

## June 2020 - Chrystal Akor

*Congratulations to our June Volunteer of the Month, Chrystal Akor! Chrystal has been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club since 2014. She is active in a variety of our events and programs, including All Comers, In-Training, the Pace Team, and as a crew chief for the Publix Atlanta Marathon. She appreciates the people of the Club because they motivate her to show up and do her best.*

### **Do you remember your first time volunteering with Atlanta Track Club? What brings you back?**

The first volunteer role I can remember was as a member of the Start Corral team for the 2014 Atlanta 10 Miler and 5K. One of my favorite parts of running is the excitement that surrounds race day. Being a part of the energy and wishing luck to the runners as they waited for their race to begin was a fun and rewarding experience.



### **Do you have a favorite Atlanta Track Club event?**

My favorite Club event is the Invesco QQQ Thanksgiving Day Half Marathon. This was the first half marathon I trained for and the experience was the start of me truly feeling like I was part of a running community. I still run with many of the friends I met in that original training group from 2010. Now, I enjoy doing the race each year as a pace leader. I love encouraging runners to the finish line.

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

The people. They motivate me to show up and do my best. They also help me fully experience how great running and racing is because I see what goes into a great race from the experience of a participant and the incredible work that is put in behind the scenes.

## **What is your best memory from volunteering with Atlanta Track Club?**

My first pacing experience was for the 2017 Publix Georgia Marathon. I knew that I wanted to volunteer for this race because friend and Running Community Leader Heather King had invited runners from across the globe to a running family reunion and to conquer the challenging, hilly course. Since I had run the race in 2016 (and set a PR!) I was not planning to run it again; I thought I would cheer others along the course and celebrate with them from the sidelines. However, when I heard that a pacer was needed that I could comfortably run, I figured 'why not?'. I challenged myself in a new way, supported others, and enjoyed my running with friends. It was an incredible experience and helped me find a new way to support my fellow runners.



## **Do you have a favorite volunteer assignment?**

I love volunteering, so it's too hard to pick a favorite. I don't think I have had a bad volunteer assignment yet. Despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, I've been able to continue volunteering with the In-Training Program as a Run Lead. In the past, I helped people prepare for the Publix Atlanta Marathon running anywhere from 6 to 22 miles each week. This spring my Run Lead contributions have moved online encouraging students as they complete workouts from home, preparing the weekly speed training workouts, consulting on presentation platforms and cheering trainees virtually.

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

My most significant volunteering outside of the Atlanta Track Club is with my alumni association. My parents instilled in me that if you enjoy doing something, you find ways to get involved. One of the mottos at my alma mater is 'Non Sibi' or 'not for self'. It's a mindset I embrace and carry with me in all that I do. As a Regional Leader for my alumni association, I organize various events, many of which have a community focus. Over the past few years we have packaged meals at Open Hand, done landscaping projects with Trees Atlanta, and volunteered for an Atlanta Track Club race.

## **What do you do for a living?**

I am a program manager in online education.

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

Try lots of different roles at events. It's great to see and try new things. I have helped at start lines, as a timer, as a course monitor, with kids events, as a pacer, as a run lead and on and on. I have sweated through assignments, been snowed on, and supported shot put in the pouring rain. Every experience has been special and I am grateful for every new challenge.

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

I'm 35 states into the 50 state Challenge where I'm trying to run a half marathon in every state and halfway through the Abbott World Marathon Majors.

