



RUNNINGMEDICINE

Running Medicine
**Annual
Report**

Prepared By :

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Introduction

At Running Medicine, we believe that movement is medicine. More than miles logged or finish lines crossed, movement has the power to heal, connect, and transform lives. Through running, walking, play, and shared experiences, we create spaces where individuals and families can strengthen their mind, body, and spirit together.

For over a decade, Running Medicine has grown from a simple vision into a thriving, intergenerational community rooted in love, inclusion, and wellness. As a program of Native Health Initiative, our mission is to empower families and communities to greater mind, body, and spirit through movement. We remain committed to being accessible to all people, regardless of age, fitness level, or ability, while honoring the cultural, mental, and spiritual aspects of movement that make our communities strong.

This past year was a testament to the resilience and dedication of our participants, volunteers, coaches, and community partners. Together, we continued building cultures of wellness across New Mexico, creating welcoming spaces where youth, elders, and everyone in between can move, learn, grow, and support one another. Every celebration, every shared story, and every step taken together reflects our belief that health is collective and that healing happens in community.

The pages that follow capture the impact of this work and celebrate the people who make Running Medicine possible. We invite you to reflect with us on another year of movement, connection, and purpose, and to join us as we continue building healthier communities—one step at a time.



Our Team

Running Medicine is made possible by a dedicated team whose unique roles come together to create meaningful experiences for our communities. Our Program Manager provides overall vision, leadership, and strategic direction to ensure our mission remains grounded in community wellness and cultural values. The Program Coordinator supports day-to-day operations, program implementation, and community engagement across our sites.

Our Youth Coordinator leads and nurtures youth programming, creating opportunities for young people to build confidence, connection, and a love for movement. Behind the scenes, our Logistics Coordinator keeps everything running smoothly by managing event planning, supplies, communication, and operational details. Together, we are more than individual roles—we are a collaborative team committed to creating spaces where movement, culture, and community can thrive.



Jessica Begay
Program Manager



Rod Lansing
Program Coordinator



Maya Hena
Youth Coordinator



Alicia Lopez
Logistics Coordinator
Spring/Fall 2025



Chavez Holiday
Youth Coordinator
Spring 2025



Anthony Fleg
Interim Youth Coordinator
Fall 2025

About Us

For over 10 years now, Running Medicine (referred to as RM - a program of Native Health Initiative) has focused on movement as medicine and has brought our unique program to communities around New Mexico. Our mission is empowering families and communities to greater mind, body, and spirit through movement. We accomplish this by instilling our core values in each of our programs and communities. Through them, we've seen individuals and families come together in love, support, and health.



Mission

- Inclusive to all people, all fitness and ability levels
- Provide high quality, individualized coaching to all participants at minimal cost
- Loving community where everyone supports each other's wellness
- Intergenerational – youth, elders and everyone in between!
- Emphasize the elements of “fun” and “play” in all that we do together
- Cultural, mental and spiritual aspects of running/walking will be emphasized
- Sustainability – our goal is zero waste
- Outreach to local communities and efforts to create cultures of wellness

Overview

Total of **843 registered participants** total that participated in RM programs (Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Gallup, Acoma Pueblo, Laguna Pueblo, and Pueblo of Zuni). Guests and other attendees would bring this number to **over 1000 attendees** in RM this past year! 87 were brand new to RM!



Locations

NHI Running Medicine is comprised of core programs (RM locations that are organized and funded under NHI), and partnership programs (RM locations that are organized through an external organization, but have access to RM resources and support for events). Current RM sites are listed below.

1

Albuquerque (Downtown/Westside) / Rio Rancho.

Core Program since 2016

2

Gallup, New Mexico

Core Program since June 2025

3

Pueblos of Acoma and Laguna

Core Program since 2017

4

Pueblos of Zuni

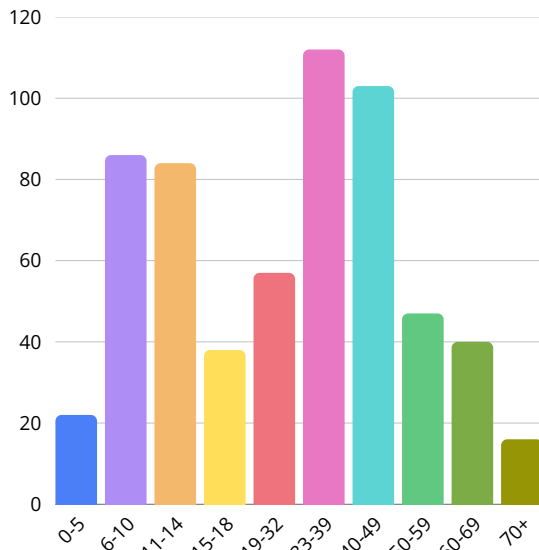
*Partnership Program
(Summer 2025)*

Demographics

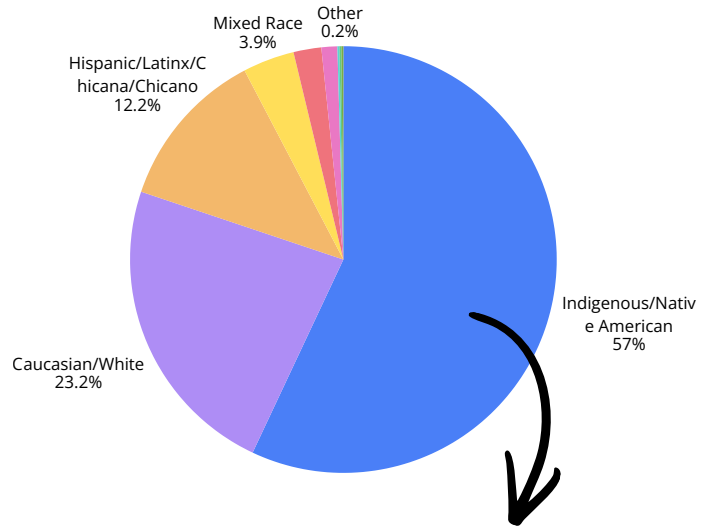
Summary

- RM proudly served 40 Indigenous Nations and Communities!
- 39 US Federally Recognized Tribes, 1 Canada First Nations, and 15 non-US Indigenous Tribes! All are self-reported.
- Majority of RM-ers are between the ages of 33 and 39.
- Youth are mostly between the ages of 6 - 14.

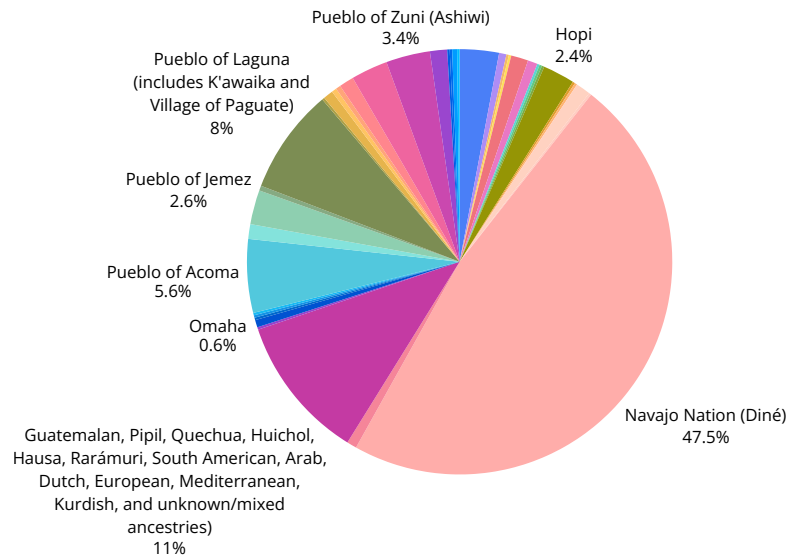
Ages of RM Participants



Ethnicity



Indigenous Tribes



Complete list of U.S. Indigenous Tribes and Canada First Nations represented:

Apache, Chahta, Chemehuevi, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Cheyenne, Chiricahua Apache, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Dakota, Fort Peck Nakona, Hopi, Jicarilla Apache, Karuk, Kawaika, Kiowa, Navajo Nation (Diné), Oglala Lakota, Omaha, Pima, Pomo/ Concow, Mandan, Potawatomi, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Isleta, Pueblo of Jemez, Pueblo of Kewa (Santo Domingo), Pueblo of Laguna (includes K'awaika and Village of Paguate), Pueblo of San Felipe, Pueblo of Santa Ana, Pueblo of Santa Clara, Pueblo of Taos, Pueblo of Tesuque, Pueblo of Zia, Pueblo of Zuni (Ashiwi), River Sioux Tribe, Sioux, Sisseton Wahpeton, Winnebago

RM Youth Program

The Running Medicine Youth Program creates opportunities for young people to discover the joy of movement while building confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging. Through culturally grounded activities, running, games, and mentorship, youth participants are encouraged to develop healthy habits, strengthen relationships, and embrace movement as a source of wellness and community. More than a running program, RM Youth is a space where young people can learn, grow, and celebrate who they are, supported by peers, families, and volunteer leaders who uplift them every step of the way. All youth are welcome and all train as a team, regardless of their USATF status.

Youth Summary

USATF Cross Country Season (2025)

Total Youth: 133

Regionals (Albuquerque, NM): 67 youth

Nationals (Shelbyville, IN – December 2025): 32 youth, 4 made All-American

USATF Track & Field Season (2026)

Total Youth: 96

Total Meets Ran: 5

Regionals (Albuquerque, NM): 65

Nationals (El Paso, TX – July 2026): 8



Snapshot

Total number of youth: 229

Participated in Spring USATF: 45

Participated in Fall USATF: 100



Youth Specific Events

August 2025. RM and Zuni Youth Enrichment had SOMOS Unidos and NM United Soccer Clinic (Zuni, NM)

September 2025. UNM Sports Medicine Sports Clinic (x2)

October 2025.

- **RM USATF Cross Country Meet** at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. 255 total participated (250 associated with a USATF run club, and 5 unattached). Run Clubs that were in attendance were: Acoma Running, Albuquerque Athletics Track, Cougar Track Club, Duke's Track Club, NB3, Running Medicine, Walatowa Running, Zia Track Club
- **NM United Flag Run**

November 2025. Indigenous Peoples' Day with SOMOS Unidos and NM United Soccer Clinic at North Domingo Baca Park (Albuquerque, NM)

January 2026.

- **Canteen 6-pack Series.** 5K Fundraiser with Canteen Brewery for RM Youth!
- **Youth Boot Camp** at Albuquerque Indoor Track. Youth got to run on an Olympic indoor track and meet team mates and coaches, and they got started on Track & Field running techniques.

March 2026. Brooks Shoes and Josh Kerr video. Josh Kerr bought XC youth shoes and the youth gathered to test them out and meet their fellow USATF Track and Field Team mates!

June 2025. Shared Practice at UNM Track and Soccer Field.



Praises for RM Volunteers!

The Running Medicine volunteer team continues to be the backbone of our programming, providing consistent support, care, and leadership across all sites. Their hard work and dedication make it possible for sessions to run safely and smoothly each week, often stepping in wherever needed without hesitation. From guiding youth and supporting runners to helping with setup, logistics, and community engagement, volunteers show up with reliability and heart. Their commitment allows the program to stay grounded in its mission and ensures that every participant is met with a welcoming, well-supported environment. We are deeply grateful for the steady presence and collective effort of our volunteers, whose contributions make Running Medicine possible.

Within Running Medicine, youth program coaches and adult/non-youth coaches each play distinct but complementary roles that support the overall health and impact of the program.

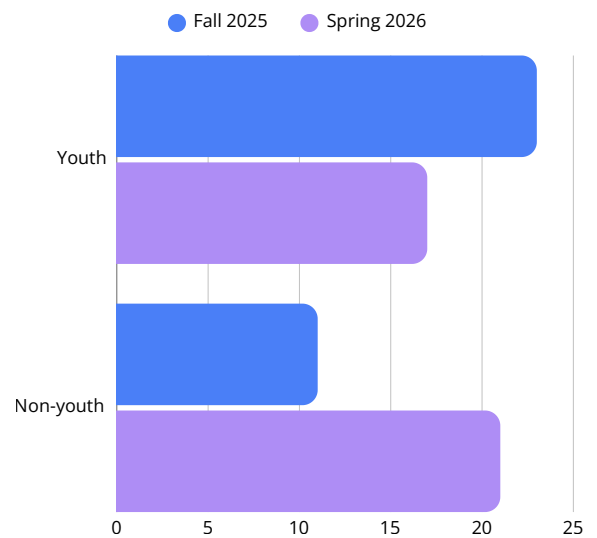
Youth program coaches focus primarily on guiding young participants through structured movement, play, and foundational running experiences. Their work often extends into youth development spaces and includes mentorship, encouragement, and direct engagement with participants in age-appropriate activities. At USATF events, youth coaches are responsible for supporting athletes in competition settings, ensuring safety, helping with logistics, and providing emotional and cultural support throughout the race experience. Their presence helps youth feel grounded, prepared, and connected during both training and competition.

In contrast, **non-youth coaches** and adult movement leaders focus on broader program facilitation and adult engagement. They support the design and delivery of overall programming, help coordinate site-based activities, and lead group movement sessions for adult participants. Their role often includes maintaining consistency across sites, supporting volunteer coordination, and ensuring that programming reflects the mission and values of Running Medicine. While they may also assist at events when needed, their primary focus is on sustaining the structure, flow, and long-term development of the program as a whole.

Together, these roles create a balanced system of support—one that nurtures youth development in high-impact moments like USATF events, while also sustaining strong, consistent programming for adult participants and community-wide engagement.



Volunteer Summary



Fall 2025 had 3 new volunteer recruits, with 31 returning from the Spring 2025 season! Spring 2026 had 5 new volunteer recruits, with 33 returning from the Fall 2025 season!



RM loves community!

Running Medicine’s presence in the local community is central to its impact and purpose. By consistently showing up in shared public spaces, neighborhood programs, and community events, RM helps create accessible opportunities for movement, wellness, and connection.

This ongoing presence builds trust over time, strengthens relationships across generations, and ensures that programming is not just an isolated activity, but a visible and integrated part of community life.

In this way, Running Medicine supports a culture of health that is rooted locally, responsive to community needs, and sustained through meaningful, everyday engagement.



RM in the Community

July 2025.

RM holds a collection for those affected by the Navajo Nation Wildfire in St. Michaels Arizona and brings a truckload of items for displaced families and livestock.

RM at Tséhootsoí Medical Center Health Fair (Navajo, AZ)

RM hosts Lollypop run at Race the Mesa (Crownpoint, NM)

August 2025.

Tamaya Health Fair/5K Run and Walk

Diabetes Education event with UNM Family Diabetes Education Program

RM Volunteer Orientation

September 2025.

RM at Collective Night (local run clubs gathering!)

Suicide Awareness Event (Indian Pueblo Cultural Center)

October 2025.

RM-hosted USATF Cross Country event.

NHI/RM accepted award from American Diabetes Association in Washington, DC!

Albuquerque Mayor makes RM Proclamation!

November 2025

Albuquerque IHS Just Move It

AIO's Indigenous People's Day Event

Gratitude Run (many RM-ers participated and volunteered!)

Hosted fitness station at NB3 Fit Day (Santa Ana Pueblo)

December 2025.

Ugly Sweater Run. Collaboration 5K with Native Women Running Albuquerque.



RM in the Community (continued)

January 2026.

RM USATF Club Championships in Tallahassee – first time ever doing this!

Tana, Nicole, Kristen - Open Women's 6k race

Matt, Justin, Seb, Gavin, Anthony, Angelo - Masters 40-49 men's 10k

Canteen 6-pack Series. 5K fundraiser for RM youth program.

Hike with Sko Outside.

MLK March at Civic Plaza (Albuquerque, NM)

February 2026.

RM Volunteers Retreat and Info Sessions

March 2026.

RM had a booth at Laguna Feast Day to share some love and information!

April 2025.

Nizhoni Days Pow Wow

CABQ Volunteer Fest

May 2026.

Self-Care Fair (El Dorado High School,
Albuquerque, NM)

NM Health Symposium

June 2026.

Fun Day with Special Olympics New Mexico, and
Opening Ceremony for the Summer Games





RM loves running races!



Running Medicine embraces every opportunity to be on the starting line.

From local community runs to regional and national races, we show up wherever there is a chance to move, connect, and celebrate running.

We have run in many places and on many courses, and each race adds to the shared experience of our program—bringing together youth, families, and adult runners in moments of challenge, joy, and growth.

No matter the distance or location, each race is an opportunity to represent our communities, support one another, and carry forward the spirit of Running Medicine wherever we go.

Races where RM-ers can be spotted! (Just to name a few)

Antelope Canyon Half and 8-mile (Page, AZ)
Big Momma Hill (Isleta Pueblo)
Bluewater Canyon 5-mile (Bluewater/Grants, NM)
Crossroads Run (Held on various locations on Pueblo lands)
Duke City Marathon (Albuquerque, NM)
DWI Awareness 5K (Gallup, NM)
Heart & Sole's Full Moon Runs
Hood Mesa Trail Run (Farmington, NM)
Jim Thorpe Run (NHI sponsored for RM registrants, Albuquerque, NM)
Joy Ride and Run 1-mile and 5-miles (Gallup, NM)
Law Enforcement Torch Run (Pueblo of Laguna)
Lily Barack's Ladies Night Run (Albuquerque, NM)
Lucky Hat Run, NHI Fundraiser (Albuquerque, NM)
Narbona Pass Classic (Arizona)
NHI's Annual Gratitude Run
Race the Mesa (Crownpoint, NM)
Rad Dash (Albuquerque, NM)
Rez Twilight 5K/10K (St. Michaels, AZ)
Rio Grande Half Marathon (Albuquerque, NM)
Run Collective
Run for the Zoo
Run to Break the Silence (NHI sponsored for RM registrants, Albuquerque, NM)
Sandia Crossing Prayer Run (Albuquerque, NM)
Shiprock Half/Full Marathon (Shiprock, NM)
Summer Twilight Series (RM, NB3, Dukes)



Survey Results

The RM Spring 2026 season had a **strong positive impact on participants' physical activity, wellness, and sense of community.** Respondents consistently described RM as a safe, inclusive, and supportive space that motivates healthy movement and meaningful connections.

Key Endpoints

89% of RM participants registered for the RM seasons.

We looked at the following outcomes:

1

Participation and Engagement

2

Movement & Physical Activity

3

Wellness Impact

4

Community and Belonging

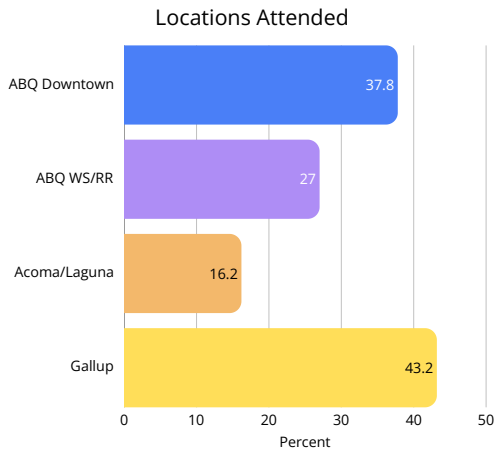
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Community Suggestions

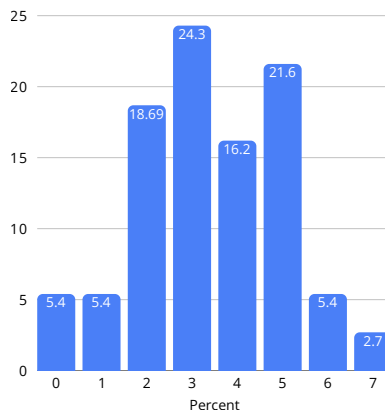


Results

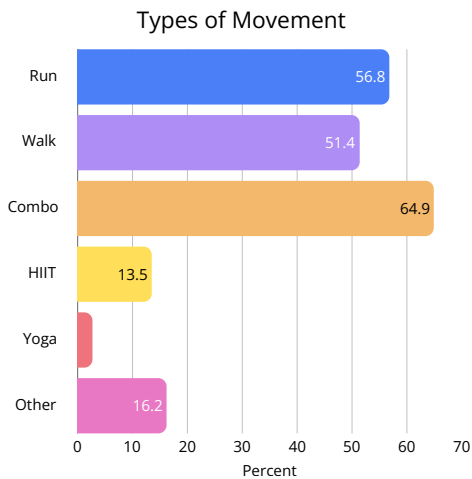
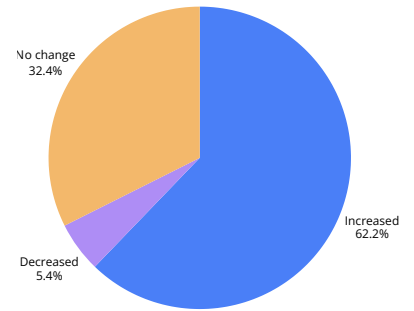
Based on Participant Survey



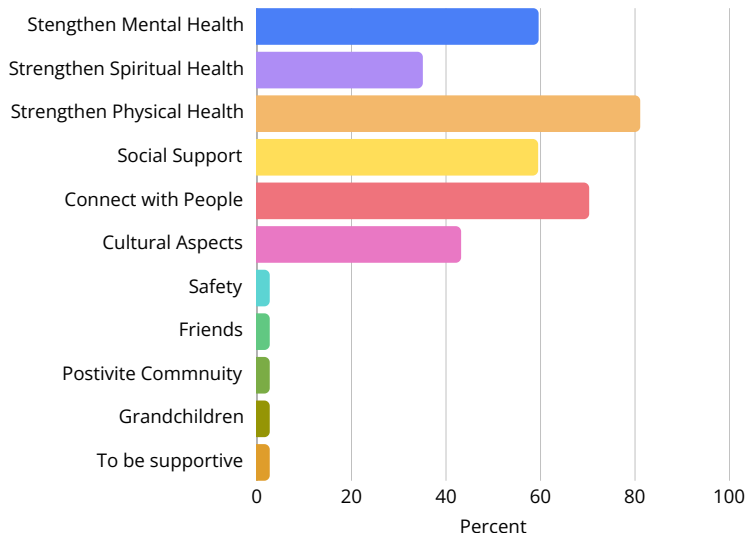
Before RM, how many day per week did you get 30 minutes or more of exercise?



How has this changed during an RM season?



What were your main motivations to attend RM?



Overall Progam Satisfaction!

Most participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

- RM provided a **safe atmosphere (86%)**
- RM was **inclusive (84%)**
- They felt **supported by RM leaders (78%)**
- The season was **well organized (76%)**
- They were **well informed about RM events (78%)**
- RM contributed to **broader community wellness efforts (70%)**



Testimonials

“the static and dynamic stretches lead by the leaders had a great impact to increase my endurance of running since the two stretching techniques benefit two different stages that our bodies are in when prep to run or recover.”

“RM has gotten me out of the house with my husband and kids and helped me get moving and still get in that family time.”

“[RM] has helped me stay sober and healthy”

“This season I was able to focus on myself. Along the way, I developed a health issue, but my exercise helped me stay focused to get better. In addition, I challenged myself to join a 100 mile running challenge and should complete the mileage tomorrow.”

“Run longer than usual” and “participating in 5k and JMI”

“One day we were running and it started raining. I gritted my teeth and started muttering as the rain hit me. I looked up and the runner in front of me put her palms up to praise the rain. I did the same and changed my mindset to being grateful for the rain. That was my lesson this season - be grateful!”

Reported Themes

Participants frequently described RM as:

- Inspirational and motivating
- A source of encouragement and accountability
- A place to find friendship and community
- An opportunity to practice gratitude and healing
- A supportive environment that promotes wellness of mind, body, and spirit

Looking Ahead: Responding to Community Feedback

We deeply value the feedback shared by our participants, families, and volunteers. Running Medicine has always been shaped by the voices and experiences of our community, and we are committed to continuously growing in ways that reflect those needs and hopes.

Based on this season's recommendations, Running Medicine plans to:

- **Incorporate more trail-based activities** by identifying accessible local trails and creating opportunities for participants to experience movement in natural spaces that foster connection to the land and one another.
- **Expand outreach and visibility efforts** through increased community partnerships, enhanced social media engagement, and broader promotion of program offerings to ensure more individuals and families know they are welcome at Running Medicine.
- **Improve communication and reminders** by strengthening our use of social media, email, and text-based updates so participants are better informed about celebrations, potlucks, special events, and seasonal activities.
- **Increase leadership engagement** across sites by continuing to support and empower local volunteer leaders, creating more opportunities for leadership presence, collaboration, and relationship-building within each community.
- **Continue prioritizing community connection** by preserving the aspects of Running Medicine that participants value most: welcoming spaces, opportunities for fellowship, family participation, and movement that nurtures mind, body, and spirit.

As we look toward future seasons, our commitment remains the same: to listen, learn, and evolve alongside our community. Every suggestion shared is a reminder that Running Medicine is strongest when it is built collectively, and we are grateful for the trust our community places in us to continue creating spaces of healing, belonging, and wellness through movement.



Conclusion

As we reflect on another year of Running Medicine, we are reminded that our impact cannot be measured solely in miles run, races completed, or registration numbers. It lives in the friendships formed, the confidence built in our youth, the laughter shared during stretches, the prayers carried on our runs, and the countless moments when individuals and families chose to show up for themselves and one another.

This year, Running Medicine welcomed more than 1,000 participants and guests into our community, representing generations of movers and a rich diversity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities across New Mexico and beyond. Together, we demonstrated that wellness is not an individual pursuit—it is something we create collectively. Every step taken in community became an act of healing, resilience, and hope.

Note from Program Manager

On a personal note, this report marks a season of community growth and resilience for Running Medicine. It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to walk, run, laugh, celebrate, and grow alongside this incredible community. Community members continue to teach me that movement is far more than exercise; it is medicine, connection, ceremony, and love in action.

Thank you to our participants, volunteers, coaches, staff, community partners, and families for trusting me with this journey. Running Medicine has never belonged to one person—it belongs to all of us. I have nothing but immense gratitude and confidence that this community will continue to move forward together, carrying the spirit of Running Medicine into every season ahead.

Running Medicine will forever hold a special place in my heart. I will always be cheering for this community, and I know that as long as we continue to move together, we will continue to heal together—one step, one mile, and one act of kindness at a time.

Jessica G Begay

Jessica Begay, MS
NHI Running Medicine
Program Manager



Thank you to all of our Partners!

Many of our events would not have been possible without the love and support of our RM, NHI, and Albuquerque community. This page only names a few of those who have helped us with their time and energy (and sometimes monies) spent.

Indigenous Organizations

Native Strength Revolution
Wings of America
Native Women Running
Notah Begay III Foundation
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
Zuni Youth Enrichment Project

Local Community and City Organizations

KidsCook!
Bernalillo Sheriff Department
ABQ Parks and Recreation
ONE Albuquerque, Mayor's Office
SOMOS Unidos Foundation, NM United
American Lung Association
American Diabetes Association
Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Mexico
Presbyterian Ear Institute
Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women

Businesses

Gatorade
Bike In Coffee
Michael Thomas Coffee
Southwest Healing Massage
Canteen Brewhouse
BeWell NM

Running Organizations

Heart & Sole
Dukes Running Club
Runners for Public Lands
Renew Earth Running
Brooks Beasts
Bosque Running Shop

Schools and Universities

Native American Community Academy
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
Central New Mexico Community College
University of New Mexico (UNM)
UNM Health Sciences Campus, and several other departments
UNM School of Medicine, Sports Medicine



Thank
You



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Native Health Initiative

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