

Ready, set ... SNOWSHOE

Sandia, Santa Fe snowshoe classics ready to go racing through a winter wonderland

BY ELIZABETH SECOR
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The Sandia Mountains and Santa Fe are hosting races perfect for those who like the cold, running (or walking) and a challenge.

The 5K Sandia Snowshoe Classic is slated for Saturday, Jan. 24, with the 6K Santa Fe Snowshoe Classic following on Saturday, Jan. 31.

"The (Santa Fe) Snowshoe Classic is a way for runners and hikers to get out and compete on a beautiful course in the snow," Svati Narula, assistant race director for the Santa Fe Snowshoe Classic, said.

Ben Shulman, race director of the Santa Fe Snowshoe Classic, said the event attracts a mix of competitive runners and easygoing hikers.

"This kind of is a unique space in-between, where it caters to both people that want to be really competitive and they want to run as quickly as they can, and kind of a unique discipline..." Shulman said. "We get a lot of people that (are) just excited to try something new and have an excuse to get out in winter."

He said one of the great things

about snowshoeing is that there is not a high expectation of running fast because of its difficulty, and the race will feature competitors of all experience, speed and fitness levels.

Mike Madden, race director for the Sandia Snowshoe Classic, said the Sandia race is a fun event with championship runners to everyday runners and walkers.

"We have the full spectrum of runners," Madden said. "The fastest ones they'll finish in about 30 minutes, or even less ... and the slowest runners about an hour and a half or two hours."

Madden said the snow is looking good for the race, even with the dry weather the area has been experiencing.

Helen Wang, a former racer and now volunteer coordinator for Santa Fe, said participants line up at the start based on how fast they plan to complete the course.

"What I love about this race is that people might take their performance quite seriously, but spirits are high," Wang said. "People are really friendly. I think it's like a very cheery, convivial atmosphere."

Narula said the first time she ran the Santa Fe Snowshoe Classic, she found it was a really nice way to enjoy the winter and go out running during a time of year when there are not normally races in the mountain area.

"You're just surrounded by trees and the Santa Fe (National) Forest, and you're in a winter wonderland," Narula said, "and the course is really nice because it's sort of just loops through the forest."

"One of the things I love about racing, and particularly doing trail races, is that I get to follow a course through the woods that I probably wouldn't take myself," Narula said.

The Santa Fe Snowshoe Classic ends with hot chocolate, bonfires and a raffle.

"It has a really great community feel and cozy feel at the end that I think makes it really special," Wang said.

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