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WORLD RECORD HOLDER, ENDURANCE SPORT PIONEER CHRIS NIKIC TO RUN 2024 GRANDMA'S MARATHON

Will Also Make Appearances Promoting 1% Better Challenge

(DULUTH, MINN.) --- 2-time ESPY award winner and Guinness world record holder Chris Nikic will be at the starting line of the 2024 Grandma's Marathon, the organization announced today.

Nikic was born with Down syndrome and was unable to walk well until age 4, but recently he became the first person with Down Syndrome to complete each of the World Marathon Majors (New York City, Boston, Chicago, Berlin, London, and Tokyo) and earn the coveted Abbott Six Star medal.

In 2020, before completing any of his running-only marathons, Nikic became the first person in the world to ever complete an Ironman Triathlon – that competition consists of a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and 26.2-mile run.

Nikic beat his own time two years later at the 2022 World Championships, and that mark of 16 hours, 31 minutes still stands as an official Guinness world record.

After accomplishing a goal that once seemed out-of-reach, Nikic co-wrote a book with his father, Nik, titled *1% Better: Reaching My Full Potential and How You Can Too*.

The book chronicles Nikic's journey from childhood to his teenage years, when after high school he was an admitted "overweight, out-of-shape" 18-year-old. As he slowly developed an affinity for exercise, Nikic also slowly changed his perception of what was possible in his life.

"That's when he wrote on the wall that he was going to be a 'world champ'," his father Nik said. "We didn't dismiss what he was telling us as impossible, we took it to heart and believed him. Then, we got to work helping him achieve that goal."



Chris will speak at the Essentia Health Fitness Expo at 12:00 p.m. on Friday, June 21, and Nik will follow that at 1:00 p.m. as a guest for a panel discussion on the inclusion of neurodivergent and disabled athletes in endurance sporting events like Grandma's Marathon. Both presentations are free and open to the public.

The Nikic's will also be visiting Northwood Children's Services west campus on Thursday, June 20, with Chris set to speak to the kids and lead them through the "1% Better Challenge."

"We're honored to have Chris as part of our 2024 Grandma's Marathon weekend," Marketing & Public Relations Director Zach Schneider said. "We met Chris and his dad two years ago in Denver, and I don't think there was a dry eye in the place after Chris had given his presentation. He's exactly the type of person we want at our starting line, and we're excited to continue the conversation about how those doors can be opened to other athletes like Chris."

Down syndrome is a chromosome disorder caused by an extra chromosome 21, which prompted the creation of the Runner 321 initiative aiming to welcome more neurodivergent athletes into endurance sports. On race day in Duluth, Chris will wear race bib No. 321 as a symbol of that initiative.

For any questions or interview requests, please contact Marketing & Public Relations Director Zach Schneider via phone at (218) 343-9874 or via email at zach@grandmamarathon.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. After seeing just 150 participants that year, the race weekend has now grown into one of the largest in the United States and welcomes more than 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. In addition to the 26.2-mile race, the organization has now added the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon and William A. Irvin 5K to its weekend offerings.

As the popularity of Grandma's Marathon has grown, our mission has stayed the same – to organize, promote, and deliver annual events and programs that cultivate running, educational, social, and charitable opportunities to our communities.

Grandma's Marathon-Duluth, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization with a nine-person, full-time staff and a 17-member Board of Directors.



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