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KEENAN RELEASES HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF RISE TO PROMINENCE FOR GRANDMA'S MARATHON

Details People, Events Involved in Growing Race to One of Country's Biggest Marathons

(DULUTH, MINN.) --- Grandma's Marathon founder and former executive director Scott Keenan has published a new book documenting his journey of bringing the event from just 150 runners in 1977 to one of the most respected road races in the United States.

My Journey to Grandma's Marathon: History and Heroes focuses on the people involved in bringing Grandma's Marathon to prominence, ranging from early champions like Garry Bjorklund and Dick Beardsley to longtime journalists who covered the race like Kevin Pates.

Keenan, who spoke about his book on the "Gearing Up for Grandma's" podcast, admitted the writing process came with challenges, but he thought it necessary to chronicle the evolution of the event and recognize lots of the people responsible.

"We had to do something special back then. We had to invite the world to Grandma's Marathon, and we did," he said. "We had the great race course, the great location, we just needed the organization to put on a good race. It was very important to me to try and take running to a new level in the Duluth area, and I'm so proud of what's been built with Grandma's Marathon."

The full "Gearing Up for Grandma's" video podcast featuring Keenan will debut as part of the virtual [2021 Essentia Health Fitness Expo](#) at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 17.

During Keenan's tenure, Grandma's Marathon grew to be one of the largest marathons in the country and now welcomes more than 20,000 runners to Duluth and the surrounding region each year. The race also played host to nine national championships, something he points to as one of his proudest moments during his time with the race.



The book costs \$17.99 and can be bought online at scottkeenanbooks.com. A portion of all proceeds will go to benefit the Young Athletes Foundation (YAF), which is the charitable piece of Grandma's Marathon that provides money and resources to local youth organizations to help keep the area's kids active and healthy.

Keenan, who served as the race's executive director for 37 years before retiring in 2013, will also be selling and signing copies of his new book during this year's in-person Essentia Health Fitness Expo on race weekend. He will be available from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Friday, June 18 in Pioneer Hall at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (DECC).

For more information or for any interview requests, please contact Marketing & Public Relations Director Zach Schneider via phone at (218) 343-9874 or via email at zach@grandmasmarathon.com.

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ABOUT GRANDMA'S MARATHON

Grandma's Marathon began in 1977 when a group of local runners planned a scenic road race from Two Harbors to Duluth, Minnesota. There were just 150 participants that year, but organizers knew they had discovered something special. Grandma's Marathon weekend draws approximately 20,000 participants for its three-race event each June.

The race got its name from the Duluth-based group of famous Grandma's Restaurants, the first major sponsor of the Marathon. Over time, the level of sponsorship with the restaurants changed, but the name stayed the same. Grandma's Marathon-Duluth, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization with a 17-member Board of Directors and a nine-person, full-time staff.

ABOUT THE YOUNG ATHLETES FOUNDATION (YAF)

Created in 1990, this arm of Grandma's Marathon allows us to support community members and local businesses to provide pathways of opportunity for kids to live to active and healthy lifestyles. The YAF offers a variety of community grants and youth programming, including our Grant Program, Running Shoe Program, UMD Eleanor Rynda Scholarship Fund, and kids' programming including Wednesday Night & Saturday Morning at the Races.

In addition, the YAF's mission is helped and funded by various races throughout the year --- St. Fennessy 4K, Fitger's 5K, Park Point 5-Miler, Minnesota Mile, and North End Nightmare.

Since its inception, the YAF has contributed more than \$1 million to area nonprofit youth athletic organizations.



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