

August 2020 - Sue Landa

Congratulations to our August Volunteer of the Month, Sue Landa! Sue discovered running at the age of 63, and discovered Atlanta Track Club shortly after that. Sue has been volunteering with us for 4 years at a variety of our events, and is currently doing a fantastic job as a Run Lead for our virtual In-Training participants, providing motivation, encouragement and "assistance at a distance" during this time of social distancing. Thank you, Sue, for your incredible energy!



Do you remember your first time volunteering with Atlanta Track Club? If so, what influenced your decision to volunteer and what brought you back again?

Becoming a Run Lead may not have been my very first volunteering job, but it's a close first. When I time qualified for my first marathon, the 2015 TCS New York City Marathon, I discovered the Atlanta Track Club. At age 66, I realized this was "above my pay grade," and I needed help to train for 26.2 miles. I signed up for the 2015 Fall Marathon In-Training program and was determined to train and finish my marathon. What I did not know is that Coach Amy and the Run Leads would become dedicated cheerleaders and mentors and understand how hard the training is in our Georgia summer heat. The Run Leads listened and answered my questions as we cranked out mile after mile on Saturday long runs. The challenge of a marathon took over my life, and at the same time, something was happening that I did not realize at the time. The program was creating a bond, a camaraderie, a mutual support, and many friendships among the participants and Run Leads. I looked forward to my "Sweat Saturdays" when I got up at 4:00 AM and drove 70 miles for practice. I had found "My Tribe." And this experience inspired me to apply to be a volunteer Run Lead.

What brings me back time after time is the chance to become a Run Lead like the Run Leads who helped me in my training in 2015. I love nurturing a runner on their run journey and helping them gain the confidence in themselves to attain their goal in training. I love the mentorship opportunities that the Run Lead position allows. It's one sport that includes young and old together.

What is your favorite Atlanta Track Club event? Why?

I love the AJC Peachtree Road Race! Celebrating running and Independence Day at the same time is a winning combination. I enjoy all the people, the costumes, the energy

of the crowd, the music, and celebrating a training block with runners I have been Run Leading during the Peachtree training. I love the hugs, the cheers, and excitement of watching runners cross the finish line.

And - - - being a volunteer at the 2020 Olympic Trials in March was EPIC!!

What is one of your best memories from volunteering as a Run Lead?

Sharing the excitement of a participant in the Fall Marathon In-Training program complete her FIRST, ever 22 miler on a hot Saturday morning after running with her! What joy and we all cheered her. She was ready for her marathon! I felt part of her success too!

How long have you been a runner and when did you run your first race?

My husband, Scott, dared me to run a race. Not just any race, but a half marathon! The race was the 2012 Disney Princess Half Marathon in Orlando. I was 63 at the time and did not own a pair of running shoes. Be careful when you dare me. I bought a pair of "sneakers" and a Jeff Galloway book and trained. This was my first race, I got hooked, and the rest is history. I'll complete my 10th Disney Princess Half in 2021 and I have completed 5 Disney Fairy Tale Challenges. All in all, I have been running for 9 years. I sometimes say that a Mouse helped me find Atlanta Track Club.

How have you been able to reach and motivate runners in our current situation with COVID 19, where you cannot physically be together?

I had no hesitation to apply to be a Run Lead for 2020 In-Training for Peachtree. I was looking forward to working with first-timers and multi-year participants for this event. Our world changed in March and Atlanta Track Club had to readjust too. No in-person training this year. I was selected to be the "Social Coordinator," along with another Run Lead, Heather. My platform was Facebook and I pondered how to make the miles and program fun and inspiring when most of the participants didn't even know each other and would not be running together! So I put myself out there by taking lots of photos of myself, where I ran, included my dogs, dressed up and ran in weird outfits/costumes (yes, Batgirl and Wonder Woman) promoting the theme of the week, and posting on Saturdays in the Peachtree In-Training Facebook page. And, then for Mid-week, I created a plexiglass square with the word "Accountability" and posted my speed workouts with photos and dared runners to do the same. I think the posts got runners' reactions and participants to post their own workouts and not be shy about the posting. We ARE all in this together: logging miles, sweating, running alone, getting blisters and chafing, and needing advice and support. The posted conversations were wonderful and I know somewhere out there, I have made new friends even though we have never met and I don't know the appearance of many! The glue that kept us together was a common objective to attain goal(s) in our run journey and feel the support of others. One day, I will meet the Class of 2020 In-Training for Peachtree and

the ones that stuck with the program when Peachtree did not happen on July 4. We were truly "separated but together."

Do you do any volunteering in the community beyond Atlanta Track Club?

I have volunteered in many organizations throughout the years. My parents set an example for me and always told me that volunteering and helping others make your life richer. True words! I volunteered at Callaway Gardens for over 25 years chairing a children's arts program there for 16 years. For 10 years, I did pet therapy with two of my dogs visiting school, nursing homes, hospice, and other community organizations. One of the volunteer organizations that I continue my volunteering since 1999 is Canine Companions for Independence, which is a non-profit and provides highly trained assistance dogs, free to people with disabilities. Recently, my 16th puppy Aibileen (21 months old), entered Advanced Training in Orlando, where she will have 6 more months of training before she is partnered with a person in need. I have applied for my 17th puppy to train and socialize for Canine Companions.

What do you do for living? Do you work? Are you retired?

Years ago, I was a high school chemistry and biology teacher and have done a variety of part-time jobs. My husband and I have three married children and five grandchildren. And, we have two Golden Retrievers, Violet and Klaus. I am not sure what retirement is, but if what I do now is retirement, I love it!

Do you have any advice or words of wisdom for any new Track Club volunteers?

There are a lot of decisions you make. Becoming a volunteer in the Track Club will be one of the best decisions you will make. It makes you part of something bigger than yourself and gives you an identity with a group doing good for the community.

Tell us something interesting about yourself!

Over my 9 running years, I have become known as SilverSue. A fun name for a silver-haired 71 year old, who just completed her 8th marathon in January and over 50 half marathons, and who knows how many 10K's and 5K's. I am convinced that running will keep me young, happy, and positive - - and other runners don't care how old I am. They still let me "play and run with them!"