

Chevron Houston Marathon's Run for a Reason Charity Program



How does the Run for a Reason program work?

The Run for a Reason program is designed to help charities receive much needed financial support through the Houston Marathon Committee's three annual races: the Chevron Houston Marathon, Aramco Houston Half Marathon and El Paso Corporation 5K (EP5K). Everyone who registers for a race is encouraged to raise money for one of our official charities.

Participants in any event collect donations from their family, friends and coworkers on behalf of an official charity of their choice. The Run for a Reason program strengthens ties between the running community and charities, and also provides much needed financial support for the underserved.

Funds are never given directly to a charity from the marathon, as the Houston Marathon Committee is itself a not-for-profit 501(c) 4 organization. Race registration fees are used solely to cover event costs and are never redistributed to official charities. Each charity is responsible for overseeing its own fundraising campaign, and the total amount of money raised relates directly to the efforts of the charity.

What are the requirements for getting involved?

Organizations must apply to become an official charity. Applications are sent via e-mail each spring and must be returned via USPS or delivery within the specified deadline. Information about how to request an application is included at the end of this document. In addition to the application, the HMC requires a list of the charity's current Board of Directors, a copy of its 501(c) 3 status letter, Better Business Bureau (BBB) status report, most current 990 and related audit, and other items.

A crucial part of the application process involves the charity's current status with the BBB. A charity must meet the BBB's "Guidelines for Giving." The HMC uses the BBB's findings to evaluate the validity of a charitable organization. For more information on the requirements and application process of the BBB, please contact the BBB's philanthropy department directly. Applications must be updated with the BBB every two years. If your charity is not currently a member of the BBB, we strongly suggest you apply to become a member as soon as possible. It may take a significant amount of time for your BBB application to be processed and you do not want to wait until the last minute.

After each race season, the HMC evaluates the performance of the previous year's official charities. Groups that do not raise enough money through the program will not be accepted into the following year's event and must wait at least one year before reapplying. Up to five new charities are accepted each year, depending on the number of qualified applicants and the number of spots available within the program. The HMC reserves the right to select charities it deems relevant to the organization and limit the number of "same cause" charities within the program. The 2010-2011 selected charity list is final.

If you contact the HMC office after we have chosen our official charities for the year, your organization can be placed on a list to receive an application for the following year. The HMC does not accept charities mid-season and will not consider applicants after the deadline; to become an official charity, you must apply within the time frame specified. If your contact information changes after you have signed up to receive an application, please notify the HMC office immediately or risk not receiving an application. Applications are only sent via email.

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One of the most important components of the application involves your charity's Run for a Reason program plan. Because the HMC selects a limited number of charities out of the many applicants, each official organization should fully utilize the opportunity presented. The HMC will evaluate the program you intend to employ to ensure that **all** charities will perform at an acceptable level in the coming race year. Your program plan should include information about what human resources you intend to use as well as how you will market your program to your constituents and the running community.

Who generally participates in the Run for a Reason program?

Many runners are already involved with a charity and decide to use the Houston Marathon Committee's race weekend of events as an additional avenue to support their favorite cause. Most official charities promote the program through their newsletter, website or word of mouth within their constituency. Even those who have never participated in a road race before can get involved in the excitement of our events while raising money for those in need. Anyone can become a fundraiser for a charity; they do not need to be a runner. We encourage official charities to reach out to those who do not run, but still want to show their support by becoming a fundraiser. The Run for a Reason fundraising season begins in July and ends in February.

Official charities are encouraged to contact local running clubs, marathon training groups and area road races to promote their cause. Some even recruit runners to the program by sending volunteers to running "hot spots." Visibility in the local running community is an important aspect of any charity's Run for a Reason program.

How are donations collected?

Official charities in the Run for a Reason program will have a dedicated donation page on the Houston Marathon Committee's website. Fundraisers can easily build a personal donation page, which is linked to the associating charity's page. This set-up process is simple and allows each fundraiser to see in real time exactly how much money they have raised. It is helpful to provide participants with informative brochures about your cause as many potential donors may wish to know more about the group before donating.

Additional online tools are also available to help fundraisers. Anyone can sign up for a free Run for a Reason campaign page on the HMC's website, which can easily be customized with a picture and personal message. Participants may email potential donors with both the link to their personal page and a request for a donation, which can be created in minutes. Donors can simply pull out their credit cards and contribute without having to write a check, find a stamp and get to a mailbox, making giving online easy! Tax deductible receipts are sent to all donors.

Personal donation pages are available for all individuals, not just race participants. Anyone from volunteers to runners to spectators can sign up for a free personal donation page on the HMC website. Raising money through a personal donation page is simple, speedy, and available to all. Please note that creating a personal donation page does not register you for our races.

Important information about donation pages: *The online donation system is maintained by an outsourced technology vendor. This company provides fundraising management solutions for hundreds of races and other sporting events across the country. There are details involved with using this software, which will be discussed at Charity Orientation.*

There are no fees incurred by collecting cash or check donations through offline means. All such contributions go directly to the charity and will not be processed in any way by the HMC. Checks written to a charity should always be sent directly to that charity's headquarters.

The HMC hosts a mandatory, hands-on training each summer. Someone from your organization must attend this session to learn about the online system, policies and procedures.

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When do I receive the money from online donations?

Approximately every two weeks checks are cut to the charities that have received online donations. Donations may continue to come in even after the event concludes, so we typically close down the online donation tool in February.

How do I know how much money we've raised?

Each official charity is given a unique username and password which allows them to access the online "administrative tools." The administrative tools display donations in real time. This system displays the donation amounts and information about the donors, fundraisers and runners. These tools are available exclusively for participating charities; the general public cannot gain access to this information.

Official charities are required to report the total amount of money raised each year. Reports are formatted as a list of participants and how much each raised, both on and offline. The HMC also requests an estimate of the total amount raised that will remain in the Houston-area and of the administrative costs associated with hosting the Run for a Reason program. These estimates will not be released to the general public except as an inclusion in the *total* estimate for all of the year's official charities. Individual charity estimates are never released.

What costs are involved with being an official charity?

All official charities incur a one-time annual fee of \$100, which is the only flat cost associated with being an official charity. This fee covers the hard costs that the Houston Marathon Committee incurs on behalf of the charities, including tent and table rentals at the Run for a Reason Kickoff Party, and hands-on computer training and standard donation set-up fees charged by our technology vendor.

Charities may choose to offer special incentives or awards to fundraisers, and these costs should be considered while financially planning for the program.

What special opportunities are there for official charities?

Run for a Reason Kickoff Party

The annual Run for a Reason Kickoff Party is held at Memorial Park each September. Approximately 2,000 people attend this event each year to enjoy free food, beer and music. We draw runners out to the party by offering a free "In Training" T-shirt to race participants in attendance. Sponsors, running clubs and official charities are represented. Official charities are required to attend and are given an assigned space, table and chairs. Many organizations choose to hang banners within their assigned section. Charities can garner much support for the Run for a Reason program simply by talking to guests about their organization and cause. The kickoff party is a wonderful opportunity for charities to meet the local running community and recruit participants to run, donate or fundraise on your organization's behalf.

Hoopla Station

Each official charity is encouraged to have a Hoopla station on race day. This is a group of cheering fans posted along the race course. We try to spread "Hoopla" all along the race route to encourage runners on their long journey. This is an excellent way to recognize participants who support your cause, see the race and get involved in the excitement on race day. Hoopla stations are available to any group, not just official charities. If you are considering applying for next year, we encourage you to participate as a Hoopla station and taste the excitement!

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Post-race Party Zone

The Post-race Party Zone, located across the street from the George R. Brown Convention Center, is a great place for runners to celebrate their accomplishment with families and friends. Official charities are encouraged to have representation at the post-race party. This is the perfect opportunity to thank runners who ran on your organization's behalf as well as collect last minute donations. Each official charity is required to have either a Hoopla station or presence at the Post-race Party Zone. A table and chairs are provided at the post-race party.

How much money should our organization raise?

The Houston Marathon sets a minimum fundraising level for all charities. Demand for participation in the program is very high, with more than 75 new charities applying every year.

- First Year - \$3,000
- Second Year - \$6,000
- Third Year and every year thereafter - \$10,000

Charities that do not raise the minimum amount will not be accepted the following year, and must reapply for a spot in the program at a later time.

How much time is involved in being an official charity?

The amount of time that each charity dedicates to Run for a Reason program varies greatly. However, the most successful fundraising results do not happen by chance. To bring in a significant amount of money through the program requires a significant amount of effort on behalf of your organization.

There are few "set" requirements for the program. Official charity representatives must attend an orientation meeting in the summer. In addition, charities need to prepare for, and be present at the Run for a Reason Kickoff Party and participate in race day activities. A final fundraising report is due after the event.

Beyond these standard requirements, there are several other things to consider:

- How will you inform constituents of the program?
- How will you recruit runners/fundraisers to your cause?
- Once people have signed up for the race, how are you going to keep them motivated to raise money?
- Who will handle questions from runners/fundraisers regarding personal donation pages and race weekend procedures?
- How will you track and collect offline donations?
- Who will handle the accounting and reporting of these funds?
- Who will send out receipts acknowledging offline donations made to your charity?
- How will you thank those who raise funds for your cause?
- Will you host parties or social events for your runners/fundraisers?
- Will you offer prizes to runners/fundraisers that raise a set amount of money?
- Will you recognize your top fundraisers in your newsletter or at an event?
- Who will be in charge of your Hoopla station?
- Who will be in charge of your Post-race Party Zone table?

How can I motivate my charity's runners/fundraisers?

Many official charities establish special incentives for program participants. You can also host events for your runners, such as a happy hour after the race or a carbo-loading lunch during marathon weekend. Many charities host an "appreciation" event in the days or weeks following the race, but other avenues for recognition include the charity's newsletter or website. The possibilities are endless!

What do race participants do on race weekend?

Runners in the marathon, half marathon and 5K must pick up their registration packet at the Memorial Hermann Sports Medicine Institute EXPO, held on the Friday and Saturday of race weekend at the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB). The registration “packet” contains the runner’s participation T-shirt, timing device, bib, final instructions, goodies provided by our sponsors, etc. All participants are required to wear their assigned bib and timing device during the race. No participants may register or pick up their packets on race day.

On race morning, participants are encouraged to arrive in the downtown area by 6:00 a.m. to park and make their way into the GRB. Parking is available in garages around the area and generally costs \$10 per vehicle.

The start times on race day are:

6:45 a.m. – Wheelchair start, marathon and half marathon

7:00 a.m. – First wave start, marathon and half marathon

7:10 a.m. – Second wave start (approximately 10 minutes after first wave), marathon and half marathon

7:30 a.m. – Start, 5K

After crossing the finish line, participants enter the GRB to enjoy a hot meal, receive medical attention if necessary and reunite with friends or family. The food and medical areas are for runners only, and there is a separate area within the GRB where the public can meet up with their runner.

Across the street from the GRB is the Post-race Party Zone. This is the perfect spot for runners to enjoy a beer, meet up with running clubs and other charity runners, congratulate fellow runners, boast about a new PR, and more!

I’ve missed the deadline to apply for this year and would like to apply for next year.

To receive a 2011-2012 Run for a Reason charity application, please send the following information before **March 1, 2011** to Kimberly Hall at kimberly@chevronhoustonmarathon.com. This information must be received in order to obtain an official application.

Full Name
Charity Name
Address
City, State, Zip
Phone Number
Email Address
Charity Mission Statement

Your organization will be added to the list of charities receiving applications for the upcoming year. If your contact information changes, it is your responsibility to let the Houston Marathon Committee office know before applications are sent distributed. Applications are exclusively sent via email. The Houston Marathon Committee will NOT follow up on returned emails. If you have any further questions, contact Kimberly Hall at 713.957.3453.

Thank you for your interest in our Run for a Reason charity program.

We are happy to announce that we raised a record \$1.8 MILLION for charity in 2009-2010 and look forward to your support during the next race season!