

Run for Women needs to be greener, race organizers say

By Jill Bryce

ALBANY – The Freihofer's Run for Women is trying to go entirely green, one step at a time.

Each year, race organizers face the problem of what to do with thousands of water bottles left behind by competitors, but this year they hope to reduce that pile by setting up fountains near the course where many runners can hydrate at the same time.

The portable drinking fountains, which contain a sport drink concentrate, will be placed at the start and finish. The goal is to eliminate waste and reduce the number of bottles of water that are consumed at the race on May 31.

"It's another way to keep the runners hydrated," said George Regan, event organizer. "Eventually, we would like the Freihofer's Run for Women to be entirely green. We are working on a plan to keep the disposable items to a minimum and reduce the carbon footprint. Hopefully we can put that to full use by next year," said Regan.

It's important for each person to do their part when it comes to the environment and consumables, said Regan, especially for a large-scale event like the Freihofer's Run.

"With an event like this, so many people generate so many consumables. Where do the items end up? They end up at the landfill. We have to be conscious of it and have to reduce the footprint."

The system, an Outdoor Boss portable drinking fountain, allows several people to drink from it at one time from one place. The fountains will be filled with Stadion sports drink concentrate.

It's being used in races around the country and this will be the first time it's used at the Freihofer's Run. If it works and helps reduce waste, it will be used again next year, said Regan.

Organizers of the 5-kilometer race, which is in its 30th year, place a pallet at the finish line and at the refreshment tent that is loaded with thousands of bottles of water. There are 72 cases to a pallet and 24 bottles per case.

The state Office of General Services tries to recycle as many bottles as possible when the Freihofer's Run is over, but hundreds of bottles still make their way to the landfill .

"We have to define this more going forward. People see barrels and they throw everything into it," said Regan.

Training for a race, whether a 5K or a marathon, starts slowly, with small steps, and turning the Freihofer's Run into a green event will also take time, said Regan.

"We are making small attempts and strides to go green. Considering the state of our environment, we need to concentrate on this," said Regan. "It has to be a priority, greening up the Freihofer's."

Used running shoes and T-shirts are also being collected at the race and donated to recipients in Third World countries free of charge through the Hudson Mohawk Road Running Club and USATF Adirondack Association. All shoes and T-shirts must be clean and in serviceable condition.

Collection bins will be set up on Friday, May 30, and Saturday, May 31, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Capital Care Health and Fitness Expo.

Regan also said he tries to be conscious about what he orders from Price Chopper for the package given to each runner. He avoids things like juice boxes, which have a straw and cellophane, seeking products instead with minimal packaging.

Runners will be given apples, granola bars and Freihofer's cookies.

The Freihofer's Run for Women 5K combines some of the top international and American distance runners and over 3,500 women from the Capital Region. They compete for \$27,000 in prizes.

The start and finish lines are located on Madison Avenue, between the Empire State Plaza and the New York State Museum.