

RUNNING FESTIVAL EXPECTED TO DRAW RECORD NUMBER

Originally published April 27, 2010

By Stan Goldberg
News-Post Staff

A record number of runners are expected for this weekend's eighth Frederick Running Festival, with the half marathon already sold out.

Race organizers say about 6,300 will run in the five events that make up the Festival -- the full marathon, half marathon, four-person relay, 5K and Kids Fun Run.

Last year, 6,015 runners took part in the event, which begins Saturday night with the 5K run. The other races are Sunday, starting at 6:30 a.m.

"We don't do a lot of marketing; the race just speaks for itself," race director Rachel Ridgway said Monday. "We put on a good race, the runners are happy and they spread the word."

The half marathon has been sold out with 3,150 runners compared to 2,933 last year. The marathon has 1,100 runners so far, 165 more than last year.

Numbers for the four-person relay and the 5K are slightly down from last year.

Among those returning is defending women's marathon champion Denise Knickman, who finished the race in 3:02.20 last year. Other top returning women include Laurie Ann Dymond, who finished fifth last year, and Katherine Claggett, who was 10th.

Men's defending marathon champion Dickson Mercer will not compete because of an injury. The top returning male finisher from last year is Karsten Brown, who was seventh.

Ridgway said the marathon doesn't draw many elite runners because the \$500 prize money to the winners is not that large compared to most marathons.

"We offer small prize money compared to other races," she said. "Because the marathon is so physically demanding elite runners are more prone to pick one with a bigger purse."

Fifty-four percent of the participants in the Festival will be women, a change from previous years when about 60 percent were men.

"It's an industry trend," Ridgway said. "I think more and more women are looking toward running as a way of staying fit."



There will be runners coming from 38 states along with Canada and Germany. Most of the runners will be from Maryland, D.C. and Pennsylvania.

For the third year, the events will start and end at the Frederick Fairgrounds. The first five Festivals began and ended at Harry Grove Stadium. Ridgway said the different venue allowed the race to grow because of increased parking and more room at the finish line.

The course has one minor change. Runners no longer go up Fairmont Avenue when they get to Frederick Memorial Hospital. Instead, they will use Trail Avenue.

Ridgway said the use of Fairmont Avenue limited the access to the hospital's main entrance for about 45 minutes.

The time for the start of the 5K race has also been moved to 6 p.m., an hour earlier than past years.

"We found out we were handing out awards in the dark," Ridgway said. "This will allow people to hang out and have fun before it gets dark."

There will be a total of 500 volunteers and 17 aid stations.