



FNHA Newsletter



*Runners dash through Mount Kessler Trails for the Kessler Trail Run, Fayetteville, AR
(Picture Credit, Ironside Photography)*

The 8th Annual Kessler Trail Run (KTR) Goes Virtual!

As we mentioned in the last issue of the FNHA newsletter, our plans for the 2020 Kessler Trail Run were turned upside down by the coronavirus pandemic. Our first (very reluctant) thought was to suspend the run, simply postponing the race until next year. But then we started talking about doing a virtual KTR. After many Zoom meetings led by board member Dot Neely and with help from Board member Craig Edmonston's advanced students at the University of Arkansas, the 8th annual and first virtual Kessler Trail Run, or VKTR2020, was ready to go. The planning committee also included Amber Ebbrecht, Becky Roark, Dana Smith, Elizabeth Smith, Ivone Hudson and FNHA president Jennifer Ogle.

How will it work?

- As in the past, the Kessler Trail Run will be a community event organized by the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association and partners to support land conservation efforts in and around Fayetteville, Arkansas.

- Registration is OPEN! Runners and contributors can register on-line at <https://app.regwiz.io/register/kessler/843>. The fee for the VKTR2020 is \$25 and all runners will receive a prize provided by a VKTR partner or sponsor.
- This year, participants will self-time their own 10K or 20K trail run before December 29th, 2020.
- Local runners are encouraged to use the trails at Kessler Mountain Regional Park, located at 2600 Judge Cummings Road in Fayetteville. Runners outside of Northwest Arkansas may run any accessible soft trail.
- All runners are asked to take a VKTR2020 selfie at a trail sign for the course they run and send it, along with their run distance and time, to kesslertrailrun@gmail.com, to receive a prize provided by a VKTR2020 sponsor.
- FNHA supporters who do not run may choose the “Not Running but Want to Donate” option to make a \$20 donation in support of FNHA’s conservation efforts.
- Dark green long-sleeved shirts with a white imprint and Virtual KTR2020 design are \$25 and may be ordered as add-ons to the registration (see design below).



The logo for the 2020 Virtual Kessler Trail Run. It is printed on the dark green long-sleeved shirts that may be ordered with registration.

Some Inspiration for Runners and Their Supporters

In early July, FNHA Board member Dot Neely shared a link to an interview with her new colleague Amber Ebbrecht that was featured as an [Activacuity.com](https://www.activacuity.com) Positive Running Story. What caught Dot's eye was Amber's mention of the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association and, in particular, her enthusiastic description of participating in three successive Kessler Trail Runs. We've reprinted some excerpts from the interview to inspire VKTR2020 runners and to encourage those who haven't tried it yet to consider trail running.

Amber is Assistant Education Coordinator for the Beaver Water District and joined the planning committee for this year's VKTR. The interviewer notes that, besides being a trail runner, Amber is passionate about the environment, climate action, sustainability, art and her two sons.



Amber Ebbrecht, Assistant Education Coordinator for the Beaver Water District and planning committee member for this year's VKTR.

(Photo Credit: Ironside Photography)

Can you share your brief running history to date?

I began running in 2004, as a stress reliever to my freshman year of college. At the time, the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, track was open to the public. I would just run in circles and circles. I loved it. My first 5k was in 2008. During this time, I had no idea trail running or OCR [obstacle course racing] existed! In October 2016, I completed a Tough Mudder and just had so much fun in that ridiculous mud! In November, I ran my first trail race, a 10k. I finished an unofficial trail half marathon around Lake Fayetteville that December (I even made myself a medal out of cool sticks and a rock). January 2017 was my first 25k. In the spring of 2017, I ran my first road marathon. By July, I finished my first 50k in Trout Lake, Washington.

I ran The Kessler Trail Run for the third time in the Fall 2019. January 2020 was Athens Big Fork Trail Marathon, where I finished the 18-mile "Fun Run." Also, I must note: one aid station made

the most incredible peanut butter and jelly pancake sandwiches served by the coolest and kindest volunteers ever!

What are the top three things you enjoy most about running, and why?

I love the conversation topics that transpire during a 20-mile run. For some reason, it is around that mile marker that the good stuff comes out! There have been so many memorable stories, one-liners, and pure belly laughs behind all my miles. All of that to say, one of the things I enjoy most about running is being part of this phenomenal running community in Northwest Arkansas. The friendships I have made while running surpass the roads or trails, into being there for one another other during all the ups and downs. It is more than just friendships; it is being part of a family. And I do love this family!

I absolutely love volunteering at aid stations. It is equally the act of helping others while having fun with my friends that gives me the greatest joy! It is utterly amazing to watch the faces of the runners and gauge if they need an Oreo or an Oreo with a side of encouragement. It is also about connecting with others, to the race, and to the environment. It is about giving back.

There is also something that is extremely rewarding about running solo. I enjoy that time where I can focus on my breath, the sound of my footsteps, and perspiration soaking my hair under my backwards hat. The act of running makes me feel so strong, capable, and grateful. I constantly practice leaning into discomfort, when it arises, either physically or mentally. It is a time where I can be in and with nature, no matter the weather (besides lightning!), breathe in the fresh air, and take in the sounds and smells of my surroundings. It is a great practice in mindfulness.

What has been your favorite race that you have run so far, and what was it about this race that made it special for you?

It is so hard to choose! Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association's Kessler Trail Run, held every fall, will always hold a special spot in my heart because it was my very first trail race. Mount Kessler is also one of my favorite areas to run. Kessler is just so beautiful! The pint glass is great, as is the ever-flowing local beer (!), sponsors, location, volunteers, and music.

How have you managed to keep active and training during the COVID pandemic, and what opportunities has changing your habits opened for you?

In full transparency, there have been times when I have not managed my training well. I have had to really give myself flexibility and release some expectations during this time. At this point with running, the goal is to increase emotional well-being during this uncertain time, more than anything.

I have had time to really reflect on why I choose to run. I have found that it is truly one of my greatest anchors. It brings me joy, community, experiences, health, and connection with nature.



*Kessler Trail Run - Supporting FNHA and conservation initiatives since 2013.
(Photo Credit: Ironside Photography)*

Virtual Kessler Trail Run 2020

Whether you're a runner or a supporter, please join us for the VKTR2020.

Go to <https://app.regwiz.io/register/kessler/843> and register or contribute and perhaps order one of those good-looking commemorative shirts!

And plan to join us next year when we hope we can run together again on Kessler Mountain at the KTR2021!

Are you a member of the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association?

Help our community balance economic growth and conservation priorities. Help create a land and water legacy for future generations. Conserve wildlife habitat, rural landscapes and neighborhood open space.

Sign up or renew your membership on our website at www.fayettevillenatural.org.

Memberships:

Single \$20
Family \$40
Supporting \$100
Sustaining \$250
Steward \$500
Landmark \$1000 (Lifetime)
Heritage \$5,000 (Lifetime)

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