDougall, teachers, parents, and students helped me to deeply understand my "big why" for wanting to get more involved in our club.

How many of you have set goals for not only your personal running, but for your involvement in the club?

Often we do things without any clear intention. When working with athletes, I've found what a myriad of research has supported to be true. It matters to achieve goals! Working towards meaningful goals provides us with a sense of direction, purpose, and meaning in life. The more goals we set within healthy boundaries the more likely we are to build self-confidence, autonomy, and happiness. When we align our goals as a club, we are able to not only empower ourselves individually but result in more engagement with each other, more motivation, and collective contribution to our club's success.

I am grateful for a Board of Directors and our hundreds of members who want to move forward to make our club the very best it can be to support our mission. I'll leave you with these thought-provoking questions: What are your individual running or walking goals? What are your goals within the Florida Striders? How can we help you achieve those goals?

With Gratitude,  
Joni



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I am from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. I started running at the age of 14 with my uncle as a way to get general fitness. Shortly after, I enjoyed racing in local 5ks and 10ks. I went to the University of Puerto Rico and studied Mechanical Engineering. In college, I was on the cross country team where I met my wife Belissa.

After graduating in 2014, Belissa and I moved to Jacksonville. I started running again motivated by coworkers to run the 2014 Freedom 5K (Marines Corps half-marathon). At the event, I quickly noticed the amazing Jacksonville running community and first joined the JTC running club interval track workouts. A year later we moved to Orange Park and Paul Smith told us about the Florida Striders track workouts. We joined the Florida Striders on January 2016 and at our first track workout, we met Dave Allen who was very welcoming and encouraged us to jump right into the workout with the group.

Upon getting to know Jacksonville race runners and club members, I discovered that for many, their main running motivation was racing marathons. This inspired me to sign up for my first marathon, the 2016 Donna Marathon. Soon after, I started looking for another marathon and ended up signing up to run the Chicago Marathon which Dave also participated in that year. At the Chicago Marathon Expo, I learned about the Six Stars Marathon Majors and completing the Six Marathon Majors became my running goal. This year, after almost 8 years, I was able to finally complete all Six Marathon Majors at the London Marathon.

In addition to running marathons, in 2017, my former work supervisor motivated me to do my first triathlon. Upon completing my first triathlon I ended up liking and enjoying triathlon races and in 2020, I completed an full Ironman (140.6) at Ironman Florida in 2020.

Since that time I have become more involved in the Florida Striders Track Club serving on the Board of Directors and this year taking on the role of vice president.



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After finishing the Six Star Marathon Majors at the London Marathon 2024



My first Cross Country Season in College (2009). Fun fact everyone in this photo reunited 10 years later at the 2019 Last Gasp Cross Country race at Jacksonville University.



Left photo: Moments before 2010 Cross Country meet with Belissa.

Right photo: Ironman Florida 2020





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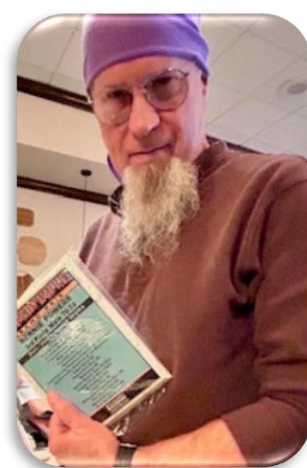
## Florida Striders Running Team Members Win Awards in the Jacksonville Grand Prix

By Shelly Allen

The Jacksonville Grand Prix is an annual series of Jacksonville's best road races, with accumulating scores in each age group for participants' finishing places through 10<sup>th</sup> place. The best eight scores are counted for the final score in either the fall or spring season of the series. Local runners have known for years that this is a challenging competition, and it's an honor to win an award! Our Florida Striders Running Team had several members win awards in their age groups! Congratulations Team!

The following members of the team placed in their age groups:

- Eve Schlotthauer 1<sup>st</sup> Place
- Emma Schlotthauer 2<sup>nd</sup> Place
- Joni Neidigh 3<sup>rd</sup> Place
- Stephen Beard 3<sup>rd</sup> Place
- Bernie Powers 3<sup>rd</sup> Place
- Leslie Hart 4<sup>th</sup> Place
- Randy Arend 4<sup>th</sup> Place
- Jennifer Szala 5<sup>th</sup> Place
- Jean Schubert 10<sup>th</sup> Place





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## 2024 FSTC College Scholarships

By Kimberly Lundy

We received many applications and the competition was tough as the students had outstanding academic and athletic accomplishments! The applications were evaluated based on their academic and athletic accomplishments, leadership, community and volunteer experiences, letters of recommendations, and their personal essay about "What Running Means to Me."

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[Florida Striders Track Club's College Scholarship Recipients for 2024](#)

Richard Circelli	Ponte Vedra High School
Isabella Hutchins	Bishop Kenny High School
Davis Johnson	Bishop Kenny High School
John Keester IV	Fleming Island High School
Allison Knotts	Fleming Island High School
Graham Myers	Fleming Island High School





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## What Running Means to Me

By Richard Circelli

Ponte Vedra High School



We have all felt it. That moment of inspiration when we see athletes set a record, a luxury car drive by, or any other symbol of success that sparks a fire within us to achieve our goals. But as we embark on our journey, we inevitably encounter obstacles. In these moments of struggle, I look down at my bracelet - inscribed with the message "1%."

My bracelet represents two core principles that have guided me in my running and in life. Firstly, it represents the aspiration to become part of the top 1%, to strive for greatness in everything I do. But more importantly, it symbolizes the idea of getting 1% better every day. It is a reminder that monumental achievements are the result of consistent, incremental progress, not overnight success.

My journey to becoming a Division I athlete epitomizes this philosophy of continuous growth. There were times when the dream of competing in college track seemed impossible. However, instead of succumbing to these doubts, I embraced the wisdom of my bracelet. I kept pushing and trusted the process. I learned that at times the future will be uncertain, but you have to just focus on doing your part and growing 1% each day. This approach has paid off, as I am now thrilled to say that I will be competing for the track and field team at the University of South Carolina.

What running has taught me, more than anything, is that the journey is as important as the destination. The process of striving for a goal, with all its challenges and moments of glory, is what truly shapes our character and makes our life meaningful. On my path to becoming a collegiate athlete, it is not the moments when I cross the finish line in first that I treasure most but the moments of pain and doubt when I think things are not going to work out and I look down to my bracelet and keep pushing. Don't get me wrong, I do love the feeling of winning though.

As I look to the future, I am excited to apply this philosophy of continuous growth to my next set of goals. I have many goals, but one that is particularly close to my heart is to surpass my father's 800m PR that he set at Florida State University (I have to show who the best runner in the family is of course!). Furthermore, my ambition to become a Chief Financial Officer is yet another milestone I intend to reach, one small step at a time.



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## What Does Running Mean to Me?

By Davis Johnson

Bishop Kenny High School



Understanding and embracing what it meant to be on my high school's cross country team helped me to find great joy and form meaningful and undoubtedly lifelong relationships. It also taught me about dedication, aided my development as a leader, and bolstered my confidence. I attended summer practices before my freshman year with the plan of having cross country as a fallback sport, but in just a few weeks, the amount of love that I grew for the girls on the team and the sport made leaving unthinkable. I was enthusiastically pulled into such an extremely positive team dynamic unlike any I had experienced. From the first day, the seniors were a radiant presence. Their joy and the life evident in their friendships created an atmosphere for me to cultivate passion for running and to branch out to make my first high school friends, friends that even as many have graduated, continue to support me. My conscious decision to be all in for this team was one of the best choices I have ever made.

Choosing to continuously put myself out there and dare to keep up with the faster runners helped me not only to become more dedicated, but also made me enjoy being dedicated because of how rewarding it was to test my limits and improve. Looking back, it's more like a montage of happy moments set to our all-too-familiar running playlist. While I emerged as the top runner, I more importantly became an encouraging leader. I truly enjoyed being the motivator during tough workouts, the overly energetic cheerleader at races, and the strong leader for the younger runners. I now felt what I had seen in the seniors, which is a mix of experiencing the fruits of my labors, having a community of like-minded and kind people, and loving something as dual natured, exhilarating and exhausting, as running. Junior year culminated in my first of two times receiving the Joan Benoit Award, our highest team honor chosen by the team for the person who best exemplifies team values and leadership. The award serves to remind me of how running could never just be an extracurricular; rather, my team is a family.

My time on this team was meaningful to me in that the days, weeks, months, and years of long runs in the sun, singing and jumping through puddles, 5am practices, and moving my legs like there was no tomorrow shaped who I am today. I did not decide to continue running collegiately just because I grew faster, but because of the genuine happiness I found in the sport and those who do it. I became the person that acted as a profoundly reassuring force to freshman me and whose spark kindled my own personal growth. Experiencing this supportive family that instilled in me a desire to work and be bold is something that I am beyond thankful for and will carry with me as a defining part of my identity.



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## How Running Has Influenced My Life

By Graham Myers

Fleming Island High School



One of my earliest memories of running was riding in a stroller that my dad pushed during his morning runs. My brother would ride along on the bike, and our dog would follow behind us. One of the things that I loved the most that came from running was spending time running with my dad who is my biggest supporter and my coach at home. Running is my path to college, my time to socialize, my time to bond with my dad, and my time when I can forget every stress and work on turning my body into a competitive running machine. Riding in the stroller while my dad ran turned into biking next to him, and it eventually turned into me running next to him. Yes, for awhile he had to slow down for me, but eventually I was the one slowing down for him. Each year he ran many road races and put us in a few as well. The Resolution Run was something that we ran every year, and my blossoming competitive nature, which has led to much of my success, had me pushing myself as a little boy to beat my older brother. When I grew old enough to run cross country and track, I really started to enjoy competing, and I knew it was something that I could be good at. In my junior year I transferred to Fleming Island where I became the top runner and had tremendous success. By the end of that year, I had committed to run for the University of Florida after high school.

The most influential thing that came out of my transfer was that I had found a team of my own. Through running I made bonds that will last a lifetime. Going to races with my teammates at Fleming Island was like going to war with my brothers. Seeing my teammates perform well was a win for all of us and seeing them perform poorly was a pain that we all felt. The literal blood, sweat, and tears that I've poured into this sport is something that I will never regret, and it has made me who I am today. I've learned to push through adversity, to have a good work ethic, and to be a leader for those who look up to me. As I continue to this next stage of my life where running will become even more important, I reflect on how I started in the sport, and I plan on continuing to run after college. The running community is one of the greatest communities to be a part of, and I want to do the same things for my children one day as my dad did for me. I want to take them on runs with me in the stroller or on the bike, and eventually I hope that they will follow in my footsteps as a runner themselves. This sport has taught me many lessons and has given me so many opportunities. I feel blessed that I have been given the ability to compete in this sport, and I'm grateful that my dad raised me surrounded by the running community.





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## What Running Means to Me

By Isabella Hutchins

Bishop Kenny High School



Reflecting on my journey as a cross country and distance track runner, I see how the blend of camaraderie, triumphs, and struggles have painted a beautiful picture of love, teamwork, commitment, and adventure. Throughout each year of my running journey, significant obstacles have hindered my progress to earning personal records or competing at meets. Despite these challenges, I have always felt loved and supported by my teammates, coaches, and the running community as a whole.

Cross country is not an easy sport; it demands 12+ hours of training each week and a great deal of mental and physical fortitude. Waking up for 5 am practices, pushing through fatigue, and fighting negative thoughts are all a part of the journey. Alongside physical setbacks like injuries, I've had to constantly battle mental hurdles with one of my most challenging moments being the loss of my opportunity to compete at states my senior year. I still vividly remember the disappointment of watching the clock as I finished my last race...20:20, 20:21, 20:22...and crossing the finish line 28 seconds from my personal record and in 10th place on the team.

Although I've struggled, I'll forever cherish the moments of triumph and joy which stand out from the rest. From finishing my first race as a freshman to achieving goals like sub-20 in the 5K, sub-5:30 in the 1600m, and earning a 6-second PR in the 800m, each achievement stands as a testament to the perseverance and dedication I've developed. The feelings of elation during moments like sprinting down the Hart Bridge at the Gate River Run alongside teammates, conquering Art Loeb—the hardest trail at Brevard Distance Runners Camp—, and completing hard workouts faster than pace will forever be imprinted in my memory.

Among these treasured moments, one stands apart from the rest: our victory at the 2023 cross country state championships. Becoming 2A State Champions for the first time since 2008 was proof of our team's connection and dedication represented by the "red line." Like the needle of a car's tachometer edging into the danger zone, the red line means that everyone presses their limits to move the team forward. It is the hallmark of the collaboration that made us a successful team accomplishing incredible feats like EVERY varsity runner placing in the school's all-time top 50.

In the face of adversity, the love I received from my team led me through the tough times and helped me come back stronger than ever. These girls are part of my fondest memories— traveling to North Carolina, Tallahassee, and New York City with the varsity team, pasta dinners, group long runs, and volunteering together. They are also a part of my most difficult ones—moving out of my childhood home and my father's hospitalization and passing. Because of them, I've learned to support others, challenge myself, take risks, and appreciate the little moments. I know that I can conquer anything with the integrity, love, teamwork, and drive running instilled in me.



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**A message from our Volunteer Coordinator**

**By Savannah Landis**



Hello Florida Striders! My name is Savannah Landis, and I am your volunteer coordinator!

A little bit about me... I was a competitive swimmer for 13 years and retired in college. Since hanging up the goggles, I've dabbled in all the fitness realms but have really come to love the running community. Thankfully Joni Neidigh, our lovely president, and Adam Cross, our wonderful treasurer, got me more involved with the Striders and I couldn't be happier to be a part of a club that is so enthusiastic about the sport and supporting one another!

One great way to get more involved with the Striders club and in the running community is to volunteer! It's a great way to give back to this amazing club, meet new friends, and have some fun beyond putting in those miles. You can really make a difference by helping build an environment that is supportive and welcoming for all runners and walkers. Also, if you've ever volunteered at one of the Orange Park High School track meets or at one of the water stations at a big run, then you know how inspiring it is to watch other runners get after their goals. We welcome anyone to come and volunteer, no matter your experience level or knowledge of the tasks! Have no fear as I will help you along the way.



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## Memorial Day 5K/ Fun Run

By Adam Cross



Another Memorial Day 5K/ Fun Run is in the books! We had a great turnout, with over 350 people registering in the final week and on race day. This also served as the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of our 2024 Championship Series.

We had a special guest as Dunkin Doughnuts came to serve free refreshments to all on race site!

With the heat continuing to rise, it seems, each year we will be moving the start time to 7:30 AM for 2025.

A special thanks to all of our volunteers, including Seaside Charter Schools employees and students in Duval County. They served as all of our course marshals and helped with medals, refreshments and in the Swag store.

We do have some left over t-shirts for \$10, which you can email me at [treasurer@floridastriders.com](mailto:treasurer@floridastriders.com) and I will ship it to you for free.

Updated championship series standings can be found on our Facebook page.

Another successful Strider event, up next – our new race the Pinch a Penny at Mandarin Strider Summer Classic on July 27<sup>th</sup>.



Pictured are all the wonderful Florida Striders Registration Volunteers and Monica Giotta, who sang the National Anthem, with Adam Cross.



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1ST ANNUAL EVENT



SATURDAY, 27 JULY 2024 | 7:30AM

# STRIDER SUMMER CLASSIC

**PINCH A PENNY MANDARIN**

11112 SAN JOSE BLVD, JACKSONVILLE

3rd race in the **STRIDER CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES.**



Fast New Course

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Registration for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Angry Tortoise 25k / 50k is now OPEN!!! The race will take place at Cary State Forest in Bryceville, FL on 15 February 2025 at 7:30am.

**New this year....**1<sup>st</sup> Place Male and Female Senior Grand Masters (70 & Over) in both the 25k and 50k will receive awards!

Awards for the Top 3 Overall (Male & Female), 1st Place Masters (40-49) (Male & Female), 1st Place Grand Masters (50-69) (Male and Female) and 1st Place Senior Grand Masters (70 & Over) (Male and Female) for both the 25k and 50k!

We also offer awards for new Course Record Holders! The current course record holders are as follows:

**25K (Female Overall): 2015 1:47:25 – Julie Stackhouse**

**25k (Female Masters): 2022 2:05:40 – Sara Pleasants**

**25k (Female Grand Masters): 2024 2:12:07 – Regina Soeey**

**25K (Male Overall): 2022 1:41:37 - Joseph Jaramillo**

**25k (Male Masters): 2016 1:45:28 - George Barthelmes**

**25k (Male Grand Masters): 2024 1:51:42 – Kevin Sweeny**

**50K (Female Overall): 2024 4:12:17 – Eva George**

**50k (Female Masters): 2017 4:24:47 – Regina Soeey**

**50k (Female Grand Masters): 2023 4:28:19 – Britta Fortson**

**50K (Male Overall): 2023 3:30:59 – Wrigley Longstreet**

**50k (Male Masters): 2023 3:58:51 – Brock Walaska**

**50k (Male Grand Masters): 2024 4:50:03 – Allen Altman**

We offer FREE lunch to the runners! Come run and then enjoy a great pulled pork sandwich, Collard Greens and potato salad!

The restrooms close to the finish line also have hot shower so you can shower and change after the race!

If you'd like to volunteer for the race, please send me an email to [George.Barthelmes@icloud.com](mailto:George.Barthelmes@icloud.com)



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## MEMBERSHIP

Welcome and thank you to our new  
and returning members!

[Click here to join](#)

[Click here to renew](#)

Dawn Abram	Shelly Allen	Ashlee Anderson	Ella Anderson
James Anderson	Sara Anderson	Christopher Bayer	Kelly Bayer
Tatiana Bayer	Steve Beard	Marlene Boyce	Bonnie Brooks
Alex Brown	Janice Childress	Greg Crews	Patricia Czarnecki
Krishelle Doronila	Rick Eberhart	Sean Etheridge	Billy Fehrs
Jeffthe Fenelon	Patrick Gaughan	Danielle Gisonni	Joey Gisonni
Chris Gisonni	Frankie Gisonni	Ken Glover	Wendy Glover
Timothy Handley	Jim Hanson	Scott Haynes	Cari Holbrook
Brent Hume	Carol Ann Hume	John Hume	Miles Hume
Olivia Hume	Wava Hume	Meredyth Hume	Kathleen Kaye
Khristi Keefe	Anne Kern	Ron Kirsch	Amy Landin
Pamela Lempicki	Maria Littlejohn	Carmen Marquez Ortiz	Melissa McCreary
Jay Millson	Jorge Morales Lopez	Michael Mulligan	Megan Ocean
Gary Patrick	Charles Reed	Dylan Reforma	Noel Reforma
Nyles Reforma	Holly Sanford	William Saunders	Nanci Scheetz
Evan Strong	Ian Strong	Nicole Strong	William Strong
Sharon Sugden	Joseph Velazquez Del Valle	Josibeth Velazquez Del Valle	
Lilibeth Velazquez Del Valle	Uriah White		