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New twists for annual LVHN marathon for Via

Race expo and pasta dinner add to the atmosphere.

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Gary Blockus
Gary Blockus
9:25 P.M. EDT, AUGUST 10, 2011

If you're planning on taking part in the 2011 Lehigh Valley Health Network Marathon for Via on Sunday, Sept. 11, the entry deadline is midnight Friday. Late registrations will be accepted through Aug. 19, but at higher fees. Participants in the 5K walks can enter right up until that race on Saturday, Sept. 10.

This year's marathon, half-marathon, marathon relay and 5K walk promise to reach a new level of competition and revelry, according to Mimi Griffin, the event manager and president of MSG Promotions, which is promoting the event for the first time.

"Honestly, I think people who have participated in the past won't believe their eyes," Griffin said. "They'll notice the changes from the minute they go to pick up their race packets."

For the first time, the race will host an expo during the packet pick-up at SteelStacks in Bethlehem on Sept. 10, and the 5K walk will take place from there on that day as well.

GARY BLOCKUS



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"We've got sponsors like Aardvark, PowerBar, ING, Davis Beverage, Bondi Band and others," Griffin said. "From right up front, the activities are going to be very, very different than in the past, and very, very festive as a way to showcase the Lehigh Valley."

The annual race has been a hit in terms of participation and raising money for Via of the Lehigh Valley, a nonprofit local agency that provides services for children and adults with disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy and Down syndrome.

Last year, more than 3,150 people participated in the various races that run through the Lehigh Valley from the Lehigh Valley Hospital-Cedar Crest parking lot, through the Allentown Parkway and then onto the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Trail into center square in Easton.

This year, registrations are running 29 percent ahead of last year's pace, according to Griffin, who credited that increase with a later cutoff date for Boston Marathon qualifying times.

"We're also hosting a pre-race pasta dinner at SteelStacks on that Saturday evening, and it's the first time for that," Griffin said. "Pre-race dinners are a normal occurrence for races of this type, and we're hoping to bring a lot of runners together to bring out a sense of community."

"This isn't just a race. We're inviting people to come out for a tremendous cause and make it a fun, festive and Lehigh Valley-based event rather than a singular race."

The 5K walks takes place 9 a.m. Sept. 10 from the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks in Bethlehem. The race expo and packet pick-up will be at ArtsQuest Center from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., also on Sept. 10. The pasta dinner is 5-7 p.m. at the Fowler Blast Furnace Room at the

ArtsQuest Center.

The marathon and relay begin 7 a.m. Sept. 11 at Lehigh Valley Hospital-Cedar Crest, and the half-marathon takes off at 7:15 a.m. from Main and Market streets in Bethlehem.

Griffin has put an increased emphasis on the marathon relay. The five-person team event features several competitions within the main competition, including a Corporate Cup for local corporations, First Responders for area fire, police and rescue squads, and the College Cup for local colleges.

Griffin's husband, Bill, is an associate director of athletics at Lehigh University. The race coincides with Lehigh's 40-year celebration of women being admitted to Lehigh, and they're hoping to use Sunday's relay race as a focal point for gathering and camaraderie. Plus, Lafayette College has won the college challenge in the past, so that ups the rivalry.



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Marathon for Via: LVHN Marathon for Via - mcall.com

"Many of the companies submitting teams, like B Braun, find that's instrumental for them," Mimi Griffin said. "They want to give their employees not only something to rally around, but a chance to be healthy. There's a residual effect for the employees that take part. If you run and get hooked on it, it helps with your overall health and well being, and that's good for the company as well."

The race also needs volunteers to sign up before the end of August to help at the race expo, packet pick-up and along the course the day of the race. Volunteers are needed at the starting line, hydration stations, as course marshals and at the finish line festivals, gear check, parking and information, and at the food and hospitality stands.

For information, or to enter, go to <http://www.vianet.org>.

Raffle for New York City marathon entry: Allied Services of Clarks Summit, Lackawanna County, is raffling off its final remaining sponsorship spot for the 2011 New York City Marathon.

The raffle is Sunday, Aug. 28, during the free Ryan's Run Family Fun Day at the Racing Tracks at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs in Wilkes-Barre.

The fun event is noon to 3 p.m. on Aug. 28, and you must be present to win. For information, call Allied Services at 570-348-1407.

Severo Run: The sixth annual Cadet Anthony Severo 5K Run/Walk and 1-mile Fun Run is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 25, at the Parkland High School cross country course.

Anthony Severo was a Parkland graduate and wrestler who was in his final year at West Point when he was tragically killed by a drunk driver. All proceeds from the race benefit Students Against Destructive Decisions and the Parkland Wrestling Scholar Athlete.

Registration forms are available at <http://psdweb.parklandsd.org/phsweb/> and then click activities. For information, contact Larry Severo at 610 398-3296 or severoe@ptd.net.

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610-820-6782

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