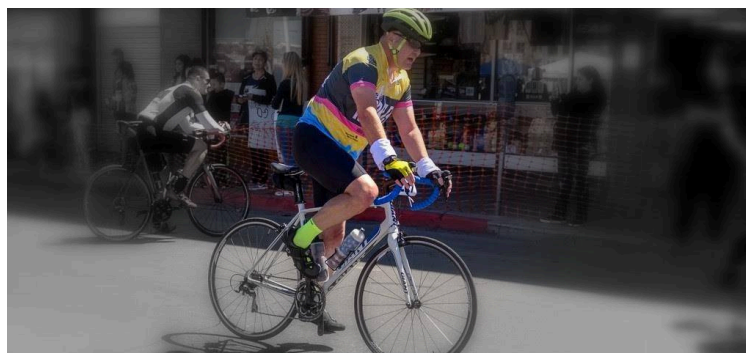




SAR Board Member Craig McCarthy ran collegiately at Eastern Michigan University (emich.edu). More recently, Craig can be found staffing the SAR or FitKidz tent at many of our local events, or riding the roads.

Letter From The Board

By Craig McCarthy - SAR Board Member

Running, rolling, jogging, walking—what a way to start the new year in 2025! As we move forward in the pursuit of movement, let's look back at 53 years of Southern Arizona Roadrunners Club activities and service to the community. Any guesses what the archives say was the first race the SAR predecessor, Southwest Truckers, put on? Hint: it remains on our club calendar all these years later.

We are a club that has evolved to meet new challenges and goals for the overall good of the Southern Arizona running community. The latest challenge is reviving The Arizona Distance Classic Half Marathon, Quarter Marathon and 5K event in Oro Valley on March 2nd. SAR has stepped up and purchased this race and partnered with Run Tucson to make this a flagship event for SAR. The views on the course are spectacular and it will be a great tune-up for the spring races. It is also an attractive option for those in snow country to come visit us, get some vitamin sunshine, and prepare for Boston and other spring marathons. Most importantly, proceeds will go to our charity partner St. Luke's Home. St. Luke's has been part of the Tucson community for over 100 years. The Home is a holistic, assisted-living community for people aged 55 and older of limited

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Letter From The Board cont.

financial means. By the way, how far is a quarter marathon? Keep reading to find out.

Why did we move the Sun Run from Reid Park to Christopher Columbus Park? Yes, the venerable Sun Run that starts the SAR race season every year is now at Christopher Columbus Park, 4300 N. Silverbell Rd. The SAR Board had many discussions about safety concerns between runners and vehicles, to include the charter busses that bring baseball players to the baseball fields at Reid Park. Safety is our top concern and despite significant traffic control efforts, we had too many close calls between runners and vehicles. Your feedback on this new race course location would be appreciated. You can send an email to SAR at info@runsar.org.

Speaking of March, the 18th kicks off our 13th year of FitKidz Club. This FREE club is for children ages 5 to 12 years old who will learn about running, stretching, nutrition, and teamwork over a 4-week period. We have FitKidz Club sites at Reid Park and potentially another site to be determined. For details go to the [FitKidz Running and Racing Program](#) on the SAR website. To register a child or to volunteer, go to RunSignup.com and select the "Find a Race" tab, then type "FitKidz Club" in the search box. SAR also has eight FitKidz 1-mile runs as part of the 2025 schedule. We want kids to enjoy running and the emphasis is on having fun no matter the pace.

For 2025, SAR continues to reinvest in making the racing experience better with high quality events. We have improved our timing and clock display systems. We have upgraded our course markings, mile markers, and other race-day amenities so you get a great value for your registration money. We will continue to partner with local running organizations to help you reach your training and racing goals.

Well, did you figure out SAR's first club race? It was

the 1971 Saguaro Loop Run now known as the TMC Saguaro National Park Labor Day 8 Mile & 5K Run/Walk.

And a quarter marathon = 6.55 miles or 10.54 kilometers. When you think about it, breaking up the marathon distance into smaller, doable chunks makes the marathon distance a bit less daunting!

Be well, and see you on the loop, trail, mountain, track, and roads.



The Arizona Distance Classic - Sign Up Today!



Runners participating in the 2017 Arizona Distance Classic
Photo courtesy of Oro Valley Photography



AZDC Signup

Produced by



Celestino's 25th Marathon – Organ Pipe National Monument

By Kim and Celestino Fernández



The marathon loop at sunrise

Have you ever driven by an area that struck you as a perfect run to do someday? Well, here's a short story of how one person made that someday thought into a reality.

Celestino Fernández had for many years participated in some form of exercise, whether playing tennis, golf, or his favorite, basketball. He believed that he should pay attention to his physical body, his ongoing mental development and education, and not least, his spiritual well-being. When he started jogging, it was just for the joy of both physical exercise and being in nature, which supported his soul. At some point in his late 40's, with his now wife Kim Fernández' encouragement, he signed up for his first race, SAR's Cinco de Mayo 10K. He loved the additional stretch it added to his jogging, and he became a runner.

Now as anyone knows, runners explore their limits,

whether it is speed, distance, or perhaps running in different locations and terrain. Celestino tried them all. At age 50, he signed up to run the Tucson Marathon, his first. He loved it and when someone told him, "Oh, you were just short of the qualifying time to run the Boston," well, he had to find out what that was all about. Once he learned, he decided that Boston might be an enjoyable marathon to strive for. Thus he embarked on a fun time of running even more marathons, qualifying for Boston at the St. George, Utah marathon the following year. Kim also qualified so they ran Boston together in 2002.

Time passed and Celestino found himself turning 75 years old in September 2024. He had run 24 marathons – why not make it 25 in as many years? Now back to the area that he had been thinking would be a perfect run someday. It is located in Organ Pipe National Monument. The entrance to the Visitor Center is located off of Highway 85, which Kim and Celestino passed on their way back and forth to Puerto Peñasco – sooo many times over the years. Directly opposite the entrance is a sign for a 21-mile scenic drive. Hmm, with just a few more miles, a perfect marathon...but, with not much shade, it would definitely have to be run in cooler weather.



"Tino" and Celestino at Organ Pipe National Monument

Celestino's 25th Marathon cont.

So the route was selected – now to assemble the team. Celestino had, over the years, passed his running enthusiasm on to his daughter Kristina Fernández and son Celestino “Tino” Fernández III. They were recruited of course, along with Kristina’s partner Anthony Walcozak. Kim, daughter-in-law Cheyenne, and grandson Celestino Chance Fernández IV all served as support along the route. Custom race shirts and medals were designed proudly titled “Celestino’s 25th Marathon.” Kristina and Anthony designed and surprised us with the T-shirts and Kim made hand-painted wooden medals.

The date was set for Sunday, December 1st, after spending Thanksgiving in Puerto Peñasco. The plan was to get up at 4:00am to be at the border a few minutes before they opened at 6:00am. That morning, Kim made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the run.

The drive went well, and we arrived at the border at 5:50am. There were only 5 or so cars ahead of us waiting to cross the border which opened promptly at 6am. Just 6 miles north of the border is the Monument’s Visitor Center and entrance to the loop. The four runners walked across the highway where the loop begins; the support team drove with a plan to wait for us every six or so miles. We took a few photos by the sign that read “21 Mile Loop” and the “race” started like most races, at zero dark thirty and at about as many degrees, but the sun emerged soon enough and the temperature rose, making the run just as perfect as imagined. The route climbed in elevation over the first half of the route to 1,404 feet, up towards the cool double arch and then took a turn for a slow downhill back to the beginning of the loop.

Even though Tino is much, much faster than Celestino, he was going to run with his dad. Bless his

soul! Celestino had thought that he would run with Kristina, but Kristina and Anthony fell back a bit. At every hour, Celestino and Tino took a GU energy gel. When they got to mile 6, the support team was there in case they needed anything. Thus went the run. Celestino and Tino finished in 4 hours and ran an 11-minute mile pace. Now some of you are doing the math and realize this was not a full 26.2-mile marathon, but Celestino says that if you’re over 75 and select the course, you can call anything over 20 miles a “marathon.” Yes, he made that up. As it turns out, according to Tino’s watch, the course was just under 21 miles.

When we all finished, we went back to the Visitor Center and put our race shirts on. Kim handed out the medals and took photos of the four runners and the entire team.



Anthony, Kristina, Tino, and Celestino proudly displaying Kim's hand-painted medals

Great fun was had by all! Yes, Celestino plans to continue running, but no more marathons.



Volunteer Rewards Program

By Amairani Garcia

SAR is excited to roll out some changes to our Volunteer Rewards Program in 2025. Previously, the volunteer requirement to earn a race voucher was to volunteer at six SAR races for a minimum of 1.5 hours each. Starting in 2025, volunteers can earn a race voucher by volunteering for at least eight shifts, including up to two shifts in a single race! Race vouchers are good for any SAR race up to a \$35 value.

The benefits of the new program:

- All volunteer shifts will count the same toward the requirement.
- Volunteers can earn a race voucher in as few as four SAR races.
- Simpler tracking means that SAR can provide participants their race vouchers as soon as they've met the eight shift minimum.

In addition to volunteering at races, participation in SAR subcommittees also counts towards the Rewards Program. Attend and participate in subcommittees for a total of six hours to earn a race voucher (down from nine hours before!). Subcommittees are a great way to let your voice be heard and use your skills, talents, and experience to benefit the Tucson running community. Committees meet throughout the month at various locations. Check the SAR website to stay up to date on current subcommittees or reach out (info@runsar.org) for more information on upcoming meetings.

As an added THANK YOU to our volunteers in 2025, individuals who volunteer for at least three SAR races will earn a free SAR Volunteer shirt!

Be on the lookout for volunteer needs at your favorite SAR races. Opportunities are typically available even prior to race day, at packet pickup. And remember to check in at the start of your shifts to get credit!

We love hearing from you! Email volunteer@runsar.org with any questions or feedback. You can also check out the [Volunteer](#) page on the SAR website.



Why Join a Run Club?

By Griffin Salkowski



In the past year, run clubs have experienced a surge in popularity. They have gone from a niche interest of a few to a general audience with several prominent clubs that have regular runs. The rise seems to follow a trend of communities forming around different aspects of fitness. Before going further, I want to make a distinction between what I see as the two types of running groups: social groups and performance-based groups. There's nuance to it; most groups seem to fall on a scale somewhere between the two.

A great local example of a social running group is the Tucson Run Club. Groups like these primarily exist to build a community with more of a secondary emphasis on running. The Tucson Run Club meets bi-weekly at the MSA Annex on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings. These environments are friendly and inclusive for runners of any experience level.

The second type of group serves to improve running performance on top of the social aspect of the group. These clubs usually involve some form of coaching to help attendees reach specific running goals. Both categories can have benefits on paper, but how exactly can they help you?

Wanting to learn more, I visited the Tucson Run Club on a Saturday morning in late December. While many of the regular attendees didn't make it because of how close it was to Christmas, there was still a turnout of roughly 20 runners of varying levels. Making my way around the group, I heard many different reasons and rationales for attending, but they all had a common theme: to meet other people who share an interest in running.

Many of the regular runners had just completed the Tucson Marathon the week before. I was told that in the fall, the participants had pushed each other to take on the challenge. That goes hand in hand with something else I heard from many of the runners: the group serves as a positive community that inspires them to strive for more fitness outside of the bi-weekly runs.



Taking on exercise in a group setting has been shown, both anecdotally and empirically, to increase enjoyment. Chances are, if something is more enjoyable, people are more likely to stick with it. Other studies have shown that being involved in group exercise, especially with older individuals, increases adherence to physical activity.

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Why Join a Run Club cont.

After visiting the Tucson Run Club, none of those results seem surprising to me. Many of the people I'd spoken with had attended for months and were all very welcoming of anyone new. For beginner runners, I highly suggest at least looking into local running groups. Even if you feel you're not ready to run the scheduled distance, you can walk. If one of your goals for 2025 is to either start running or get back into it, groups can provide an advantage. You can always do it all by yourself, but why wouldn't you want to give yourself the best chance of achieving your goal?

For runners who are more serious and are striving for a particular goal, this can still be an excellent option. You might meet new people who you want to train with, learn from others and their running experience, or become familiar with the local running community. However, the other category might be more of what you're looking for. There are many groups around Tucson that will help you reach your running goal in a more practical manner. Examples of these include 520 Running and Riding, Happy Hour Hobble, the Beyond Meet Me Runs, Southwest Endurance Training, Tucson Trail Runners, and WOG (The Workout Group). More information about these and many other groups can be found on the [Running Groups](#) page of the SAR website.



Run The Numbers

SAR Membership:

As of January 14th, 2025:

Number of Members	937
Number of Memberships	660

Children's Fitness Fund:

In 2024, Children's Fitness Fund grants totaling \$6,880 were awarded to the following organizations:

- Beyond Bikes
- Catholic Community Services
- Fitness Funatics
- Girls Run Our World (G.R.O.W.)
- Menchaca Running Camp
- Rich River Athletics Club
- Senita Valley Elementary
- Sonoita Elementary SD #25
- Vail School District
- Vail Tucson Lacrosse

Volunteering:

For the year 2024:

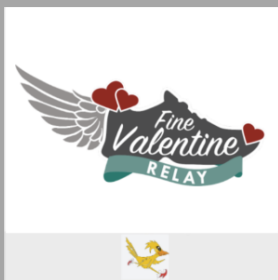
Number of Individuals Volunteering	210
Total Volunteer Hours	1016
Free Race Vouchers Issued	17

Jim Click Raffle:

Thank you to all who purchased Jim Click Millions for Tucson raffle tickets. All funds raised directly support the Southern Arizona Roadrunners FitKidz program and Children's Fitness Fund.

500 Tickets Sold	\$10,175
Anonymous \$1,000 Match	\$1,000
Grand Total	\$11,175

2025 SAR RACE SCHEDULE



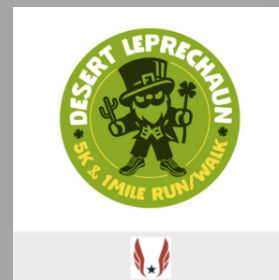
February 9, 2025



February 16, 2025



March 2, 2025



March 16, 2025



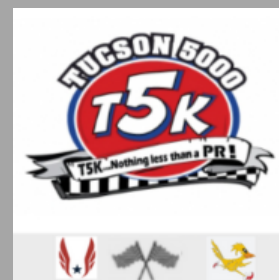
March 22, 2025



April 12, 2025



May 4, 2025



May 18, 2025



May 31, 2025



USATF Certified Course



FitKidz Mile



Gabe Zimmerman Triple Crown



The Running Shop SAR Grand Prix

About SAR

The Southern Arizona Roadrunners is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting health and fitness in Tucson and Southern Arizona through running and walking.

Our vision is to strengthen and support the running and walking community in Southern Arizona through high-quality, affordable, and family-friendly events and programming that empower people of all backgrounds, abilities, and ages to pursue a healthier lifestyle. We promote community engagement by celebrating the joy of athletic achievement, individual and group participation, philanthropy, and volunteer service.



For the latest information, visit us online at runsar.org
You can also follow us on Facebook and Instagram at:
[@azroadrunners](https://www.facebook.com/azroadrunners) & [@runsar](https://www.instagram.com/runsar)

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