

# Marathon article in Frederick Newspost...

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## **Record numbers expected at festival**

Originally published April 30, 2008

By Stan Goldberg

Sports Editor

The Frederick Running Festival will have a record number of athletes, a new course and a new starting time when it is held this weekend.

About 5,200 people are expected for the event, which includes a 5K race on Saturday night, a marathon, half-marathon and team relay race on Sunday.

That's almost four times more than the 1,320 that took part in the first event in 2003 and about 1,900 more than last year.

Organizers said that word of mouth by the runners and a good marketing job has accounted for the increase.

There will be 1,200 people in the marathon, 2,300 in the half marathon, at least 800 in the 5K, 160 to 170 teams in the four-person team relay and 200 to 300 in the kids run.

The marathon, half-marathon and relay races are filled. As of Tuesday, there were still about 75 openings left for the 5K.

Last year, about 1,500 people were in the half-marathon and 1,000 in the marathon.

The runners come from 43 states along with five countries, including two runners from Sweden.

The courses have also changed. The races will begin at the Frederick Fairgrounds. In past years, they began and ended at Harry Grove Stadium.

The runners in all races will go through downtown Frederick. The marathoners also will go to the Spring Ridge development.

"I would say it's a flatter course," race director Rachel Ridgway said at a press conference Tuesday. "It has five hills (all in Spring Ridge), but they really aren't that bad."

Limited parking at Harry Grove Stadium was one reason the course was changed. The organizers used shuttle busses, but that didn't work as well as hoped.

"We had a very successful event for the last five years," Ridgway said. "The only wrench in the works last year was that we ran out of parking spaces and had to shuttle people in and out. I think the runners this year will be very pleased knowing on race day that the logistics will be a lot easier."

She said anyone -- runners and spectators -- can park at the Fairgrounds.

The races will start at 6:30 a.m., an hour earlier than last year. Ridgway feels the early start will make it easier for local churchgoers on Sunday.

"We already planned to move it up to 7 a.m.," Ridgway said. "Then, once we started looking at the time schedule and the course that we wanted to do, it became real apparent that 6:30 a.m. would be the better time. It helps us avoid 98 percent of all the church services. Just by modifying the time frame a little bit, we're able to make life a lot easier for the residents."

Organizers didn't say if any former champions would be competing.

Chris Zieman was the top male marathon finisher last year and Jean Shelton the top female finisher.

Machael Wardian set the record for the marathon with a time of 2:29.12 in 2005. The female record is 2:53.44, set by Jenn Shelton last year.

Registration will take place Saturday and there will be a kickoff party at the Fairgrounds.

<http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/sports/display.htm?StoryID=74396> (if you also want to see the file photo)