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Fourth Annual South Park Trail Marathon and Half Up, up and away

By Lori Bennett Correspondent



Only 28 miles to go

Runners in the 2017 annual South Park Marathon and Half line up to run the half marathon or full marathon beginning at South Park City in Fairplay. This year's race will be June 9 and is the fourth annual race in Fairplay. Most marathons are approximately 26.2 miles, but this course offers two free "bonus" miles. Last year 114 runners participated, and many stayed around to eat, drink and sleep in Fairplay after the race. Runners also do volunteer work on trails in the South Park area and will be working four full days over the summer doing trail work.

(Photo by Lori Bennett/The Flume)

What begins at the South Park City Museum in Fairplay, requires you to leap over rivers, plow through snow in June and scramble over 3,268 feet. The answer is, the Fourth Annual South Park Trail Marathon and Half, June 9, 2018.

The race is in its fourth year, sponsored by the Human Potential Running Series, which also sponsors the Silverheels 100

race and the Sheep Mountain Race, both of which take place in Park County in July.

The course

"Starting at an elevation of 9,915 feet and topping out at 13,183 feet, the South Park Marathon and Half are among the highest in Colorado. Marathoners run from the South Park Historic District all the way to the top of the Peerless Mine, per the HPRS website.

www.humanpotentialrunning.com.

Runners will see the Colorado gold rush terrain where mining prospectors sought and found gold, fortunes, famine, illnesses and the beautiful scenery around South Park.

The marathon will be under 28 miles (two "bonus" miles), and the half marathon course will be 15 miles, also with two "free" miles added. The mileage can vary depending on snow conditions the day of the race.

Why?

Many who are not marathon runners or "ultramarathon" runners often scratch their heads and wonders "Why?"

Many runners have a variety of reasons why they run 13, 25, 50 or 100 miles in one day.

According to “Sherpa” John Lacroix, race director for the HPRS, “If you were to ask one of them, they’d tell you ‘because I can.’”

“Ultimately, what we’ve discovered is that there are many reasons why individuals run these long distances. For most it brings purpose to their lives, it provides them with a safe space to work through life’s various challenges, because they want to belong to a wonderful community of like-minded individuals, or simply because they enjoy the challenge of seeing just what is humanly possible,” Lacroix added.

New this year

“Our series focuses even more on positive social change through athletic endeavors. We’re excited to have a new finish line arch to celebrate our runners at the end.”

A portion of the proceeds from the races goes to various fundraising endeavors. This year the recipient organization will be 2-Mile High Inc., which is a nonprofit agency that works for the future development and marketing of the South Park Recreation Center.

Why run in South Park?

Lacroix said, “People like the solitude. Here we’re afforded an amazing opportunity for runners to enjoy the natural beauty of the area without the hustle and bustle of a busy town or city.

“Fairplay is quaint, and we celebrate the quaint nature of the area without imposing on it, or burdening the local infrastructure. Our runners also really enjoy the challenges of competing twomiles above sea level, and taking on the mountains.”

Runners do trail work

The HPRS series runners take their commitment to the communities where they run seriously and with tools. They

volunteer for trail work where they race. This year’s schedule of trail work in the Fairplay area is June 10, June 23, July 5 and Aug. 5.

Non-runners can also volunteer. The work is done in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, and tools are provided.

Trail work training is also provided, and per the HPRS website, “Some days are harder than others, some days are dirtier than others, but all days end up being incredibly rewarding.”

More information

Last year 114 runners ran the race and about 114 are expected this year. Volunteers and racers are always welcomed. To register or get more information on volunteering on race day or on the trails, go to the HPRS website.

www.humanpotentialrunning.com.

If inspired to run more than a marathon, the Silverheels 100-Mile Endurance Run and Last Call 50-Mile Endurance Run are July 7 and 8, and the Sheep Mountain Endurance Runs (50-mile and 50k) are Aug. 4.