

## August 2018 - Cindy Patton

*Congratulations to our August Volunteer of the Month, Cindy Patton. Cindy first started volunteering with Atlanta Track Club in 2017 and quickly became a staple on the volunteer team supporting the Club at many events, office projects, and as a new Crew Chief in 2018. Cindy brings a bright and cheerful attitude to each event she works and always comes away with wonderful memories no matter the weather.*

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

My first time volunteering with Atlanta Track Club was only last year's Atlanta Hawks Fast Break 5K. It was a brisk 32 degrees and I remember that the city was eerily quiet, like I have never experienced. I was completely clueless as to what to expect but there were plenty of smiling faces to make me feel welcome. The hot coffee and donuts helped a bit too. The other volunteers and I walked to our positions as course monitors and shared stories about ourselves. It was a wonderful bonding moment with perfect strangers.

The first few runners passed by and I wasn't sure what to expect but after a period, I started commenting on people's shirts, especially the Hawks fans. I tried to make the runners laugh with statements like, "Hey! That shower is going to feel great when you get home!" or "You totally deserve that cheeseburger now!" Seeing the smiles on the runners' faces when they heard me shout, "Hey, you get to go downhill soon!" gave me such simple pleasure. After that morning, I was completely hooked!

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



My favorite events are the ones close to my house. In all seriousness, it is hard to pick one specific event, as each race is unique from the course to the runners to the mix of incredible volunteers. If I absolutely had to pick one, it must be the AJC Peachtree Road Race. This year I was Crew Chief at the Finish Line Food Boxes, so I was able to experience the finish line area with the news crews, Atlanta Police Department, and the other companies involved in Atlanta's biggest party. What amazed me

was the behind the scenes action many people don't see leading up to the race. Even

though we all know the race happens each year, it is still a feat for Atlanta Track Club to organize all aspects of the event as well as they do!

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

I have a list of memories from the short time I have been a part of Atlanta Track Club.

- We can start with the freezing cold weather at the Resolution Run at Piedmont Park. Seeing snowflakes on a runner's jacket made me laugh and appreciate the fact that Atlanta is a great city that has seasons. Although it took three hours after the race to thaw out, it was a lot of fun bonding with the other volunteers with jokes to keep our minds off the extreme cold.
- At the Southside 12K, the course was a loop, so the runners would pass me twice. One lady yelled "We have to stop meeting like this, people will start to talk!" That absolutely sent me into hysterical laughing.
- My biggest heartwarming moment was at the Atlanta Women's 5K at the finish line where I was passing out medals. It was an honor to share that moment of their achievement whether it was their fifth run or their first. Those ladies are strong and amazing!
- My one breathtaking moment I will never forget is at the Publix Georgia Marathon this year. I was Crew Chief for Hydration Station #1 and a bit stressed since it was my largest station to maintain as a rookie Crew Chief. I looked up the street and it was like the flood gates opened. There were people everywhere and it was almost never ending. As they passed by grabbing water out of my hands they were exclaiming, "Thank you for volunteering!" That one statement is simple and yet powerful to all volunteers. Thank you for saying that to us, it really does mean a lot for the volunteers to hear. That's another reason why I like coming back.

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

My wardrobe has certainly expanded with the clothing we are given as volunteers and I sport them proudly. Whenever I see another person wearing an Atlanta Track Club T-shirt, whether it's a runner or volunteer, I always introduce myself and ask about their experiences with the organization. My favorite part is hearing their personal stories. Volunteering really puts the spotlight on others and many times, diminishes the negative in our minds about ourselves. Since becoming involved with the Club, I feel more connected to my city and my community.

As a native Atlantan, being a part of such a well-known organization brings pride to my heart. I weirdly don't mind getting up super early on the weekends and showing my support for the Club, its members, the runners, and the wonderful volunteers. Luckily, I have become friends with amazing people and that's another reason why I like coming back.

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

I have enjoyed all the assignments but I really like being a course monitor because I love the interaction and one liners I throw at the runners. When they smile or laugh and realize they have the support of strangers, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to.

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

The readers may have noticed at the end of every answer, I say why I like coming back. The reasons are many, there isn't just one specific reason why I love the Track Club, it's multiple parts of the whole. I wish more people could experience the friendships, the camaraderie that the Club offers, and the great feeling of helping others.