

Volunteer of the Month January: Joe Pollard and Joe Jr. Pollard:

Congratulations to our January Volunteers of the Month, . Joe Pollard and his son, Joe Jr. “JJ.” Joe began volunteering with Atlanta Track Club in 2011 and has been dedicated to giving back ever since. He shares that wherever he goes, he looks for ways to help others and lend a hand. JJ has been volunteering alongside his father for about two to three years now. While Joe jokes that he often “drags” his son along, his true goal is to instill in JJ the importance of giving back and understanding the mission of service. Together, they make it their mission to support others in the community.



Originally from Atlanta, Joe reflects that he did not have the best upbringing and has experienced homelessness firsthand. Because of

this, giving back is deeply meaningful to him. He believes his son has a special light about him and often tells JJ that the best way to share that light is through a smile and conversation. Joe has seen how powerful a simple smile can be and wants his son to understand how much it can mean to others. For Joe, volunteering is about kindness, positivity and making a difference in someone's day.



Joe's first volunteer experience with Atlanta Track Club was at the Peachtree Junior event, which remains one of his favorite events alongside the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race. He enjoys seeing the large number of participants and interacting with people throughout race day, whether handing out participant bags, cheering runners on, or reconnecting with them at the finish line. He describes these moments as "full circle" experiences that keep him coming back. JJ's favorite event is Race the Loop Series, where he enjoys seeing many kids his own age out on the course.



One of Joe's most memorable volunteer moments involved helping a young girl, around seven or eight years old, who was frozen with fear while her parents ran ahead. Joe walked with her for about a mile, keeping the conversation light and making sure she was okay until they reached the finish line. He explains that he would never want his own child standing alone and felt compelled to help. JJ also shared a memorable experience from the Peachtree Road Race, where he and his uncle were running while his dad walked. They became separated but were able to reconnect later at Cardiac Hill, staying in communication along the way.



Despite living about four hours away, the Pollards consistently volunteer before running races and will often volunteer again the next morning if it is a weekend event. Joe has been doing this for years and says what brings him back is the impact a simple smile or conversation can have. He believes kindness and encouragement go much further than negativity and that everyone needs that reminder.

Joe's favorite volunteer assignments include packet pickup, t-shirt distribution and bag pickup. He especially enjoys working alongside Victoria at the Braves County 5K & Dash Presented by Southwire, describing her as always sweet and wonderful to work with. JJ enjoys volunteering at the Polar Opposite Peachtree Road Race, during its inaugural year, particularly at gear check. Despite the cold, he loved meeting so many people before and after the race and seeing runners out on the course.

Beyond Atlanta Track Club, the Pollards volunteer at several other events and organizations, including the Hot Chocolate Run in Atlanta, the Cathedral Cavern Race, the North Alabama Food Bank, Conquer the Cave Run, the Chick-fil-A Race and a mission trip to Nicaragua with their church. Mr. Joe shares that these experiences remind him

how fortunate we are and how important it is to give back whenever possible.

Each year, they typically volunteer at six or more Atlanta Track Club events, focusing on major races such as the Peachtree Road Race, Polar Opposite Peachtree Road Race, the Publix Atlanta Marathon, and the Winship 5K. The Winship 5K holds special meaning for Joe, as he participates in honor of his mother, who passed away last year, and plans to continue doing the race in her memory and honor.

Professionally, Joe works with the Department of War and has done so for 19 years. Outside of work, his hobbies include Atlanta Track Club events and running races, which also provide valuable bonding time with his son. JJ enjoys building LEGO sets, playing basketball and football and watching YouTube. He is also one of our youngest volunteers and proudly follows in his dad's footsteps.



When asked for advice for new volunteers, Joe emphasizes the importance of always wearing a smile.

“You never know who is going to come to your table or what kind of day they’re having. Ask people how they’re doing and remember that no job is too small. Everything counts and everything matters. What may seem small to you can be huge to someone else.”

JJ echoed his dad’s advice, adding that having fun is essential because if you are not enjoying it, there is no point

Joe also shared that although he lived in Atlanta his entire life, he did not begin participating in races until after leaving the city. Atlanta Track Club provided a meaningful way for him to reconnect with Atlanta, making his volunteer journey a full-circle moment. He also

credits his wife as a tremendous supporter of their volunteering efforts, noting that none of this would be possible without her constant encouragement and support. On behalf of Atlanta Track Club, thank you for your continued dedication and support.