

# BREVARD COLLEGE

BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA

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## **Running Camp Returns to College for 51st Year**

BREVARD — For locals who wonder about the packs of young people running around town and down the trails of our nearby parks, here's the answer: Brevard Distance Runners Camp has returned to Brevard College (BC) for its 51st summer.

Taking advantage of the lush and varied landscapes of Transylvania County, this renowned camp serves as a transformative platform for both individuals and teams to “elevate their running abilities and embrace their full potential.” The first week focuses on individual athletes, while the second and third week bring in full cross-country teams.

This year's camp, held July 2-22, centers around an immersive experience on Brevard College's campus. The facility's rich history and connection to the camp's founders, Norm and Nancy Witek, provides an idyllic setting that encapsulates the spirit of the camp.

“When we first started, we did everything,” reflected Mrs. Witek in the weeks leading up to camp.

Mr. Witek is a Hall of Fame Cross Country & Track Coach who coached at BC from 1967 until 1986, producing a record 5 consecutive NJCAA Championship teams. Mrs. Witek worked in the College's Admissions office in the 1970s. Due to his immense accomplishments as a coach (and thanks to one of his former athletes who went on to work at Adidas), Mr. Witek even had an Adidas running shoe named after him: the “Witek.” Today, Adidas also sponsors the camp.

“Our camp is the only thing outside of Europe that Adidas in Germany funds,” explained Mr. Witek. Everything else in the USA is funded through the American Adidas company.

That first year, the camp hosted 30 adults from the Florida Track Club. This year, close to 1,000 athletes are registered for the three-week camp, and there's a wait list. The program is only limited based on the number of runners that can converge upon Dupont State Recreational Forest and Pisgah National Forest at a time, due to permit restrictions and competing foot traffic with other visitors.

Since its inception, Brevard Distance Runners Camp has consistently attracted aspiring athletes, seasoned runners, and running enthusiasts. Most participants come from across the Southeast, and an estimated 80% of the staff return each year. Some staff members even earn 5-, 10-, 15-, 20-, 25- and 30-year certificates for their continued involvement.

The program has evolved into an iconic institution over the years, drawing on the wisdom of accomplished coaches, celebrated athletes and industry pioneers. It has become synonymous with excellence, offering a comprehensive curriculum designed to address every aspect of a runner's journey.

“The fact that schools from South Florida will send their teams all the way up here to train over their summer break is what always impresses me,” said Phil de Montmollin, Assistant Athletic Director for Communications and a native of Miami. “Once I saw the caliber of high school programs from Florida that were represented, I knew it was a big deal.”

Participants learn from a distinguished lineup of experts who have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of running excellence. These esteemed coaches and accomplished athletes share their insights and experiences, instilling invaluable knowledge that extends far beyond the tracks.

At the core of the camp is a profound commitment to holistic development. The program encompasses a wide range of topics, including: Technique Refinement; Endurance Mastery; Injury Prevention and Recovery; Mental Resilience; and Fueling for Success. Campers spend their mornings running in the cool mountain air, and then attend lectures, drills and other activities in the afternoons.

Brevard Distance Runners Camp hit a major milestone when it became incorporated in 1990 after separating from other partnerships.

“That's when it really took off,” said Mr. Witek. “That's when I was able to make it the camp that I thought it should be, and that's when we started challenge courses.” These group challenges focus on teaching runners how they relate to one another on the team. “Coaches

can watch and see which members are leaders and who has problem-solving skills,” continued Mr. Witek.

Mr. Witek brought in the idea from the First Year Experience at Brevard College, which he helped manage when he was Dean of Students in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

#### QUOTE

Beyond the enriching sessions, Brevard Distance Runners Camp fosters a sense of community and camaraderie. Engaging social events, team-building activities, and opportunities to interact with guest speakers create lasting memories and forge connections with fellow runners.

This year, the Witek’s have started to hand off some of the responsibilities of the camp to their assistant directors, but remain committed to continuing its legacy of inspiring runners to surpass their limits and achieve greatness.

“We will never sacrifice the quality of the program just to bring in more numbers (of campers),” said Mr. Witek.

*Brevard College is consistently recognized as one of the best liberal arts colleges. The College’s focus on experiential learning, small class sizes, and location in the mountains of Western North Carolina near Asheville makes Brevard a top choice college for students around the world.*

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