



Story Ideas

Elite Runners

1. Freihofer's 40th Anniversary Mirrors Growth of Women's Running in America

The Freihofer's Run for Women, one of the nation's most prestigious all-women road races, turns 40 this year.

This piece could explore how the event, under the sponsorship of the Charles Freihofer Baking Company, has mirrored the evolution of women's distance running in U.S. beginning in the late 1970s.

Our tagline this year is "Forty Years of Firsts," since there have been so many "firsts" here in Albany since the event began.

Infographic: <https://freihofersrun.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/FRW-40-Info-Graph-2.pdf>

History: <https://freihofersrun.com/history/>

For this article you could talk with Saratoga's Art and Linda Kranick, who have developed so many of the region's top high school racing talent, including '99 champion Cheri Goddard-Kenah, and understand the national/international significance of the race; Joan Benoit Samuelson, winner of the first Olympic women's marathon who started running here in the late 80s and understands its significance on the national stage; longtime WNYT commentator Rodger Wyland, who has covered the race for decades and knows how far reaching the event is; the four local women who haven't missed a run since its inception in 1979; longtime race announcer Dave Oja; former Event Director George Regan; and, FRW Elite Athlete Recruiter John Tope.

2. Former Winners Discussing FRW's Place in the Evolution of Women's Distance Running in America

If story one interests you, you'll certainly want to head over to the Renaissance Room in The Armory at Sage College, 130 New Scotland Ave, Albany on Thursday, May 31 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. where the FRW will host a past event champions' panel discussion.

"Our 40th anniversary presents a wonderful opportunity to welcome back so many of our former champions to share their stories, experiences and thoughts on the role that the Freihofer's Run for Women has played in the evolution of women's distance running in America," said Patrick Lynskey, co-director, Freihofer's Run for Women. "This panel discussion will be a great opportunity for runners of all ages and abilities to learn more about the history of this event and the remarkable women who have won our prestigious title and their collective impact on the sport of distance running."



Slated to attend the session are Jacqueline Gareau of Canada, the first non-US competitor to win the Freihofer's Run for Women 10K in 1982. Regina Joyce of Ireland, the event's 1983 champion. Elva Dryer (1997 winner and 2004 runner up), Carmen Troncoso (multiple masters race winner, top 10 finisher and age group winner), and Joan Benoit Samuelson (1984 Olympic Marathon gold medalist and FRW masters race winner). Longtime race announcer Dave Oja will moderate the discussion.

"We encourage the Capital Region's running community, especially local teams and coaches, to come to the session to meet and learn from these American distance running legends," Lynskey added

Seating is limited. To register for the event, please go to <http://bit.ly/ChampionsPanel>

3) Nukuri Leaves War-Torn Burundi to Pursue Running Dream, Safety

Former Burundian Diane Nukuri will be the one to beat in the open field. She has a fascinating background story, as she was the fastest girl in Burundi at the age of 15, a distinction which punched her ticket to the 2000 Sydney Olympics. However, due to growing violence in her homeland, which had claimed the life of her father, she decided not to return after competing at the Francophone Games in Canada a year later. Instead, she stayed with a cousin in Ontario and finished high school, while continuing to run. Her athletic skills earned her a scholarship to the University of Iowa (graduated in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in communication studies) — and a return ticket to the Olympics. She ran a PB in the 10,000m final at the 2016 Rio Olympics and also represented her former country at the 2012 London Olympics. Nukuri, who became a US citizen last year after living in the USA for 14 years, has raced in New York's capital city numerous times and has an intimate knowledge of the event's challenging downtown course. In 2015, the Santa Fe, NM resident finished 7th (16:07) and she'll be eager to improve upon that time. Recent results (6th 2018 Great Manchester Run 10K, 3rd 2018 Gasparilla Classic Half Marathon, 5th 2018 Cherry Blossom 10 Mile and 6th 2018 B.A.A. 5K) suggest that she is peaking at just the right time.

Note: Diane is one of eight athletes who'll be taking part in the school visitation program (see attached schedule).

Background Articles:

<https://www.runnerstribe.com/features/running-for-her-life-diane-nukuri-interview-with-runners-tribe/>

<https://deadspin.com/diane-nukuris-long-run-to-freedom-1820224818>

<https://www.runnersworld.com/elite-runners/telling-her-own-truth>



4) Kieffer Overcomes Self Image Problems to Cement Reputation As One of America's Top Distance Runners

For as long as she can remember, Buffalo's Allie Kieffer has struggled with comments people in the running community have made about her size and weight. These comments followed her to college at Wake Forest University (she ran on a college scholarship) and led to her obsessing about her weight and unhealthy eating disorders. Today, after getting expert help, she has started a new habit: fitting as many nutrients as possible onto her plate. Last November at the New York City Marathon, Kieffer ran her fastest marathon time ever (2:29:39) and was the second American to cross the finish line after winner Shalane Flanagan. She also made the 2017 USATF 10,000m Championships. Kieffer has become a positive body image activist while her star continues to rise on the running circuit.

Background Articles

<https://www.runnersworld.com/elite-runners/breakthrough-in-new-york-opens-doors-around-the-world-for-allie-kieffer>

<https://www.fleetfeetsports.com/blog/allie-kieffer-americas-next-great-distance-runner>

<https://www.self.com/story/my-weight-has-nothing-to-do-with-how-good-a-runner-i-am>

Other Elite Stories of Note:

Kristen Heckert Has an Amazing Marathon PR—and a Mind-Boggling Wakeup Call To get her miles in around her job teaching high school math, she has to get up bright and early.

<https://www.runnersworld.com/chicago-marathon/this-teacher-has-an-amazing-marathon-pr-and-a-mind-boggling-wakeup-call>

World record for Lindsey Scherf: Former Scarsdale runner claims indoor marathon mark

<https://www.lohud.com/story/sports/2018/03/17/world-record-lindsey-scherf-former-scarsdale-runner-claims-indoor-marathon-mark/417144002/>

http://www.armorytrack.com/gprofile.php?mgroup_id=45586&do=videos&video_id=238283



Empire State Well Represented in Elite Field

In addition to **Allie Kieffer (Buffalo, NY)**, **Maegan Krifchin (Bellmore, N.Y.)**, a 2010 graduate of nearby Syracuse University, will toe the line. She'll be hoping to improve on her impressive 3rd place 2016 finish (16:11), while **Lindsey Scherf (Scarsdale, N.Y.)**, 31, a former three-time NCAA Division I All-American for Harvard University, will be hoping to better her 2017 third place finish (16:10). In addition, three-time Olympian and Syracuse native **Jen Rhines** is looking to secure back-to-back wins in the masters (over-40) competition. Rhines, who lives and trains in San Diego, ran and starred at Liverpool High School and later at Villanova University, where she won five individual Division I national titles. She competed for the U.S. Olympic team in Sydney in 2000 (10,000 meters), in Athens in 2004 (marathon) and in Beijing in 2008 (5,000 meters). Rhines will be joined by **Marisa Sutura Strange** (Pleasant Valley, N.Y.), 54, a special education P.E. teacher who won the title here in 2016 (17:41) and, **Heather Webster** (Honeoye Falls, N.Y.), 44, the 5th place master (33rd overall) at Freihofer's in 2017.



Local Runners

1. Family Overcomes Mental, Physical Battles to Run 40th Freihofer's Run

When more than 4,000 women assemble on Washington Avenue for the 40th anniversary Freihofer's Run for Women on Saturday, June 2, just making the start line will be a victory for one local family.

For Brianna Phillips, 23, of Schenectady, fitness has always been an integral part of her life. A former field hockey and lacrosse standout at Guilderland High School, Brianna was on the path to becoming a physical education teacher and sharing her passion for health and fitness with others. However, towards the end of high school and starting college at SUNY Cortland, she began suffering from intense bouts of depression and anxiety, which erased her love for fitness. On February 6, 2014, she attempted suicide while at school.

"I was 19 years old and my dream school, job, and identity were crashing down in front of me," said Brianna. "However, I have fought many demons, and this year I chose the one I have been most fearful of — reclaiming my physical health. I signed up for the 10-week Freihofer's Training Challenge -- <https://freihoferstrun.com/training-challenge/> - having coached alongside Freihofer's Run for Women Co-Director Kristen Hislop in swimming and trusting that this was an environment with individuals who would embrace me on my journey.

"Each time I show up to a training run, I get to experience a 'flow,' which is a concept that was introduced to me at a spin class. It is described as, 'the moment when challenge is met with skill.' My challenge is to conquer the thoughts of doubt in my head and have patience with myself, as I am met with the skill of the mentors and the tips that they share with me. Throughout the challenge, the connection between my mind and body has been growing stronger and I cannot wait to cross the finish line at the Freihofer's race," said Brianna, who works full-time at CAPTAIN Community Human Services in Clifton Park.

Brianna's mom, Carol, will also have climbed a mountain to toe the start line.

In 1999, at the age of 39, the Schenectady resident's world fell apart when she was diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma on her foot. "I remember crying in the oncologist's office prior to the surgery. She prepared me for the worst- and best-case scenario, depending on the results of the sentinel node biopsy. Her words were, 'you might want to get your affairs in order if this has spread; six months, maybe a year.'"

Almost 19 years later, Carol considers herself one of the luckiest people in the world. "It has not been easy journey by any means," she said. "I have had two more melanomas and five more surgeries on my feet to repair collapsed arches and ripped tendons, as well as have screws removed. Also, a painful and difficult divorce left her alone and in debt to raise her three children.



“As I approach my 20-year anniversary, I wanted to prove to myself that I am a fighter and a survivor. I cannot count the number of people who I have known who have passed away from cancer since my first diagnosis. I often wonder ‘why me, why I am still alive?’ As I age, I am realizing my bucket list is getting longer and my time is getting shorter. Running this race again is high on my list. I am not sure I will be able to run the whole race, but I will never know unless I try.”

It would be interesting to talking with Brianna and Carol about the challenges they have overcome to take part in this year’s event. They are both gearing up for the 5K at the weekly Training Challenge sessions held on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at the Southern Saratoga YMCA. I can connect you to them, as well as to Hislop and Brianna’s supervisor at CAPTAIN, who can attest to the courage she has shown turning around her life.

2. Running Buddies Reunite After 40 Years for Freihofer's Run!

Julie Rodriguez has been getting in shape for the 5K by doing the Freihofer’s Training Challenge, a 10-week training program with locations across Albany -- <https://freihoferstrun.com/training-challenge/> She has been part of the weekly group that meets at the Clifton Park YMCA.

One of the main reasons she is doing the Training Challenge is that she now has a running partner. But she’s not any old training buddy!

“On the second Saturday session, I was surprised to run into one of my best friends from high school (over 40 years ago!), Paula Tyner-Doyle, and we have been running together at the training sessions ever since,” said Rodriguez, a first-time participant in the program. “What makes it even more special is that we used to get up early and run in our neighborhood before getting on the bus to go to school at Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School. And now, all these years later, here we are running together again! It has given me that extra incentive to make all of the training sessions! Getting ready for this 5K has been so good for my body and soul!”

I thought it might be neat to catch up with these two local ladies to talk about how running is the common thread that has kept them together all these years!

3) Crossing the Line Since '79 Team Continues to Carry the Flame

Until early last year, only five women had run the FRW since its inception in 1979: Linda Campbell, Denise Herman, Cynthia Kelly, Bernadette La Manna and Ellen Picotte. Picotte was terminally ill with breast cancer and passed away the summer of 2017 leaving her four friends to carry on the legacy. You might want to catch up with these amazing women who are still going strong! You can read their inspiring story on page 15 -- <https://bit.ly/2kijGjh>



4. 71-Year-old Laura Clark Still Running Strong

Old Father Time isn't slowing down 71-year-old Saratoga Springs resident Laura Clark.

Clark, who has worked as a children's librarian at Saratoga Springs Public Library since 1993, has been running five to six days a week since the early 1970s, when she moved to Germany with her late husband, Jeffrey Clark, whose Army service brought him there.

"My husband always wanted me to run with him, and I never really wanted to, but then I did because I didn't have my bike anymore," she said, "and now I like running better."

Clark, who prefers trail-running to the road, "mostly because trails are more fun, and it's more fun to be out in the woods," takes part in numerous running events throughout the region, including the Bacon Hill Bonanza 10K in Schuylerville, the Blue Needs You 8K Run to support Saratoga's Code Blue homeless shelter, the 5.67-mile run up Prospect Mountain, the Father's Day half-marathon on Mount Greylock and the Firecracker 4 in Saratoga Springs.

Clark said she loves the social element of running and is a member of Saratoga Striders. And she plans to keep running as long as her legs allow!

5. Colonie High School Supports Anniversary Event in Numbers

Runners from Colonie High School have taken part in the Frehofer's Run for Women for the past 20 years. This year, the school will send a team of more than 100 runners (both present students and alumni) to the event's 40th anniversary. Following the event's awards ceremony (10 a.m. at the Awards Stage, East Capitol Park), all 100 runners plan to meet on the steps of the NYS Capitol for a photo with Joan Benoit Samuelson. Contact: Coach Mike Caccuitto who has been pulling together the Colonie teams. He can be reached at pathrun@verizon.net

6. Women Runs Frehofer's In Memory of Her Sister

From an email we received...

"Running a 5k has been on my Bucket List since 1977 - when the Bonnie Bell Mini Marathon (now the Tufts 10K) began in Boston. I lived in the Boston area at the time and every year on Columbus Day, I wished I had signed up for it. While I wanted to try it, I had no one to train with and was overwhelmed with the logistics of it.



I grew up in Watervliet, but moved to MA right after college and lived over there for over 40 years. We moved back here about 5 years ago ... and for the first couple of years when I heard the announcements for the Freihofer's Run, I told myself I should / could do that... but again had no one to train with, etc. So last year when Vent was helping to promote the race and particularly the training, it was the perfect opportunity for me to overcome my excuses. (And if it wasn't for Rosemary's prompting i probably wouldn't have attempted it). I was so glad I did. You have a wonderful program that really makes the race manageable. Thank you for helping me cross off an item on my Bucket List.

Freihofer's had been a big part of growing up. In those days, the Freihofer's truck would drive through our neighborhood making home deliveries. I have fond memories of putting the Freihofer's sign in the window so the truck would stop and bring us or bread, chocolate chip cookies or during Lent Hot Cross buns (the best ever and I was so sorry when they stopped making them). My association with Freihofer's now includes memories of my younger sister, who began working for the company after college and rose to be an Executive Assistant at the Executive offices here in Clifton Park. Unfortunately, in 2016 she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and lost her battle last August. So in addition to running for myself, I am running with the memory of my sister as well.

I am so glad to be part of the Freihofer's Training Challenge again this year.

JoAnne Burrows
burrowsjoanne@gmail.com



7. Albany Barn Creates Customized Awards to Celebrate Freihofer's Run's 40th Anniversary

Talented artists from the Albany Barn are creating customized awards for all of the event's age group and team award winners!

Says Casey V. Polomaine, director of programming & residencies at Albany Barn, Inc.: "A team of four women artists from The Barn (myself included) combed through old race photos, medals, banners, and anything else we could find and chose to focus on a vintage, throwback feel in honor of the race's 40th anniversary. We have several mixed media collages featuring a mix of old a new photos and 3D elements (like using race medal ribbons as a finish line across a photo of a first-place runner), and we even have very special hand-sewn bags made out of old mile marker banners that will be given to the group of women that have completed every race in the program's history. Our goal is that the awards bring a sense of community and history to those who win them."

*Casey V. Polomaine, Director of Programming & Residencies, Albany Barn, Inc.
56 Second Street, Albany, NY 12210
Phone: 518-935-4858*

