

Sports

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Yonkers Marathon takes on new look

Area restaurant owner assumes sponsorship

By Leslie Beth Feffer
Staff Writer

Although the Yonkers Marathon won't be contested until Sept. 20, its planners and sponsor are already off and running.

The second-oldest marathon in the country is about to be revitalized with a new sponsor and new ideas. At a news conference at Redheads Bistro/Bar in Yonkers yesterday morning, the Chief Executive Officer and President of Redheads, Inc. announced that the restaurant will sponsor the 62nd Yonkers Marathon.

"What we want out of this is to forge new working relationships," said Redheads CEO Charles Olson Jr. of West Nyack. "I don't want to just serve food to the community. I want to be a part of the community, and forge a working relationship between business and government, to improve the quality of life."

At one time, the Yonkers Marathon was one of the most prestigious in the country, as both a national race and one of the Olympic trials. Working with the city of Yonkers, Olson wants to restore the marathon to its former glory.

One of his goals is to increase the number of participants in the race, using his restaurant as a registration center, and to draw more top-tier runners to the race. Another is to tie it in with the Sixth Annual Riverfest, which will be held the same weekend.

Perhaps the most significant decision is to increase the amount of prize money that will be distributed by at least five times last year's amount, from \$2,000 to \$10,000.

Olson, Yonkers Chamber of

Commerce president Kevin Cacace, the mayor's office and the Westchester Roadrunners have been brainstorming fund-raising possibilities.

"We have ideas to create a pool of money," Olson said.

Redheads will ask customers to donate \$2 apiece to write their names on cardboard cutouts of sneakers, which will be displayed around the restaurant. With Cacace's assistance, they hope to encourage other area businesses to do the same.

Within the next month, Redheads will host a breakfast, donating all proceeds to the marathon. Olson is trying to secure a celebrity keynote speaker for the breakfast in order to draw a larger crowd. Tickets will cost \$20 per person.

The money raised will be given out to the competitors. Besides trophies and cash prizes for the top finishers in each gender and age category, Olson has established The Redheads Challenge: the first redhead and the first Yonkers resident to cross the finish line and the first person to establish a new Yonkers Marathon record will each receive extra prize money.

Although the marathon already has \$2,000 in its prize money pool, Olson has personally guaranteed that it will be at least \$10,000. If necessary, he said he'll make up the difference.

This past May 1, Redheads held a fund-raiser, called To Dye For, to benefit the homeless. In keeping with the theme of the restaurant, people came in to have their hair dyed (presumably red) by the Vidal Sassoon salon, and the money was used to buy food for the homeless.