

July 2020 - Taylor James

Congratulations to our June Volunteer of the Month, Taylor James! Taylor has been volunteering with Atlanta Track Club at the AJC Peachtree Road Race for 10 years! She has honed her skills as an excellent course marshal, making sure the course is safe for our participants, free from cars and notifies folks of emergencies if necessary. She now shares her knowledge with volunteers as Crew Chief of Zone 2 at the AJC Peachtree Road Race. Though Peachtree looks different this year, we look forward to having Taylor and her expertise with us at Peachtree on Thanksgiving Day!

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



If my math is correct on 10 years, my first time volunteering was at the 2010 AJC Peachtree Road Race. My friend, Elizabeth, and I signed up as course marshals. We were assigned a spot on cardiac hill—easily one of the toughest parts of the course. As a course marshal, your most important job is keeping the athletes safe, but a large part of the job is cheering them on. It's such a great feeling to see the racers pick up their pace just because someone is there cheering for them.

Do you have a favorite Atlanta Track Club event?

Definitely the Peachtree. There's nothing like seeing racers of all varieties completely fill the street for hours on end. The wheelchair athletes who start off the event are just incredible and truly inspiring. Then

the elite runners sprint by, seeming to have barely broken a sweat by the time they're reaching the three-mile mark. Then the floodgates open and you start seeing runners who are aiming to set personal records and those who are just there to have fun. People dress in red, white, and blue, plus a myriad of other super creative costumes. And all of Atlanta comes together to celebrate our city and our community.

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

Getting to be a part of the 2020 U. S. Olympic Marathon Team Trials was such a special experience. Though the Olympics will be delayed, I'm so grateful the Trials were able to happen right before we really started experiencing the effects of COVID-19 in Georgia. It was phenomenal to see months of intense planning put into action on race day, allowing the Trials to go off without a hitch.

Do you have a favorite volunteer assignment?

I absolutely love serving as the Zone 2 crew chief for the AJC Peachtree Road Race. All of the volunteers I work with are so awesome and dedicated to making the race a success. It's fantastic to walk my section and see the volunteers keeping the course clear, looking out for those in need of medical attention, providing assistance, cheering on the athletes, and really just going above and beyond in their course marshal duties. A couple years ago, one of my volunteers even chased down a car that managed to sneak onto the course before the race! It's great to catch up with those who return year after year, and to meet new people who may be volunteering for the first time.

What do you do for a living?

I am working on my Ph.D. in cognition and brain science at Georgia Tech. My dissertation project is investigating how symptoms of depression affect memory across the lifespan. My research lab, the Memory and Aging Lab, is always looking for new participants!

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

The best advice I can give is to have a positive attitude. That may be hard when a race like the Peachtree requires you to wake up before 4 AM, but I find the sleepiness is quickly overtaken by excitement once I step onto the course. Review all necessary information about your volunteer position ahead of time, know who to contact in case of an emergency, and most importantly: have fun!