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## **Syracuse Festival of Races Selected to Host 2008 USA Masters 5 km Championships**

**Syracuse, NY** — The 16<sup>th</sup> annual Syracuse Festival of Races, scheduled for Sunday, October 5, has been selected by USA Track & Field to host the 2008 USA Masters 5 km Championships for both men and women. Masters competition in distance running in the United States begins at age 40, and race organizers expect the Championships to attract out-of-town competitors ranging in age from 40 through 95.

“The Masters Long Distance Running (MLDR) Committee of USATF is proud to announce the award of our 5 km Masters Championship to the Syracuse Festival of Races,” said Don Lein, Chair of USATF’s MLDR Committee. “We always look for races with a very rich and successful history, as well as a sound organization responsible for the conduct of the race, and—most importantly—an experienced and well-respected race director. We know this will be a successful event with the track record that the Syracuse Chargers Track Club has and the impressive credentials that Dave Oja brings to this event. We are proud to have our name associated with them and with the Syracuse Festival of Races.”

This will be only the fourth time in the past quarter-century that the national governing body for the running sports in the United States has placed a long distance running (LDR) national championship in Central New York. The Syracuse Festival of Races previously hosted the USA Masters 5 km Championships in 1994. The Syracuse Freihofer’s Run for Women hosted the USA Open Women’s 5 km Championship in 1991, and the Syracuse Chargers Track Club hosted the USA Masters 5 km Cross Country National Championships at Green Lakes State Park in 1990.

The national championship designation will benefit Central New York in several ways. From an economic standpoint, the national championship designation and the \$9,000 in national championship prize money will attract out-of-state athletes and teams who will purchase hotel rooms, gas, and food during their weekend stay. Many of those athletes have children or grandchildren approaching college age, and they’ll get a good look at Syracuse University, staying at the Sheraton Syracuse University as well as starting and finishing the race at S.U.’s Manley Field House.

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From an athletic and recreational standpoint, having a national championship close to home provides local and area athletes and clubs with a rare opportunity to compete for national medals on their home course. It also provides all of the participants and spectators at the Syracuse Festival of Races the opportunity to witness inspiring performances by top age-group distance runners from throughout the United States.

David Holder, President of the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau, which played an instrumental role in securing the championship designation, sees the championship designation as helping to enhance Syracuse's image as a city and a community of championship quality. "We at the CVB are tremendously excited to welcome another top level championship to Syracuse. Events like this reinforce how great and multi-dimensional this community is."

One of the keys to Syracuse's hosting the Masters Championship is support for cash prize structure from the Empire State Development Grant secured by NYS Senator John A. DeFrancisco.

Along with its separate 5K races for men and women, the Syracuse Festival of Races includes the enormously popular MVP Health Care 3K Fun & Fitness Run, and the Dermody, Burke & Brown Community Fun(s) Walk. The four events of race morning, Sunday, October 5, are expected to attract approximately 3,000 participants and raise thousands of dollars for multiple area non-profit organizations.

Individuals and groups can request hard copies of the entry form for the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Syracuse Festival of Races by calling 315-446-6285 or e-mailing [daveoja@festivalofraces.com](mailto:daveoja@festivalofraces.com). Non-championship participants can register for any of the four events of race morning online via the "Register" link at [www.festivalofraces.com](http://www.festivalofraces.com). USATF athletes and teams must register online at the USATF web site: [www.usatf.org/events/2008/USAMasters5kmChampionships](http://www.usatf.org/events/2008/USAMasters5kmChampionships)

Major support for the 2008 Festival of Races comes from: MVP Health Care; a grant secured by NYS Senator John A. DeFrancisco; the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau; Stickley, Audi & Company; the Niagara Association of USA Track & Field; Dick's Sporting Goods; Dermody, Burke & Brown CPAs; News 10 Now; Time Warner Cable; Citadel Communications; the Syracuse New Times; Family Times; P&C Food & Pharmacy; and the Syracuse Chargers Track Club, Inc.

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