

# November 2017 - Nisa Sommers

*Congratulations to our November Volunteer of the Month, Nisa Sommers! Nisa has been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club since 2009 beginning with our In-Training Programs. She is now involved with our Kilometer Kids Fun Runs as well as the cone crew. She makes sure that our courses are marked correctly for the safety of all participants. She appreciates that with Atlanta Track Club she can volunteer in a variety of roles, as service and community engagement is a priority in her life.*

## **1. How long have you been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club? What has brought you back?**



I have been volunteering for Atlanta Track Club since 2009 in the Club's 'Women on the Move' and AJC Peachtree Road Race Training Programs. It was great fun! After some time away due to injuries I returned as a run lead in 2015 because I longed for the positive coaching experience, the fun trainees and I needed the training structure in my own life. I had coached running and other sports for 20+ years, but I always learned something new when working with other coaches and trainees.

In 2017, I started volunteering at Atlanta Track Club events, starting with the Publix Georgia Marathon & Half Marathon. I loved the energy of the people and the race volunteers. I could still be a part of the Club's energy machine outside of the training programs.

## **2. What is your favorite Atlanta Track Club event? Why?**

My current favorite event is the PNC Atlanta 10 Miler. Ten miles is a different challenge than the half marathon. You can tighten your running speed a bit more and challenge yourself with the hills. The stronger you train the hills the better runner you will be in this



#### **volunteering with Atlanta Track Club?**

I come back time and time again because of the communities that the Atlanta Track Club reaches. From young to old there is always a space for health, wellness, and healthy competition in everyone's lives. These are some of the things that make us better people. I also love my co-volunteers and being able to represent the Atlanta Track Club with them is a pure pleasure and honor.

I love what the Club stands for and the connections they have with the community. I like that even though I started volunteering in one position I was able to move around and try something else. Atlanta Track Club is a great example of an organization that encourages volunteering on many different levels.

#### **5. What is your favorite volunteer assignment?**

I was already focused on coning, race marshaling, and race managing for runningnerds and I thought that I would take a chance with coning at Atlanta Track Club events. I quickly fell in love with the Club's coning style. When I came on board, no other women were signed up for this wonderful opportunity. Coning is physical work and you arrive early to a race to cone the course and then follow the last runner to pick up cones. By the time, you get to the race start/finish most participants have gone home. The race perspective is very different. There is no fanfare or seeing more than a few running friends. My pride is in creating a safely coned course for all runners. I also enjoy that I have recruited other women to join the cone crew.

challenging Atlanta race. I love the Cardiac Hill challenge! It's a nice added surprise for a city race!

#### **3. What is one of your best memories from volunteering at any race?**

I love working with kids and young adults. My best volunteering memories are running sweep at the Kilometer Kids Fun Runs. Helping the "back of the pack" kids finish and not give up during their race whether they are running or walking is a true gift. Nothing beats their smiles when they say, "I did it!" and "I can!" instead of "I can't do it," and "It is too far."

#### **4. What is your favorite thing about**

**6. Do you do any volunteering in the community beyond Atlanta Track Club?  
What organizations?**

- Atlanta Bicycle Coalition – I represent them as an Advocacy Ace and Bike Education Aid. I believe in a sustainable city infrastructure including more accessibility for walking and cycling throughout the city.
- Blaze Sports – I am a volunteer swim coach and swim instructor there. The swimmers of Blaze Sports have tremendous heart. To them, nothing is impossible.
- runningnerds – I am a coning lead, course marshal, and course manager. I learned how to cone with this super fun group and I continue to help with their races throughout the year.
- East Intown 10K Tuesday – I am the cofounder of this running group where I get my miles in during the week. This fantastic group is even keeled and encouraging. Helping to develop this group for its members has been pure joy!
- Strong Start Reading Program – I am a participant that helps first graders at Tuskegee Airman Global Academy Elementary School increase their reading ability. Teaching children to read is a deep passion of mine. So many children do not read well or have access to books to read. If I can make a difference in one child's reading life then that is a win, win for them for every day going forward.

**7. What do you do for a living? Are you retired? Professional volunteer?**



I do work, but I volunteer so much that it seems like I am a professional volunteer. Service is very important to me. It always has been, even through all the ups and downs of my life. I believe my individual responsibility is to serve. Because of this powerful belief, I involve myself in organizations throughout the city where I feel I can be an impact. My volunteer amount

varies, but I tell people you can do anything you want to once you decide what the most

important things in your life are. I am lucky in that I also get the chance to volunteer with my family when I can. Those opportunities are the best. I have also met the most incredible people from all backgrounds volunteering and that alone is the best reason to volunteer. It keeps me coming back.

I am the founder and owner of Triple Play, LLC an Atlanta based school support program for students. We offer academic support services for students beginning in 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. We also work with collegiate and post-graduate student athletes with scholarship opportunities. Lastly we offer internship programs and career counseling for students 18-35 years old that are off-track and need guidance to move forward with better life choices.

### **8. What is your favorite Thanksgiving Day tradition?**

The past 5 years I have been hosting a Turkey Tune-Up Fun Run from my house the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. I invite people from the community and different run groups to get in one last run before the Thanksgiving Day Half Marathon or their journeys out of town for the holiday. I map out a 5K and 10K options and everyone meets back at my place for hot chocolate, tea, and cider around the fire pit. It is a great start to the day and the holiday season.