

## Step lively and go to \$500

Freihofer's starts 10k race walk with prizes for women and men

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ALBANY -- Pamela Allie-Morrill walked briskly in circles around the Empire State Plaza early one morning last week.

The Poestenkill resident, wearing a blue windbreaker, a baseball cap, gray pants and pink gloves, stood out among the workers who planted geraniums and state employees who toted umbrellas in a cold, gray drizzle.

Her elbows pumping furiously and hips swaying, Allie-Morrill wasn't merely exercising as she cruised along the red brick road that surrounds the plaza's reflecting pool.

She was training for this Saturday's USATF National Race Walk 10K Open and Junior Championships, which will be held on that same plaza course.

"I'm trying to use the home-court advantage," Allie-Morrill said.

Racewalking, a new addition to the Freihofer's Run For Women program, will start at 7:30 a.m., before the women's 5k road race goes off at 9:15.

Freihofer's race director George Regan said the timing was perfect to invite the nation's top male and female race walkers to Albany. He said it will bring exposure to the Freihofer's community walk, meant for the average person, which is held Saturday afternoon and will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year.

"My idea is to bring fitness to everybody in our community," Regan said. "If I can't do it through running, I'll do it through walking. Just get out there and move your body."

Don Lawrence, who is running the event, is expecting 80 to 90 racewalkers on the plaza.

Allie-Morrill, 45, is a former runner who finished seventh in the 1987 Freihofer's with a time of 18 minutes, 31 seconds in the 5k race. She said her goal is to finish Saturday's 10k course in "less than an hour."

She switched to racewalking 1 years ago because of painful bone spurs in her heels.

She first tried it in El Salvador, where she lives part of the year with her husband, Kenneth, a naval officer who's stationed at the U.S. embassy there. She spends the summer running her family's ice cream shop, Moxie's, in Wynantskill.

Allie-Morrill said she finds her new sport reduces the stress on her body while providing a similar cardiovascular benefit.

"It's equivalent to running," she said. "It's the same kind of conditioning. You're getting your heart rate up."

But her son still teases her by saying, "You're only walking."

Really, though, it's far more technical than that.

Racewalkers must abide by two very specific rules:

Part of one foot must touch the ground at all times, which prevents running.

The walker's knee must not bend from the moment the foot touches the ground until the leg is in a vertical position.

Judges will be located around the course Saturday. They'll raise a paddle to issue a warning to any walker who is seen breaking either of those two rules.

Three warnings and you're disqualified.

Elite racewalker Matt Boyles, an Ohio resident who will compete next weekend, said the judging is highly subjective.

"It's like calling balls and strikes," he said. "Everybody has their own opinion."

Boyles took up race walking at Rio Grande University in Rio Grande, Ohio, as a way to help his team score points in meets.

"When you say 'walking,' that conjures images of an easy stroll," Boyles said. "But it's more like a funny way of running.

"It's probably even more demanding than running based on the fact that you have to make sure you keep your form correct or you'll be disqualified."

Teresa Vaill, 45, was an Olympian four years ago and hopes to make the team again at the Olympic trials next month in Eugene, Ore.

Vaill, who trains in Gainesville, Fla., will come up to Albany on Saturday to compete for the \$500 first-place prize. Her travel is paid for by her club team, but Vaill acknowledged she's not in racewalking for the money.

"I love this sport," she said. "I love to compete." Singelais can be reached at 454-5509 or by e-mail at [msingelais@timesunion.com](mailto:msingelais@timesunion.com).

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