

Suffolk Hosts Inaugural Suffolk County Marathon and Half Marathon to Support Local Veterans

More than 3,500 runners throughout the country participated in the Boston Marathon qualifier

SUFFOLK COUNTY, NY – (September 14, 2015) – Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone announced today that more than 3,500 runners from twenty five states and four countries participated in the Inaugural Suffolk County Marathon & Half Marathon to Support Our Veterans. All net proceeds generated from the event will go directly to veteran service organizations in Suffolk County.

The male and female winner of the full Marathon were: **Chau Zhou, NYC-2:46:50, Caroline Levesque, Rhode Island-3:12:02.**

The wheelchair division winner: **Peter Hawkins, Malverne-2:13**

The male and female winner of the half marathon were: **Anthony Famiglietti, North Carolina-1:07:35, Pamela O'Sullivan, Babylon-1:24:02.**

The male and female winners in the Veterans Division: **Sean Dowling, Sayville-3:25:28.5, Jennifer Coon, Massachusettes-5:41:10.6**

The male winner of the Active Duty Military category was: **Timothy O'Connor, Maryland-3:11:42.3**

Among those who completed the half marathon were two veterans in their 80s: 84-year-old Howard Kestenbaum of Plainview and 82-year-old Harold Daus of Terryville.

Along with raising funds for the veterans, the Suffolk County Marathon was a qualifier for the 2016 Boston Marathon. Sunday's race was held on the last day for most registrants who want to qualify for the world-renowned race.

“On behalf of our 1.5 million residents in Suffolk County, we are forever grateful for the commitment and sacrifices that our veterans and active service men and women make every day to protect our freedom,” said Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone. “Expanding and enhancing services for our heroes when they return home is vital, that is why we were here today and that is why every dollar of the proceeds from the event will go towards doing exactly that. It was an absolute privilege to run my second marathon alongside with these heroes and supporters as we helped the veterans in our community with each step we took.”

Posted comments about the marathon:

Tom Alfano: *This event was awesome! I live south of Montauk in Oakdale and it wasn't a bother not being able to drive, in fact it was a great excuse to have a lazy Sunday. Events like this have a direct positive impact on the quality of life here in Suffolk and raised money for our Veterans!!*

Marie Trav: *I have to say, if I didn't know yesterday's event was an inaugural race, I wouldn't have known! Everything was very well organized, the distance between the water stations was perfect, the aid stations were well placed as well, and everything went very smoothly! My only problem with yesterday was the weather which, let's be honest, we have zero control over. Fantastic event, can't wait to do it again next year!*

Linda Valdez: *It was both a privilege and a pleasure to participate in this inaugural event! The race was well run, the course was great, and the benefit to our veterans made the run even sweeter! Thank you Suffolk County Executive Steven Bellone, the Suffolk County Legislature, GLIRC, and all the first responders and others, for making this event possible! I'm looking forward to next year!*

Kristin Venendaal: *I just wanted to say thanks for the great race!!! It was a great and scenic course! Loved it!!! Everything was so organized and the volunteers were amazing! I will be doing this one every year. And thank you to all the veterans and service men and women. I had the opportunity to thank a few, but glad this was set up for such a good cause.*

The races included a special veteran's category for all active military and retired veterans as well as a handicap accessible component.

The marathon route took runners along the scenic Great South Bay, starting and ending in Heckscher State Park. Participants ran through Suffolk's downtowns, including Oakdale, Sayville, Patchogue, Blue Point and Bayport where they were cheered on by thousands of onlookers at watch parties, restaurants and local business along the route.

The Suffolk County Department of Economic Development estimated that the per capita revenue generated from the event was nearly \$8 million towards the region.

"We wanted to make this a destination marathon and take this opportunity to highlight our downtowns while boosting the local economies," added County Executive Bellone. "We worked with our local chambers of commerce and local business leaders to organize and provide viewing parties and various events in order to enhance the ultimate marathon experience for our spectators and visitors."

The Suffolk County Marathon was the second marathon County Executive Bellone ran in the past 10 months, including the 2014 New York City Marathon. The County Executive's participation was inspired by his commitment to live a healthier lifestyle, which includes a 69 pound weight loss since 2013.

A Taste of Long Island Festival was also held at Heckscher State park in conjunction with the marathon to highlight the region's local businesses, such as local craft breweries, award winning wines, and local eateries and produce. The Taste of Long Island Festival was made possible with the support and partnership with New York State, the Long Island Farm Bureau, the Long Island Music Hall of Fame, Project 9 Line and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

In addition, through the efforts of the Long Island Music Hall of Fame and the nonprofit veterans' organization Project 9 Line, live music was performed throughout the event with the assistance of Don Audio. Most bands featured musicians who are United States Veterans, including Vince Martell and His Band of Brothers (Formally of Vanilla Fudge).

The Suffolk County Marathon and Half Marathon additionally is part of the 2015 Suffolk County Veterans Running Series, a series of local races throughout the County that will raise additional funds for veterans causes.

The previous races included the Annual Cpl. Christopher G. Scherer "I DID THE GRID" Run/Walk, Navy SEAL Michael Murphy 4-Mile Run Around the Lake, Oakdale Chamber of Commerce Firecracker 5 and Cow Harbor Warriors Captain Joseph J. Boccia Jr. USMC 4-Mile Warrior Run. The last race of the series will be the 8th Annual Long Island Run for the Warriors in Lindenhurst on November 7.

Sponsors of the Inaugural Suffolk County Marathon and Half Marathon to Support Our Veterans

include but are not limited to: Presenting Sponsors-NS-LIJ Health Systems, Distinguished Sponsors: St. Joseph's College, Canon USA, Catholic Health Services, Bethpage Federal Credit Union, WBAB/WBLI, Blue Point Brewery, PSEG Long Island, Coca-Cola, QuickChek and NBTY.

For information on the winners of the races, photos and more information on the event, visit www.suffolkmarathon.com or www.facebook.com/SteveBellone.

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