

Gaspin' in the Aspen Summer Trail Run 2006

Inaugural Trail Run a Huge Success

The Flagstaff Nordic Center today held its first ever Gaspin' in the Aspen Summer Trail Run. The Flagstaff ski area hosted a 5K and 15K, Race #3 of the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce Summer Running Series to great success. Runners from all over the U.S. and the world attended the sold out race.

Runners from as far away as Singapore and British Columbia, Canada traveled to Flagstaff to test their metal in the aspen groves of the Flagstaff Nordic Center. It was local runners though that took three of the four overall wins. A Runner's High, Flagstaff's specialty running store, sponsored the race and also sent their team members to dominate the men's field. Chris Gomez of A Runner's High smoked the competition by nearly two minutes to win the 5K race in 19 minutes, 04 seconds. Tom Acker of Phoenix took the second spot coming in at 20 minutes, 57 seconds. Nik Southwell of Victoria B.C. Canada and Carl Rundell of Michigan tied at 22 minutes, 37 seconds to round out the top three overall 5K winners.

The Women's 5K was a national run with Emily Kroshus of Philadelphia taking the overall win in 22 minutes, 45 seconds. Texas was well represented with Meredith Johnson, 23 minutes, 07 seconds, and Lige Anna Stewardson, 25 minutes, 29 seconds, rounding out the top three.

A Runner's High team member and Flagstaff resident, Shiloh Mielke ran the 15K race in 57 minutes, 46 seconds to take the overall win. That was three minutes ahead of Steve Folkerts of Phoenix who finished in 1 hour, 45 seconds. Mark Ulm of Flagstaff took the third spot overall in 1 hour, 2 minutes, 27 seconds.

The overall winners of the women's 15K were all from Northern Arizona. Theresa Holland of Flagstaff took the top spot in 1 hour, 11 minutes, 46 seconds, closely pursued by Sara Wagner of Tonalea at 1 hour, 12 minutes, 34 seconds. Grace White of Flagstaff was also not far behind with a time of 1 hour, 14 minutes, 15 seconds.

Flagstaff Nordic Center owner Wendell Johnson was very pleased with the outcome of the race. "We were able to reach our limit of 250 with runners from all over the country, as well as the world. We know that once athletes see the beauty of the landscape and the quality of events at Flagstaff Nordic Center that they will come back to visit us again."

Since taking over The Flagstaff Nordic Center, Johnson has worked to bring other events to the cross country ski area. A fall duathlon, ski races, snowshoe races, mountain bike races, weddings, camps and corporate retreats are all aimed to bring more visitors into Flagstaff. This sits well with the Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce who sponsored the Flagstaff Summer Running Series. After running today's race, many out of town and out of state athletes pledged that they would be back.

The remaining races in the series are the Machine Solutions Annual Soldiers Trail Run for Children's Health Center 10K, 5K and 2K Fitness Walk on August 5th and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Half Marathon and 5K on August 12th. More information on either race can be found on NATRA.org.

The Gaspin' in the Aspen was race number one of two to determine the Mountain Trail Runner Award. The Soulstice Trail Run held on October 14th is race number two. Times between each race will be added to determine the winner. The Mountain Trail Runner Award will include an undisclosed cash prize. See NATRA.org for additional information or to sign up for the Soulstice Trail Run.