

March 2018 - Jess and Walter Kolis

Congratulations to our March Volunteers of the Month, Jess and Walter Kolis! Jess and Walter have been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club for the past three years. They love volunteering at the finish line and seeing the sense of accomplishment on the finishers' faces and have made running and volunteering into a family affair, bringing their son Benny to several events. You'll see Jess and Walter on the Georgia Tech campus during the Publix Georgia Marathon, where they will both be crew chiefs.

Do you remember your first time volunteering with Atlanta Track Club? What event was it and what brought you back?



Jess: I volunteered for the first time in Spring 2015 at the Be Healthy Georgia Festival and have been hooked ever since. I loved being at an event with the future of running - I got into running when I was young, too.

Walter: I volunteered for the first time at the Atlanta Women's 5K in Chastain Park. Jess and I were trying to wrangle finding a place for cars to park! As soon as Caryn sent out the email a few days later to say thank you, I immediately signed up for more events! I was impressed with how organized and fun it was to volunteer, and that hasn't changed!

What is your favorite Atlanta Track Club event? Why?

Jess: Does everyone say the AJC Peachtree Road Race? It is my favorite. I love point to point races. I

think they are really neat (our first marathon was also point to point). The crowd and the excitement are what I love. I love a BIG race and you don't get any bigger than Peachtree.

Walter: Well, even though Jess said it, it's the AJC Peachtree Road Race. I love the pageantry, and when else can you get on the MARTA at 5:30 a.m. miles away from the start of a race and have it be packed full of runners! As a runner, I love the Grand Prix races (I did all of them in 2017!) and particularly enjoyed throwing the shot put! I threw shot in high school.



What is one of your best memories from volunteering at any race?

Jess: My favorite memory is volunteering at the 2016 Wingfoot Classic. I grew up running Cross Country and I loved being able to give back to my sport and the future of it. It was so cool to see the Saratoga Springs Running Club! Being from the northeast,

Saratoga was always an amazing team to watch. We would see them at Foot Locker Cross Country regional meets (before Nike Cross Nationals) and would always be in awe.

Walter: There's so many! But, most recently, I was responsible for driving course monitors out to their stations for the Atlanta Hawks Fast Break 5K [presented by Sharecare]. We played the Atlanta Track Club version of Cash Cab!

What is your favorite thing about volunteering with Atlanta Track Club? What brings you back?

Jess: The people are wonderful! We started crew chiefting in 2016 and it has given me an opportunity to get to know so many Atlanta Track Club members! Who else gets up at a crazy hour with a smile?

Walter: Definitely the people! Why else would I get up at 4:00 a.m. and drive clear across the city in the rain to stand outside for hours and not get paid?

Do you have a favorite volunteer assignment? If so, explain.

Jess: The finish line. The smiles on the faces or the exhaustion are so exciting to see. No matter what, the finish line is full of emotion and celebrations and I love being a part of it.

Walter: I agree with Jess! Seeing the accomplishment in a finisher's face, whether it be a smile, a grimace, or tears--Nothing beats it!

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

Jess: Atlanta Track Club is the only one right now! Between an 8 month old (a volunteer of the month in-training), a Labrador, training for a marathon and work, our schedule is pretty booked.

Walter: Tell me about it!



At how many Atlanta Track Club events do you typically volunteer during the year? How many events outside of Atlanta Track Club?

Jess: As many as we can! Typically eight to ten.

Walter: I do as many as I can, sometimes too many if you ask Jess! Somewhere around 15 last year.

What do you do for a living? Do you work? Are you retired? Professional volunteer?

Jess: I am the Communications Manager for Health & Well-Being at Georgia Tech.

Walter: I am the Assistant Director for Member Services & Staff Development Georgia Tech in Campus Recreation, a Health & Well-Being department.

Jess: We actually work in the same office suite.



Tell us something interesting about yourself – an interesting fact or a story that will help us get to know you...

Jess: Walter and I were set up on a blind date by one of our students while working at the University of Alabama! The student worked as one of my peer health educators and went on a service trip that Walter chaperoned. While on the trip she told Walter she was going to find him his wife. A few weeks later, she set us up. To make it even funnier, a week before we were set up, Walter and I were both invited to an awards banquet. He was walking up to receive his award and I had missed his name but thought, “Man, he’s cute - too bad I will probably never see him again!”