

# volunteer profile

BY BRANTLEY SHERRER

## The Hite of Volunteerism

Standing at the edge of a swamp, looking as if it had been born of the sludge itself, sits a large red sign covered in fungus, bird refuse and slime. The sign screams, "DO NOT FEED THE ALLIGATORS! VIOLATION OF GEORGIA CODE..." the rest is obscured by debris. A sign like this is rarely found at the site of a race, even in cross country. It can be found, however, at the Magnolia Springs 4.8-mile USATF State Championship, held at Magnolia Springs State Park in Millen, Ga., a small town north of Statesboro and south of Waynesboro. De-

spite the ominous warning about alligators, there has never been an incident involving the carnivorous reptile in the history of the race.

The race is organized by Jim Hite and his wife Joyce Hodges-Hite, longtime coordinators of the ATC track and field team, who easily succeed at what many couples only attempt: being a team. "We do everything together," Jim affirms.

Both Jim and Joyce are veteran runners. "I was 42 going on 43 when I started running in 1979," says Joyce. "Almost immediately I got a stress fracture on the upper part of my femur. It happened because I was wearing bad shoes—hiking shoes I think. I ended up in a body cast and was 43 by

Jim Hite



Joyce Hodges-Hite



the time I was able to run again." As for Jim, "I've been running most of my adult life. My first race was in 1977 and was the St. Patty's Day 5K in Savannah. I got a yellow T-shirt with a green shamrock in the center. I thought that was the greatest thing in the world."

Running seems to permeate every part of their lives; the Hites even spent their honeymoon at a race. "We got married the Sunday before a marathon; Joyce ran the marathon and won the masters women's division. She's awesome," Jim continues proudly. "She's my hero." The feeling is mutual. "He is an awesome person," says Joyce, without having heard Jim's statement. "There is nothing he can't do."

People who know the couple agree with this assessment. "They are 'Energizer Bunnies,'" says longtime ATC Member and former ATC Board Member Susan Aderhold. As USATF-certified officials they work dozens of events. They've worked events all over the Southeast. We were lucky to get Jim and Joyce as track and field coordinators. They are the highest level of volunteers—dream volunteers."

In addition to serving as track and field team coordinators, the Hites also volunteer for the ATC Track and Field Classic and the Atlanta Marathon and Half Marathon. For the latter event, Jim drove one of the baggage trucks, getting to Turner Field at 5 a.m., driving a 26-foot truck to the start of the half marathon in Chamblee, and then returning with all the runners' baggage before the first runner finished—not an easy task.

When not volunteering, the Hites continue to run, and continue to win races. Joyce is preparing for her 112th marathon, scheduled to take place this year in Greece. She has taken home a great deal of hardware from her races, winning her age group at age 60 at the Huntsville Marathon, placing third in her age group at the World Championships at the Puerto Rico Marathon, and, recently, winning her age group at the 10K Trail Championships in Laurel Springs, N.C.

Jim also won his age group at Laurel Springs. One of his fondest race memories is that of his second-place finish in the steeplechase in the 2000 National Championships. Due to a foot injury, he has since turned his attention to duathlons, typically doing events consisting of a 10K run, 40K ride and 5K run. At the National

Championships in 2005 he finished second in his age group and has also participated in four World Championship duathlons, finishing sixth in 2009.

After serving on the ATC Board for the past eight years, Jim is handing the reins of the track and field position to team member Mary Richards. "Jim and Joyce are great people. They have gone out of their way to make the transition easy for me," Richards says. "They are great volunteers."

The Hites are two of the most positive individuals you could meet. There's no doubt that whatever they do, they will continue to exert a positive influence on the sport of running. ●

# 671

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