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Contact: Zach Schneider  
Marketing & Public Relations Director  
[zach@grandmasmarathon.com](mailto:zach@grandmasmarathon.com)  
(218) 727-0947

**DOWNTOWN DULUTH'S STOKES NAMED  
2026 RON DAWS AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR**  
*Has Worked Since 2000 on Bettering Duluth's Downtown, Canal Park*

**(DULUTH, MINN.)** – Longtime downtown Duluth advocate Kristi Stokes has been named the 2026 Ron Daws Ambassador of the Year, it was announced today by Grandma's Marathon.

Stokes first moved to Duluth in 1991 as a reporter for KDAL Radio, admittedly knowing very little about the marathon. Naturally, it was one of her first assignments, and from that point on it's been a centerpiece of her professional career in Duluth.

"That first year I was at the finish line and got to interview runners live on the air, and I was hooked," Stokes said.

In 2000, Stokes began her career with the Greater Downtown Council, which is known today as Downtown Duluth. There, she's served more than two decades as an advocate for the people who live, work, shop, and play in Duluth's downtown and Canal Park districts.

Her work is year-round and involves many events other than Grandma's Marathon, but the efforts of Stokes and her staff are certainly center stage on race weekend as participants run through the heart of the city on their way to the finish line in Canal Park.

"I know there's many people deserving of this award, so it's truly an honor to be receiving it," Stokes said. "How can you not be an ambassador of this race? I love this community, and I love this event, so this has always an easy one for me."

The award is named after Ron Daws, who was a 1968 Olympian and instrumental to the development of road racing in Minnesota. It's presented each year to an individual or group who has been a leader in the development and growth of long-distance running and who has shared a commitment toward Grandma's Marathon and the City of Duluth.



Stokes was officially presented with her 2026 Ron Daws Ambassador of the Year award on Wednesday, May 20 at a dinner and ceremony at the St. Louis County Depot in Duluth.

## RON DAWS AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR RECIPIENTS

<b>2026</b> – Kristi Stokes	<b>2007</b> – Doris Windsand-Dausman
<b>2025</b> – Alan Evans, Jim Evans, Matt Evans	<b>2006</b> – Dan ‘Digger’ Carlson
<b>2024</b> – Bob Hartl	<b>2005</b> – Ed Hermel
<b>2023</b> – Rafael Botello Jimenez	<b>2004</b> – Kelly Keeler
<b>2022</b> – Katie McGee	<b>2003</b> – Bill Andberg
<b>2019</b> – Dan Conway	<b>2002</b> – Terry Lundberg
<b>2018</b> – Patricia Goodwin	<b>2001</b> – Richard Braun
<b>2017</b> – Austin Jarrow Sports	<b>2000</b> – Rob Link
<b>2016</b> – Brian Larsen	<b>1999</b> – John Goldfine
<b>2015</b> – Peter Graves & Michael Pinocci	<b>1998</b> – Kerry Rodd
<b>2014</b> – Joanie Holst	<b>1997</b> – Doug Kurtis
<b>2013</b> – Huck Andresen	<b>1996</b> – Garry Bjorklund
<b>2012</b> – Jon Anderson	<b>1995</b> – Dick Beardsley
<b>2011</b> – Gloria Jansen	<b>1994</b> – Dorothy Spencer
<b>2010</b> – Martha Firling	<b>1993</b> – Alex Ratelle
<b>2009</b> – James Kirkham	
<b>2008</b> – Carolyn Mather	

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](mailto:zach@grandmamarathon.com).

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### ABOUT GRANDMA’S MARATHON

Started by a local group of runners in 1977, Grandma’s Marathon has grown from just 150 participants its first year to now one of the largest and best-known marathons in the United States. Widely regarded as a world class event with small town charm, our race has now added the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon and William A. Irvin 5K to its weekend offerings.

With all three races combined, our race weekend welcomes more than 20,000 participants – usually from all 50 states and from 70+ different countries – and brings with it close to \$40M of economic impact to the region.

The race got its name from the Duluth-based group of famous Grandma’s Restaurants, the first major sponsor of the marathon. 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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