

# Guide to Non-Binary Races in Charlotte

## Table of Contents

Importance of Non-Binary Inclusion in Races	2
List of Inclusive Races	7
2025 Superlatives	7
How many races Hare Bandits got to successfully added the NB category	9
How to Advocate for Inclusive Races	9
Resources	13



# Why is having a Non-binary category important?

**Written By: Ab McCarthy**

Imagine this, if you will:

You're young, around high school age, and you walk into a hair salon. You have a specific goal in mind; cut this damn hair off. You just moved from a different part of the country and the humidity and stickiness of this warm southern state is driving you crazy. You tell the stylist that you want it all chopped off and you are absolutely sure this is what you want, with references and everything. The stylist gives you a curious look and completes the cut. There's a feeling in your chest that you can't quite explain when you look at the finished product in the mirror. Relief? Satisfaction? Anxiety? Those don't sound correct. Then, once you get home, you reach the word you sought.

*Euphoria.*

Years go by. You experiment with your appearance. When others refer to you as a girl, the feeling in your chest begins to shrink. It doesn't feel good. You cycle through names, pronouns, and labels like they're going out of style. You never find the right one, and by the time you graduate, the pit in your stomach and now what feels like a cavern in your chest has made themselves known to you. You've always been nothing if not eager to learn, so you dive into the history of the LGBTQ+ community, as you know you're a part of it. One thing sticks out.

Gender non-conformity. Specifically, being non-binary.

A lightbulb appears above your head as if you were in a cartoon. The word "non-binary" was a consistency throughout your self exploration; an umbrella you wear like protection. The euphoria settles in like a rolling tide from the ocean. The dysphoria melts away. You are finally, *finally*, satisfied with what you have.

A few more years go by. You were never really athletic, but something compels you about this running team you've joined. You didn't know that this kind of inclusivity even existed in Charlotte. You quit your retail job where you never felt like you belonged, and started a new one. You can start fresh with no judgement.

Then, you start racing. It feels so good to get outside and do something to improve yourself. Your younger self would laugh if they knew you were running *for fun*. You

know you're a slower runner, but that's okay! The team is full of those who are starting from the beginning, just like you. You learn and you grow.

You start to notice a pattern when you register for races with the team. You register as your gender at birth, because there is no other option, really. That pit in your stomach comes back, but you don't falter. You're doing the damn thing and that's what matters.

Then, you are elated when you finally register for a race that actually has a non-binary division. You start to wonder...

Why can't every race do the same thing? Why would you not be granted that choice?

The reason is simple; the fear of change.

The broad concept of it is normal; I even have a hard time adjusting, sometimes, but keep in mind that everyone is different. No one is exactly like the other. No one fits into the same box as the next person.

"But, Ab, aren't you just repeating yourself?"

Well, of course, but you don't have to phrase it like *that*. Emphasis is a wonderful tool to have at your disposal. It gets your point across, and that point is that change is also natural. How else would we navigate through this thing called 'life' if it wasn't?

However, the math is easy; even I can do it, and I suck at math. Change plus emphasis equals progress, no matter how big or how small. Progress is something to be encouraged, especially in the LGBTQ+ *and* the running community.

It's not a difficult equation. Offering the choice to register in this particular division to non-binary people gives us the ability to do hard things, amazing things, just like our binary counterparts. It validates our existence, as it has been smothered for years. It proves the notion that representation matters and should be celebrated. We should not have to keep bugging race directors to change our division *after* we register; it should already be offered. Running a race and receiving recognition for it is a pivotal moment in anyone's life; why should it only be limited to just the male and female divisions?

Newsflash: it should not.

Here's something else to ponder; adding a non-binary category promotes gender euphoria. Euphoria can be compared to a runner's high. Everyone deserves to chase that high.

Having a non-binary category at every race [and it does not have to specifically be marketed towards the LGBTQ+ community] is not only progressive allyship, but fosters a safe environment where we can heal and be ourselves in a world that is actively attempting to suppress us.

I tried to fit myself into a mold that was not made for me, all those years ago. No one should have to be forced to go through that same experience. No one should have to relive that experience in the running community. It's dysphoric, harmful, and it only makes things worse.

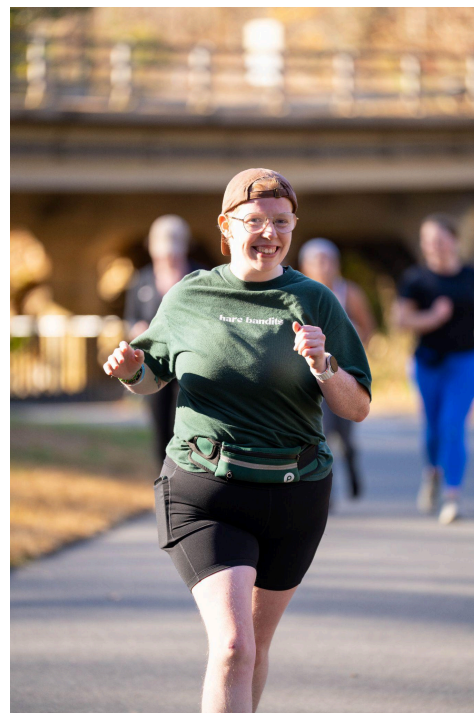
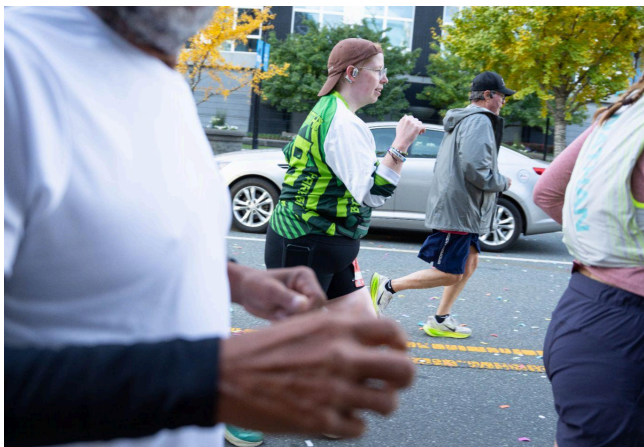
Non-binary excellence, granted by this category, is resistance. Resistance is necessary in our current political climate. It is a testament to our younger selves that we are here, we exist, and we aren't going anywhere. We owe ourselves some grace, so why not give it? I certainly owe it to my younger self to keep pushing forward; everyone else should, too. Call me the Little Engine That Could. If you know what I'm referencing, you get extra brownie points. Or kudos, if you're thinking in Strava terms.

Adding a non-binary category may be a subtle change, but it's a big one that provides hope for the future. We could all use some hope right now, yes?

Not unlike cutting your hair, it's simple, yet effective.

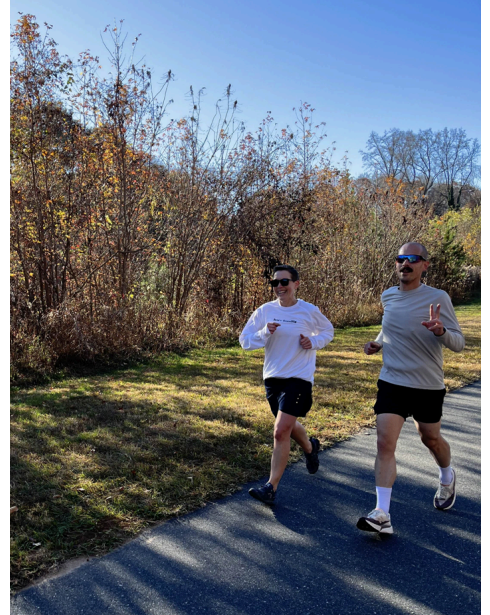
Plus...it's not that hard. Technologically speaking, anyway.

So, with that, let's get to work.



As a parent, it means experiencing the joy of my child's face lighting up as they realize: "They have your category...we can run together!" When we create space for others, we build a more inclusive future for all.

- Mer

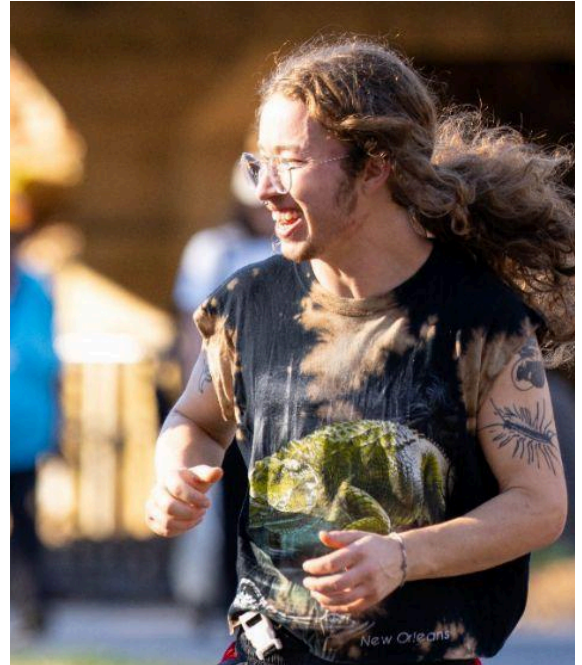


It makes me feel safe and heard even though I mostly choose to race in the male category. When I see "non-binary" on a sign-up it feels like progress towards a future where people can be themselves always and never have to pretend. It makes my soul happy to know my friends and family will be accepted the way they are.

- Andrew

Having the non-binary category at a race establishes a baseline of queer and trans acceptance at the event. Without having to be branded explicitly as a queer friendly event, I know that at least on the side of the organizers, the vibe will be good.

- Jason



When I came out as trans, I gave up on running races. I didn't want to deal with anything related to being trans in sports, especially not competition. I even kicked every single person off my Strava followers list, I unfollowed everyone. I made my account fully private, and hid all my past activities completely. I ran way less because what was the point? When I see inclusiveness and non-binary categories in races it allows me to do these things I thought I would have to give up.

- Jo

# List of Inclusive Races

## Spring

- Stride for Pride 5K and Relay
- Run Jen Run 5k
- Sarcoma Sucks 5K Charity Run
- Charlotte Dog Jog 5K
- Communication Counts 5K
- Five Points 5K
- RaceFest 10K, 10K Relay, Half Marathon
- Elizabeth 8K
- Run the Loop \*returning in 2027
- Mental Health Matters 5K
- NoDa 5K



## Summer/Fall

- Q Fitness and Wellness 5K
- Run the Wild 5K
- Run the South
- 4 on the Fourth
- Stride for Pride 5K and Relay
- Around the Crown 10K
- Fight the Flame
- Runway 5K
- CPI Turkey Trot
- Novant Health 5K, Relay, Half, Full



# 2025 Superlatives

## Most Participation

Race with the most participation in the Non-Binary category

Around the Crown 10K

21 NB runners in 2025, dethroning Stride for Pride with 3 more runners and making Charlotte History.



## Best Prize

Race with the Best Prize for the Non-Binary Category  
Runway 5K  
Flight points equivalent to \$750 able to use on the winner's next vacation

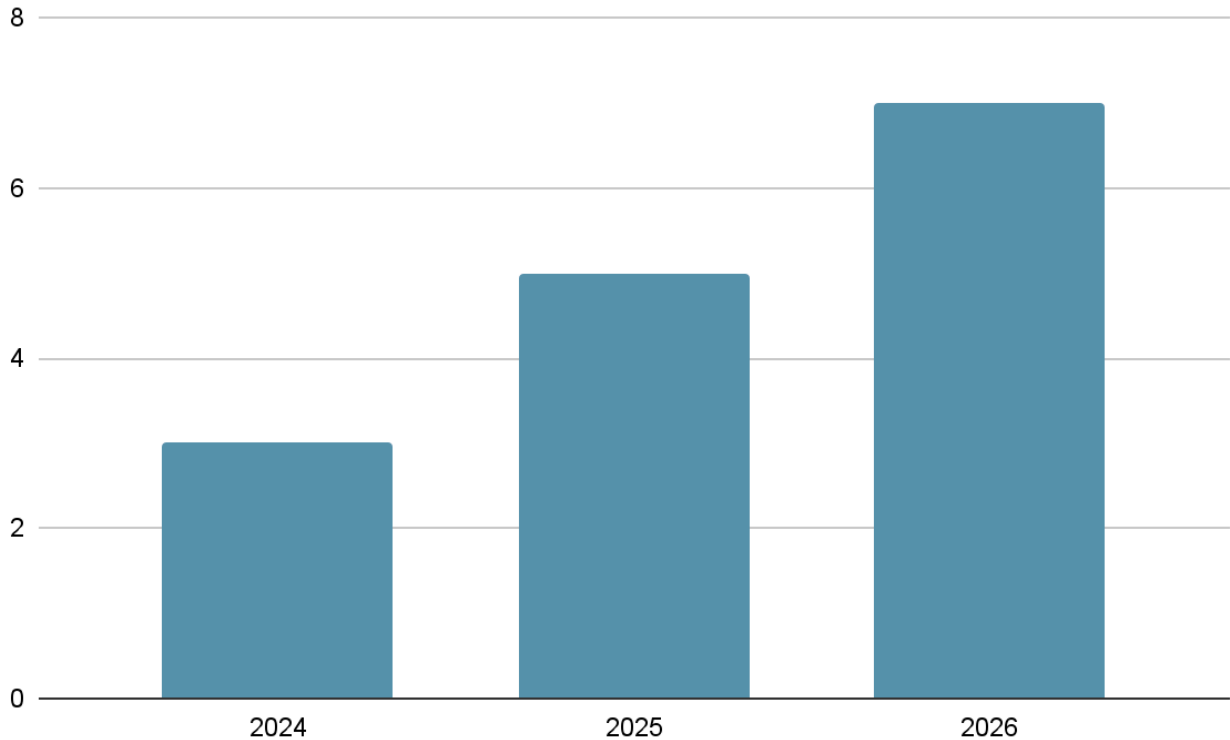


## Most Pride

Race with the Most Pride  
Stride for Pride 5K & Relay  
Included an entire market of queer small businesses and nonprofits. Showcased queer artwork. MC was a drag queen. Truly euphoric, Colors and smiles everywhere!



## How many races Hare Bandits got to successfully added the NB category



2024- 3 races

2025- 5 races

2026- 7 races [and counting]

## How to Advocate for Inclusive Races

- 1) Consider only supporting races that include the non-binary category. You can check this under gender when you get into registration [or browse page 4 & 5 of this guide]. Money talks, and once races that choose not to be inclusive start feeling it in their bank accounts they'll have to reconsider.
- 2) Send emails to directors of races that don't include the category. Tell them why it matters and why their support would mean so much.

Here we have included a sample email that you can send to races to help our community advocate for the Non-Binary category. The amount of inclusive races in Charlotte is growing and we believe we could turn into the most inclusive city for runners in the country with your help!

Sometimes finding a race's contact email can be a little tricky. Our method is to scan the race's website first. If the only contact listed there is from Start2Finish or another race management company - keep looking. It's better to contact the organizers of the race directly. If you can't find it on the race website, try the company or non-profit that puts the race on. Usually they will have a website with an email you can contact to see if you can find the race director or organizer. We've also had a small amount of luck in Instagram DMs, but try email first!



If you don't hear anything back in 2 weeks, we strongly recommend following up. There's two realities here, the first being that they are just incredibly busy as race organizers tend to be overworked and underpaid, and the other is that sometimes they are secretly wishing you'll just go away so they don't have to worry about



inclusion. Be polite, but make it known that you won't be going away until you receive a firm answer. If they do end up saying "no" to including the category, while it's not ideal and we may not agree with it, we do have to respect their choice. We don't have to support their race though if they don't support our community!

## **SAMPLE EMAIL:**

Hi there!

I'm reaching out as a runner who cares deeply about creating inclusive racing environments. I believe all athletes deserve to feel welcome, seen, and able to compete authentically.

Many of us love participating in races like yours! However, I noticed that your registration form doesn't currently include a Non-Binary category for runners to select.

There are countless non-binary runners in our community who would deeply appreciate having this option. The impact of being able to register and race authentically is about more than just a checkbox; it's about feeling valued and recognized as we are. Many of us who identify as male or female often take this basic recognition for granted.

Many other races have already added this option to their signup forms - including Around the Crown, Elizabeth 8K, Communication Counts, Runway, Racefest, and others. The New York City Marathon also offers a non-binary category with strong participation. Adding this is straightforward through platforms like RunSignup or Race Roster and can be updated easily.

I'm attaching a link to a resource packet about non-binary inclusion in running if you'd like to learn more about why this matters: [Non-Binary Inclusion Packet](#) And also Charlotte's Inclusive Races Guide <LINK OUR PACKET> to give you more insight on our local races.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have or assist in any way I can. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

I sincerely hope you'll consider the importance of this issue!

Thanks,  
<YOUR NAME>



3.) Sign up for our Stride for Pride 5K & Relay to help us support the queer community and raise awareness.

4.) Support the Hare Bandits by donating financially or physically [list of items needed on our website]. Your support allows us to spend less time on raising money to pay for things like race admission and shoes for low income runners and spend more time advocating for our community.



## Resources

### [Non-Binary Inclusion Packet](#)

Formulated specifically for race directors looking to add the category or be more inclusive but who may not know where to start.

### [Trans/Nonbinary Education & Trainings](#)

TNET [Transgender/Nonbinary Education & Training] is an education-focused agency that offers training, workshops, and print materials designed to help all people understand and interact with trans and nonbinary people more effectively.

## [The Life of a Non-Binary Runner](#)

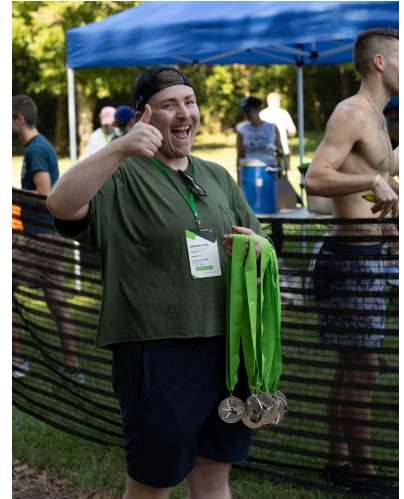
Runner's World Article

## [Running as a Non-binary Athlete](#)

Personal essay on the non-binary running experience

## [Other Resources & Reading Material](#)

From [nonbinaryrunning.com](http://nonbinaryrunning.com)



## Contact Us

Have questions we can answer? Want to share how our work has made a difference in your life? We want to hear from you!

The best way to contact us is through our website or by email. Our Instagram dm's are often full and can be overlooked.

[info@harebandits.org](mailto:info@harebandits.org)

[www.harebandits.org](http://www.harebandits.org)

Want to join our team? Check out our open season dates on our website under the JOIN THE TEAM tab.

