

THE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF MORGAN HILL, GILROY & SAN MARTIN

MARCH 20, 2020

South Valley

GOING VIRTUAL

Wildflower Run takes unique approach to COVID-19 pandemic P4

BY ANNE KAPPMAYER

WILDFLOWER RUN GOES VIRTUAL

A look back at the gains
made in female long-
distance running



Editor's note: The annual Wildflower Run in Morgan Hill was originally scheduled for March 29. But Santa Clara County's order for residents to stay in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic for the next three weeks has forced the run's organizers to go "virtual" with this year's iteration. Nearly every event in Santa Clara and San Benito counties for the next month has been canceled. See below for a partial list of major events that are affected.

COVID-19 IMPACT

To combat the spread of COVID-19, organizers throughout Santa Clara and San Benito counties have either canceled or postponed their events that typically draw hundreds of guests.

Here is a partial list of the numerous events impacted, with their originally scheduled dates in parentheses:

- San Benito Stage Company's Casino Night (March 21)
- Hollister Exchange Club Crab Crack (March 21)
- San Benito High School Drama Department's Grease (March 20-21, 26-28)
- Limelight Actors Theater's *Tigers Be Still* (March 20-April 11, postponed at least a month)
- San Juan Bautista Art & Craft Festival (March 28-29)
- Flamenco performance at Gallery 1202 (rescheduled to June 26)
- Art, Wine, Bubbly, & Chocolate Lovers' Affair in Downtown Gilroy (April 4)
- San Juan Bautista Rib Cook-Off (May 1-3)
- San Juan Fiesta Fun Run (May 16)

I am a proud new member of the Morgan Hill chapter of the American Association of University Women. Every year, all members assist with the organization's annual fundraiser, The Wildflower Run, a 37-year community tradition that brings together up to 1,200 diverse runners and walkers from all over the Bay Area. All proceeds fund scholarships, leadership programs for women and girls, community grants, and other programming supporting equity.

With the restrictions on public gatherings, the 2020 Wildflower Run is going virtual, meaning it can be run or walked from any location you choose. New dates are between Sunday, April 19 and Sunday, April 26. We are excited that a virtual run

will enable runners from all over to join in the fun, get their swag, and support our causes. To find out details, visit www.Wildflower-Run.org.

This is a unique year for members of AAUW. It is the 100-year anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which granted American women the right to vote. (White women were the main beneficiaries. Men and women of color would continue to fight to battle discriminatory voting practices for decades even after technically receiving the right to vote, culminating in the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965).

As an organization whose mission is to advance gender equality for women and girls, we know that while we have a ways →6



PHOTO: JONAS

Susan Bracken

RECORD RUN Sunnyvale's Ann Marie Cody earned a Guinness Book of World Record during the Wildflower Run in 2019. She was crowned the 'Fastest 10K Pushing a Triple Pram (Female)' titleholder with a time of 47:10.



COMMUNITY TRADITION *The Wildflower Run returns March 29.*

to go in attaining full female equality (only 38 states have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, for example), we must always look back at progress that has been made in our country, if only to remind ourselves that persistence will always move us forward.

As a tribute to our beloved Wildflower Run, I'd like to speak to the gains that have been made in the area of female long-distance running. As a woman runner, one thing I know I often take for granted is the freedom to run without social persecution.

The world of women's racing as we know it today did not exist 50 years ago, and women's distance running went unrecognized throughout most of the 20th century.

Though the modern Olympics were founded in 1896, it wasn't until 1928 that women were allowed to compete in the athletic events. As women competitors

crossed the finish line of the 800-meter race, word spread quickly that a few had collapsed in exhaustion (these reports have since been disputed). In response, the International Olympic Committee decided women were too weak to run such long distances and banned them from competing in any race past 200 meters. This ban lasted for the next 32 years.

The world of amateur road racing (runs and marathons) was not faring much better. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) also barred women from competing in long-distance races, citing health concerns.

In the late 1960s, this battle played out on a national stage. After her race entry to the 1966 Boston Marathon was denied because of her sex, 23-year-old Bobbi Gibb hid in the bushes by the starting line and ran the race illegally, finishing ahead of two-thirds of the male competitors. →7

Kathrine Switzer followed in her footsteps a year later, registering under a gender-neutral name and becoming the first official female competitor. In what is now an infamous story, a race official tried to grab Switzer near the start to rip off her number. Her teammates intervened, and Switzer was able to finish the race successfully.

By the next decade, the barriers began to crumble. Title IX passed in 1972 and protected women from sex-based discrimination in educational programs and other federally funded activities. That same year, the AAU lifted its ban on women's distance running. And finally, in 1980, the American College of Sports Medicine officially found zero scientific evidence that women could not compete in long-distance running.

Researchers have since begun to investigate whether women might be better suited than men to run long distances. Reasoning includes

everything from superior pacing abilities and a naturally higher body fat percentage to sociological theories—women have greater barriers to overcome which requires a higher level of effort which only results in greater achievement.

Despite strict laws banning our participation in the Olympics and in amateur road races, despite the lingering belief our mental stamina and physical capabilities are limited, despite constant safety concerns that have us proactively scanning our surroundings every step of an early morning jog, women still run.

Our commitment to the sport is a ready-made metaphor for running itself. We endure. We outlast. We look to the finish and keep pushing until we break the tape.

Though the journey has not been easy, one thing is now clear: The female runner is here to stay, and her time in the spotlight has just begun.