



Event Record of More Than 25,000 to Compete on Chevron Houston Marathon Race Weekend

*Aramco Houston Half Marathon, USA Half Marathon
Championships, EP5K and Kid's Race all part of race lineup*

HOUSTON, TX (Jan. 12, 2009) - The Chevron Houston Marathon and its three companion races will set a new event record Sunday, January 18 by drawing more than 25,000 runners to the streets of Houston.

Fields for the 37th running of the Chevron Houston Marathon and eighth-annual Aramco Houston Half Marathon sold out for the fourth consecutive year, reaching capacity more than six months before race day.

The events attained their combined limit of 18,000 runners - 8,229 for the marathon and 9,771 for the half marathon - just 16 weeks after registration opened. With fields in excess of 4,000 runners for the EP5K and 3,000 for the Texas Children's Hospital Kid's Race, combined participation in the Chevron Houston Marathon weekend races will top 25,000 runners for the first time in the events history.

"The interest and support we receive from the running community is incredible," said Race Director Brant Kotch. "We have experienced tremendous growth over the past seven years, transforming an already successful event into a must-run race weekend for runners from across the country and around the world."

Thousands of race participants will arrive on the starting line to run for personal accomplishment and to help others through the event's Run for a Reason charity program. Over the past 14 years, runners have raised over \$9 million through pledges and donations for dozens of charities associated with the program. In 2008, Run for a Reason participants generated a record \$1.2 million for 45 nonprofit organizations, and fund raising is expected to approach \$1.5 million this year.

In addition to the fundraising aspect of race weekend, many of America's best long-distance runners will be part of the event, participating in the 2009 Men's and Women's USA Half Marathon Championships. Both national championship races are part of the Aramco Houston Half Marathon, with more than \$59,000 in prize money at stake.

Deep fields have been assembled for both races, with 2008 Olympic marathoner's **Dathan Ritzenhein** (Eugene, Ore.), **Brian Sell** (Rochester Hills, Mich.) and 2004 Olympic Marathon silver medalist **Meb Keflezighi** (Mammoth Lakes, Calif.) among the top men's seeds. Leading the way for the women will be 2008 Olympian **Magdalena Lewy Boulet** (Oakland, Calif.), defending champion **Kate O'Neill** (Palo Alto, Calif.) and **Desiree Davila** (Rochester Hills, Mich.), runner-up to O'Neill in last year's race.

In the marathon, **Deriba Merga** (ETH), fourth in the marathon at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, will take aim at the 20-year-old course record of 2:10:04, while three-time champion **David Cheruiyot** (KEN) will attempt to become the only runner in Chevron Houston Marathon history to win the open race four times.

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Teyba Erkesso (ETH), world record holder for 10 miles, **Amane Gobena** (ETH), and **Lioudmila Kortchaguina** (CAN) will lead the women's marathon field. The prize purse for the open marathon races is \$130,000, with a \$35,000 first-place award for both the men's and women's winners.

Chevron Houston Marathon race weekend will get under way with packet pickup and on-site registration for the EP5K Friday, January 16 at the Memorial Hermann Sports Medicine EXPO.

The EXPO - which will include more than 100 exhibitors and feature seminars on health, fitness and running - will be open Friday 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the George R. Brown Convention Center, Hall A3, third level. The EXPO is free and open to the public. Packet pickup is not available on race day.

Houston Mayor Bill White will fire the starting gun to begin the first of two waves of the marathon and half marathon Sunday at 7:00 a.m. The second wave will follow at 7:10 a.m. The EP5K will start at 7:30 a.m.

The Chevron Houston Marathon, a Running USA founding member, is the nation's premier winter marathon, annually attracting participants from nearly all 50 U.S. states and more than 20 foreign countries. In 2008, more than 20,000 runners participated in four marathon weekend events (marathon, half marathon, 5K run and children's run). The Houston Marathon has been ranked among the top five marathons in the nation by *Ultimate Guide to Marathons* for fastest course, organization and crowd support. More than 5,000 volunteers organize the race, which is Houston's largest single-day sporting event.

For more information, visit www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com or call 713-957-3453.