

PRESS RELEASE

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Chevron Houston Marathon Kicks Off 40th-Anniversary Bash *Kilel, Lelisa Headline Strong Aramco Houston Half Marathon Field*

HOUSTON (Jan. 13, 2012) – More than 28,000 runners will take to the streets of Houston on Sunday as the Chevron Houston Marathon, Aramco Houston Half Marathon and El Paso Corporation 5K top off perhaps the biggest weekend of road racing ever seen in this country.

“The entire racing industry has descended on Houston this weekend,” said Wade Morehead, executive director of the Houston Marathon Committee, in kicking off the main press conference on Friday afternoon. He gave special recognition to Brant Kotch, president and race director of the committee, for his “passion for the community.”

On Saturday, the men's and women's U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon will be held on the same day and the same course for the first time ever, and on Sunday the Chevron Houston Marathon will celebrate its 40th anniversary, expecting to raise even more than the \$2.1 million it did in 2011 for the Run for a Reason charity program.

This weekend's lineup of races “shows that we know how to put on a world-class event,” said Mayor Annise Parker, adding thanks to volunteers, city employees and title sponsors Chevron, Aramco Services, and El Paso Corporation. “All of you are not only sponsoring a sporting event, but you're supporting the city of Houston.”

The marathon, said Joni Baird, is “the epitome of human energy, which is what we are all about.” Baird is manager, public and government affairs manager of Chevron, which has been title sponsor of the marathon since 2006. Emcee Tom Koch of KTRK-TV then introduced two of the marquee athletes, three-time Olympian Benita Willis of Australia and 23-year-old Demessew Tsega of Ethiopia, who will be competing in Sunday's 26.2-miler.

It turns out that Saturday's race isn't the only one in Houston this weekend with Olympic implications: both Willis and Tsega are hoping to run fast enough to be named to their countries' Olympic squads for London 2012.

“My goal is to shave as much time as possible” from the course record, said Tsega, who brings a personal best of 2:09:44 but plans to leave with one many minutes lower.

One of the things Willis loves most about marathons is sharing the field with the pack, everyone running together toward their own goals. “That really inspires me to do really well,” she said.

Meg Mozaini, director of public affairs at Aramco Services Company, praised the energy of the firm's many employees who run or volunteer for the race in introducing the Aramco Houston Half Marathon. Headlining that race will be Kenya's Caroline Kilel, winner of the 2011 Boston Marathon, and Ethiopia's Feyisa Lilesa, the 2011 IAAF World Championships Marathon bronze medalist. Kilel is preparing to defend her title at the 2012 Boston Marathon, while Lilesa is in training for the 2012 Virgin London Marathon.

When Koch asked Kilel how she chose which distance to run on Sunday, she replied: “I like the half marathon because it is short, not like marathon.”

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About the Houston Marathon Committee, Inc.

Established in 1972, the Houston Marathon Committee, Inc. (HMC), a Running USA Founding Member, annually organizes the nation's premier winter marathon, half-marathon, 5K and kids' fun run. In 2010, more than 30,000 runners participated in four race weekend events organized by 7,500 volunteers, creating Houston's largest single-day sporting event. In addition to hosting numerous world-renowned road races, including the USA Men's and Women's Half Marathon Championships since 2005 and 2007 respectively, and the 1992 U.S. Women's Olympic Marathon Trials, HMC will host the 2012 U.S. Men's and Women's Olympic Team Trials - Marathon on January 14, 2012.

For more information, visit houstonmarathon.com or call 713.957.3453.

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