

Freihofer's race brings women together

Mother-daughter teams prepare for annual run

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To be in the Fab 5, you must have run all 30 races.

"I've been crossing the line since '79," said Denise Herman, 52, of Saratoga Springs, who will be celebrating her 30th year participating in the annual Freihofer's Run for Women on May 31.

Herman, one of five women – known as the Fab 5 – who have run every year since the race's inception, has been pushing her body to make it past the 5-kilometer finish line for decades. In the past five years, an added element has been pushing Herman harder, encouraging her to keep running until the very end. Her daughter.

Herman and her 17-year-old daughter, Brianna, are one of many mother-daughter teams that participate in the race, which takes place in downtown Albany, every year.

In fact, mother-daughter teams have been racing since the beginning of the run itself. According to Georg Regan, event director of the race, in 2005, there were 185 mother-daughter teams; in 2006, there were 150; and in 2007, there were 127. So far this year, there are 69 mother-daughter teams registered as of April 30.

"We've had mother-daughter and sister-sister teams for about 15 years now. They number in the hundreds," said Regan, "It's really turned into quite an event for the family."

Regan continued, "I think the beauty of it is that mom and

daughter can come out for an event that has some of the best women in the world in the event. We have had mothers that are of Olympic caliber running with their daughters, which is cool."

Many of this year's mother-daughter teams are already knee-deep in preparation for the Saturday, May 31, run.

Anne Hurley, 45, of Delmar, said she and her daughter, Grace, 14, have begun their cross-training program to get ready for the race.

"We run separately probably once or twice a week. She's very fast, but a 5K for her is a lot, so she's working on endurance," said Hurley. "I'm more of a distance person myself ... but I'm working on trying to keep up with her."

The mother-daughter teams, as well as individual runners, have some fast times to beat, according to Ed Parham, director of public relations for the run. Parham said the fastest time at last year's race was 15 minutes and 17 seconds.

Hurley said she and her daughter are working on getting in sync so that they can run side by side at the race.

"It's always good to have someone to run with you," said Grace Hurley. She said she's running in the race because it helps her prepare for many school sports she participates in, including softball and basketball. She hopes to try soccer in the fall.

"If I can do running, it can make it easier for me," she said.

Although it has not yet happened for the Hurleys, Grace said that if one of the members of the team won the prize this year, "[my mother] would probably split it with me, but I don't know if I would split it

with her."

Other mother-daughter teams kick up the competition by competing within the race.

Twenty three-year-old Abigail Selert, of Latham, said that she and her mother, Pamela Jones, 47, of Latham, have little competitions. She said in April, the two ran in the Brinkerhoff 5K race at the University at Albany, and it was the second time she beat her mom.

While some mothers have been running with their daughters for a number of years, one mother ran the race with her daughter before she was even born.

Jessica Vogelien, 53, of Voorheesville, said she has run the race every year but two.

"The one time, I was actually pregnant with my daughter," she said. Vogelien walked that race, she said, because she was only 10 days away from the baby's due date.

For other mothers, this will be the first year running with their daughters.

"I'm going to be 50 this year; my birthday is a couple of days before the race. My daughter is 10 now and I thought it would be fun if she ran with me," said Cathleen Cenci, of Slingerlands. Cenci said that even though her daughter has not participated in this race before, she has run in other races for children.

Cenci said there are substantial prizes for the winners, \$10,000 for the winner, but to her, that's not what the run is about. "I'm not a fast runner. To run with my daughter will be just a real thrill."

The race is scheduled at a new time this year – 9:15 a.m. – on May 31. Registration fees are currently \$30 per person, subject to increase



closer to the event. Participants will meet, on the day of the event, in downtown Albany in front of the State Museum.



The annual Freihofer's Run for Women is May 31.

Submitted photo