



Since announcing in March that the 2010 Gasparilla Marathon would be its Final Running, there have been many questions and concerns as to why the decision was made and many opinions and rumors as well. So, the Gasparilla Distance Classic Association felt it best that the real story come straight from the horses (or Race Director's) mouth!

Here's what's going on.

Since its inception in 2000, the Gasparilla Marathon has been an exciting and successful event, but participation has remained at the 1,700-1,800 level. Over the years, the Marathon has been carefully nurtured and always produced with the quality of the participants' overall experience in mind. The Association and City of Tampa take a great deal of pride in knowing that each and every year the best of what both have to offer has been provided to the runners, walkers, volunteers, spectators, sponsors and the Tampa Bay community.

The reasons for the Marathon's lack of growth are unclear, but certainly a contributing factor is the number of marathons that are run in Florida during January and February.

In any event, after the 2009 Gasparilla Marathon, the Association took a good long look at the event and what was being asked of the City of Tampa and its residents...especially those directly impacted by the 26.2-mile course. Additionally, all of the Race Weekend events are produced in cooperation with the City, which provides all the services required for the event (police officers, street closures, Fire Rescue, sanitation, etc). That's quite a commitment and costly too. With the current economy and the fact that the city is being forced to cut programs, slash budgets, freeze salaries and lay off employees, the Association felt that continuing the marathon without significant growth was simply too much to ask of the City.

The Association also gave great consideration to its charitable goals and responsibilities. Whether for 1,000 or 10,000 participants, producing a first-class running event is an expensive endeavor. Since 1978, Race Weekend events have provided \$2.8 million in contributions to Tampa Bay youth organizations. These contributions are crucial to the operations of the organizations, and it would be irresponsible for the Association not to address expenses that threaten its ability to make the contributions.

So...after much discussion and, frankly, a great deal of struggle, the Association decided that 2010 would be the Marathon's final year. If you've waited to run or walk the Gasparilla Marathon, the time is NOW!

Beginning in 2011, Race Weekend will include the Publix Super Markets Gasparilla Distance Classic 15K & 5K on Saturday and, on Sunday, the Gasparilla Half Marathon and a brand new Gasparilla 10K, both presented by Sports Authority. Unlike the Marathon, the Half Marathon has grown and, in 2009 alone, more than doubled in size with almost 4,500 participants. The popular Michelob Ultra Challenge (15K, 5K & Half Marathon) and Bud Light Challenge (15K, 5K & 10K) will also continue in 2011.

A final word about Race Weekend 2010 - in addition to celebrating the 33rd Running of the Publix Super Markets Gasparilla Distance Classic 15K & 5K on Saturday, February 27, the Gasparilla Half Marathon and tenth and Final Running of the Gasparilla Marathon will be celebrated in a big way on Sunday, February 28!

Thank you so very much for your understanding and continued support. There's not a whole lot that we could do without each and every one of our participants.



Susan C. Harmeling ☺
Executive Director (AKA Race Director)