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“DON’T WAIT” WARNING RINGS TRUE AS GRANDMA’S MARATHON SOARS TO NEW HEIGHTS

Record-Setting Registration Starts Road to 50th Annual Weekend with a Bang

(DULUTH, MINN.) --- Endurance is the quality most often associated with Grandma’s Marathon weekend, but the organization was more than happy to show off its speed as registration opened on Wednesday evening ahead of its 50th annual race weekend.

Just over 90 minutes after the proverbial doors opened, four of the five events for June 2026 had reached their capacities – all in record-setting time – with the last well on its way.

Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon – 7,000 entries, sold out in 75 minutes
William A. Irvin 5K – 1,500 entries, sold out in 106 minutes
Full Great Grandma’s Challenge – 500 entries, sold out in 92 minutes
Half Great Grandma’s Challenge – 500 entries, sold out in 48 minutes

Add to that, Grandma’s Marathon – the weekend’s crown jewel – had fewer than 1,250 of its 9,500 spots remaining just 90 minutes after registration open. After reaching a record-setting sellout in early November a year ago, the 26.2-mile race is also on pace to shatter its previous best.

“To see the shift in conversation of these sellouts from days and hours to mere minutes is incredibly humbling,” Marketing & Public Relations Director Zach Schneider said. “There’s always some nervous anticipation around registration day, so it’s good to take a breath and now go forward into the real work of delivering on what these tens of thousands of people signed up for.”

As registration opened at 7:00 p.m. CT on Wednesday, October 1, organizers showed close to 9,000 people in the waiting room. Once 90 minutes had passed, more than 17,500 people had signed up for one of the weekend’s events.



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“To think of all these people in their areas of the world, logging on tonight to be part of Grandma’s Marathon,” Schneider said, “it’s why we do what we do. We can’t wait to give them a weekend they’ll remember forever.”

So, what can runners do now that most of the weekend’s events have been sold out on day one? Grandma’s Marathon has an answer.

“Run for charity, and everybody wins,” Schneider said. “We have 50 Charity Partners to help us celebrate 50 years of Grandma’s Marathon, and together we’re aiming to raise \$1 million for worthwhile and deserving causes in our community.”

Participants can choose one of the charitable causes with available entries, and when that participant reaches the fundraising goal – set by each organization – they will receive a free entry into the 2026 event of their choice. *Approximately 1,000 total race entries are available through charity partners, though availability will vary by organization.*

“We talk every year about the positive impact Grandma’s Marathon weekend has on our participants and community,” Schneider said, “and our Charity Partners program is a prime example of how that impact can extend even past our race weekend. Runners can get what they’re after, a spot at the starting line, and in exchange these nonprofit organizations can receive money to do some real good within our region.”

The 50th annual Grandma’s Marathon weekend is scheduled for June 18-20, 2026. 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@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. After seeing just 150 registered participants that year, the marathon has now grown into the 10th largest in the United States.

The race got its name from the Duluth-based group of famous Grandma’s Restaurants, the first major sponsor of the marathon. Having now added the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon and William A. Irvin 5K, the race weekend now welcomes more than 20,000 participants to Duluth and the surrounding region each year.

As the popularity of Grandma’s Marathon weekend 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 10-person, full-time staff and a 17-member Board of Directors.



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