

## **THE FREDERICK STEEPLECHASERS RACE MANAGEMENT PRIMER**

### **OVERVIEW**

From the perspective of the running community here in Frederick, there are a number of things to do which can make your run a success.

If you are looking to attract a large number of reasonably serious, veteran runners (such as most of the members of the Steeplechasers) there are some usual expectations. First, an accurate, well marked, safe course, accurately timed. Most runners who donate money to participate would expect that there would be awards (simple medals or small trophies) for overall and age group winners, some sort of a race "premium" (tee shirts are traditional but mugs, hat bands, etc. are OK) and food and drink for participants. The better/more popular races have better food - bagels, fruit are staples, Gatorade and water is necessary. The better quality food and drink make for more "buzz" and attract more participants. Music or some sort of entertainment adds to a race's popularity.

Frankly, most runners can run anytime, anywhere, for free. There needs to be some special attraction to have a regular runner want to spend \$ to run. There's a lot of competition out there, there is a race nearby most every weekend, all benefiting some good charity, so there needs to be some reason to attract runners.

The key to making money is active fund raising. The entry fee barely covers expenses; profit usually comes from donations. In addition to cash, local merchants can usually be a source of material donations of such things as food and drink and supplies such as cups. Cones to mark the course can be borrowed from utilities (Washington Gas) or the Highway Department.

To attract a lot of participants needs heavy publicity through the local paper, radio stations, etc. A good cause makes this easier since there is a lot of competition with many races around.

Lots and lots of volunteers are essential. You will need people for registration, people to mark the course, people to act as marshals on the course to direct and guide the runners, people to put out food and drink, people to do timing and man the finish line. I would expect that race day needs at least a dozen volunteers for the simplest of runs; the more volunteers available the smoother the race.

The Frederick Steeplechasers Running Club has about 200 active members in Frederick County. The Club is the primary source of information and coordination point for running activities in Frederick County. Following are some of the areas where the Frederick Steeplechasers may assist you:

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The race calendar for anytime during the year is very busy. You can contact Mark Lawrence the Club's current President at [markruns50@comcast.net](mailto:markruns50@comcast.net) to coordinate race times and locations and to get your race listed on the Steeplechasers schedule.

If your run is to be held in Frederick City, you will need a permit from the City. You may contact the Frederick Police for info. There is a fee (\$100 I believe) for this permit. There is an established measured 5K course around Baker Park. This is the City's preferred course.

The Steeplechasers can provide assistance in helping publicize your race through its newsletter and website. We can also distribute flyers/applications for your race in our Club Newsletters. We can also provide you with our Club mailing list if you are planning a publicity mailing of your own. There is a small fee for each of these services. Again contact Mark Lawrence for more info on these items.

The Frederick Steeplechasers can also provide materials and labor to set up the Finish Line and provide Timing and Scoring for your race. This will help make your race more professional in approach and help attract more of the veteran runners. Our usual services include a large Display Clock, Recording Stopwatch, Finish Line Chute (stanchions and flags), Display Boards and other assorted materials. We will also provide the manpower to setup and time runners, post the results and assist your group in picking overall and age group award winners according to you needs. We usually provide two or three Steeplechasers to work the finish line; in addition we expect that your group would provide additional volunteers to supplement this effort. Our timing is by a manual method suitable for relatively small races (up to about 300 participants), although we can handle up to 500 participants with additional help. We will also time walkers and/or a separate kids run if these are part of your plans. Our services are limited to the above; we do not do participant registration, provide measurement or marking of the course.

The Steeplechasers do charge for these finish line services according to expected race size. Our minimum fee is \$150 for races with up to 200 participants, the fee increases to \$200 for 200-300 runners; \$250 for 300-400, \$300 for 400-500, and so-on. If you wish to contract for the Club's finish line services, contact Ken Anderer, the Steeplechasers Finish Line Coordinator at [chronico@aol.com](mailto:chronico@aol.com)

Following is a brief discussion of issues to consider when deciding to put on a race and an outline of some of the steps which may be done for a successful run.

Thanks  
Frederick Steeplechasers  
Race Committee

### **WHY PUT ON A RACE?**

Many reasons exist for any person or group to organize and put on a running activity:

- Raise awareness for specific location, activity, organization or event.
- Raise money to benefit charity or other specific goal.
- Promote general good health or recreation activity.

### **MAKING THE DECISION TO PUT ON A RUN:**

Organizing a running activity takes planning, resources and a commitment to succeed:

- Is there enough interest by the organizers? There's a lot of work required and some up-front funding to get things going.
- Are there key people who are willing to take on the task? The most work falls to one or two individuals (the race director(s)). Is there someone who's willing to take on the task and carry it through
- Is there enough time to set things up? Generally a new run requires up to a year to properly plan, organize and execute a successful run.
- Will there be enough help? A modest run requires about a dozen people to get the preparatory work done and to assure that things go safely and smoothly on race day.
- Does the expertise exist in the organization to know the general requirements for putting on a race?

### **RUN ESSENTIALS:**

The following are some of the essential planning elements required to put on a run:

- Select or establish a Race Course. Determine length of Race: 5K, 5 mile, 10K or other distance. Will there be a kids or non competitive fun run at a shorter distance? Will walkers be encouraged to participate? What about wheelchairs or other special needs? The course needs to be simple and safe. Avoid heavily trafficked areas. Will the run be mostly on pavement or grass? Consider safety of pathway; avoid too many curbs, uneven pavement obstacles. Pathway. Select a course location which is easily accessible, has bathroom facilities available, and has plenty of parking and adequate space or facilities for race-day activities.

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- Determine if a source of electricity is available if needed. A course which starts and ends at the same location or reasonably close simplifies race day activities.
- Target a date and time for the run. Be flexible. Generally select dates and times that will not conflict with other major events, other local runs or most holidays. Avoid coldest part of winter and hottest part of the summer. Select an appropriate time of day. Mornings are the norm; mostly to avoid traffic and be less disruptive to the community at large. A early morning, twilight or evening run in the summer should be considered to avoid high temperatures
  - Get necessary permits. Secure or reserve area for the run including both the course route and support location. If you are planning a run in the City of Frederick, a permit is a necessity; contact the Frederick City Police. The permit cost (\$100) will also get some raceday support from the City's Auxiliary Police to close streets and direct traffic at major intersections. The City however will have a lot to say about the course route. Their preferred race course in the city is a certified 5K loop around Baker Park. Getting any other route approved may be problematic. Outside the City, contact the State Police or State Highway Department, though these groups do not offer any particular guaranteed support.
  - Select a name or theme for your race. Putting the location, organization or benefactor in the name usually works. Most runners remember an odd or "punny" name.
  - Set a realistic budget for race expenses. Allow for expected expenses for awards, race premiums, printing and distribution of race flyers and race registration forms, race day food and beverages. Fees for finish line support or clock and equipment rentals may be required. Permits or use fees, event insurance may also be required there. Incidentals for printing, postage, sign boards etc. etc. etc. The up-front expenses for a modest-sized race (100 participants) will likely be between - \$1500 - \$2000.
  - Consider setting up a dedicated checking account for the race; this simplifies handling of payments and receipts and avoids potential issues with co-mingling funds with an established business or organization.
  - Determine awards or premiums to be given. Runners like to receive awards. Simple trophies or medals (usually costing a few dollars each) are the norm, but other items might be suitable. Cash or substantial material awards for top runners may attract more elite or faster runners but most runners are satisfied with a trophy. The quantity of awards is a consideration also. As a minimum awards or recognition should go to the top 1, 2 or 3 runners overall, for both male and female. Usually awards are also given to the overall winners in the Masters (aged 40 and above) runners. After that awards or recognition are usually given to winners in any of a number of age categories for both men and women. Ten year

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age groups (i.e. 20-29, 30-39, etc) are the minimum expected; five year age groups allow greater recognition and are much preferred by the runners. Broader categories are OK for both older (70+) and younger runners (say, 15 and under), since there usually are but a few in these extremes. Special categories to suit your event may also be appropriate. The number of awards adds up quickly, so keep that in mind for your decision making. A race premium is usually expected for each participant; tee shirts are the most common race premium although mugs, gloves, hats or most anything else have been tried. This is a great source of publicity for your organizing group and for donors as well. Enough race premiums should be available for all participants.

- Set a cost for participation in the run. A cost between \$18 and \$25 is usually OK for most short distance runs. Higher cost will usually discourage many runners from participating, particularly families with children. Offer discounts for early registration, seniors, membership in particular organizations, etc. to rotationally attract additional runners. Family discounts may be considered. Most runners don't like pledge races, so avoid this concept if you can.
- Secure major sponsor or sponsoring organization. Making money on a run usually requires race sponsorship. Find a business or organization willing to fund all or part of race costs. You can offer their logo on tee-shirts and feature their name on all pre-race and race day publicity. Multiple smaller donors are similarly recognized. If not cash many businesses would be willing to provide material, food, cubs, small give-aways,
- Getting out the word about the run is extremely important. Press releases to local newspapers and media may get some results, personal contact works best. Paid ads are usually cost prohibitive. Running publications such as Runners World, Capital Running Journal. Posting on event calendars on websites for these publications and most news media sites is usually free. The Frederick Steeplechasers website is the primary source of information on local running activities.
- Secure medical support or have plan for medical emergencies on race days. Ambulance companies, fire/rescue units are sometimes willing to stand by on race day. A donation usually helps on this. At very least know who/where to call or other medical tech for raceday.

### **PRE-RACE ACTIVITIES:**

The following activities should be started between three and six months in advance of race date. All should be completed by one month before race date.

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- Make final selection of Race Course. Obtain accurate measurement using a Jones Counter or wheel. Measure the course several times to assure accuracy. Consider having the course Certified. Certification is a formal course measurement by trained individual which assures accuracy of distance and is registered with the RRCA. Certification is required for official records and is a plus in attracting serious runners. Certification of a new course is available at a cost. Several certified courses exist in the county.
- Set up and print race flyer and race registration form. Include all race essentials (time, location, costs, types of premiums, restrictions) along with a fill-in/mail back race application. Be sure to include a runner disclaimer or waiver - see sample race applications for wording or consult legal adviser. Decide how participants pay; to whom is the check made out and where it will be sent and include that information as well. Note a cut off date (approximately one week before race) for mail in pre-registration. Don't forget the sponsor(s) logo's if required.
- If your organization has a web site, have race information and/or race application available on line. If you have the resources, establish a race-specific website.
- Consider purchasing insurance coverage to protect the race organizers and volunteers. Single event liability insurance is available from most local insurance agencies.
- Set-up on line registration means if desired. On-line registration services such as "Active.com" are available which will allow race participants to access on line your race and potentially reach more potential runners. The registration service takes a percentage of registration fees for this service.
- Order race awards. Allow adequate time for manufacture and delivery. Consider generic awards for age groups without year or age group identification. This will allow re-use of unused awards in future years. A large selection of race trophy, medals and other awards are available from local trophy shops or from on-line sources.
- Order race premiums. Estimate quantity required; consider extras for give away to sponsors, police and race day help. Allow sufficient time for design, printing and delivery (usually two to three weeks). Tee-shirts, screen printing and artwork services are available from several local sources at reasonable prices. Cost is dependant on quantity, quality of shirt and amount and complexity of printed image.
- Order race numbers. Each runner requires a race number or other identification. A pin-on race bib with pull off bottom tab is required to facilitate most manually times events. Order sufficient quantity and allow time for delivery. Custom

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- printed race bibs with race name and/or major sponsor are available at modest cost. Avoid printing date on bibs, so that extras can be used in future years. Remember to also buy enough safety pins for runners to attach the numbers to their running jersey or tee-shirt. Generic and custom printed race numbers are available through on-line sources. Delivery can usually be done in 1-2 weeks.
- Determine how the finish line will be handled. You will need to set up a marked start and finish line and some sort of traffic control area to be able to identify each runner, get their place and assign a time to each and to do this in a quick and efficient manner. You may consider contracting with the Frederick Steeplechasers or other group to provide finish line services. For a fee these organizations will furnish and set up the finish line area, provide and operate necessary timing equipment and may even bring along several volunteers to assist you with the process. Cost varies according to race size and timing method. The Steeplechasers offer a simple manual timing system at modest cost (usually \$150 - \$250.) which is suitable for most small runs (up to 300 participants). For larger races, an electronic timing using bar codes or “Chip” timing is available from commercial finish line services. Electronic timing services are costly (usually \$1500 or more) and the service providers are usually booked for a year or more into the future.
  - Solicit and secure donations (cash and materials) from sponsors. This is the only successful money making means for most smaller races. The entry fee by runners only barely covers cost of putting on the race; most profits come from monetary donations from sponsors. Get commitments for donations of food and drink. Coffee, water, bagels, fruit are all potentially available from local merchants. Secure commitments for race-day give-aways. Coupons are frequently available from merchants and services.
  - Get out the Word! Get your race information to anyone, every one and in every possible place imaginable. Get info on the Steeplechasers web site. . Do a press release to local and national media. Don’t forget Washington and Baltimore areas. Get you race flyer to local running stores. “If the Shoe Fits” is great location to place race flyers.
  - Make arrangements for any possible race day activities which you may be considering. Having a band, DJ, an exercise session, massages, health/fitness displays all can make for a memorable race day experience.
  - Organize method to receive and track race pre-registration. Any method works both manually (a list) or on computer. For pre-registrants you can assign numbers and prepare race day packets with race premium, number, etc.
  - Think about race day layout. Plan where registration will be done. A dry area, preferably indoors is best but a park pavilion or picnic area cover is OK. You may consider renting an event tent, but these are costly. Plan location for food and

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other material layouts. Plan for the possibility of rain or other unusual weather condition. Make sure there is plenty of parking but that parking doesn't interfere with race activities.

- Make arrangements and plan how course will be marked. Several methods can be used. If sufficient help is available volunteers can be placed at all turns and intersections to direct runners. The use of traffic cones and arrow signage can also be used. Marking pavement with arrows should be avoided. In Frederick City markings on the street in any manner is not permitted. Elsewhere if arrows on the ground are considered use garden lime or other wash away marling, **DO NOT USE PAINT ON PAVEMENT**. Traffic cones can be borrowed from the highway department, gas company or some schools. Frederick Steeplechasers can provide a limited number of direction signage, cones and set-up; there is a cost for these services.
- Get commitments for race-day help. Get more help than you need. For every two people committing to help, remember that one won't show up!

### **THE DAYS BEFORE THE RACE:**

In the last few days leading up to the run, it's time to confirm all of the things that have been prepared:

- Confirm delivery of race numbers, awards and race premiums.
- Arrange pick-up or delivery of borrowed material such as tables and cones.
- Complete assembly of race packets for pre-registered runners. Include race number, pins, awards, race premium and any give-aways
- Organize and pack materials needed for race day including race forms, cashbox, change, paper, pens.
- Make final arrangements for pick up food and drink for raceday.
- Make sure race site and course are in condition for use. Construction or unexpected obstacles on race day can be avoided. Verify that bathrooms will be available and in satisfactory sanitary conditions. Confirm that facilities are to be unlocked or opened on race day if needed.
- Remind all race day volunteers of time and place. It might be helpful to contact the Police, Steeplechasers and other organizations which also may be assisting on raceday.

**RACE DAY:**

- Mark the course. Put out cones/arrows and signage, identify mark miles.
- Set up race day registration table and organize or instruct registration volunteers. Race day registration should start about 1 and ½ hours before race start. Be prepared for a large number of last minute registrations.
- Set up pre-registration packet pickup. Organize alphabetically for ease in locating packet. Locate in separate area from registration table.
- Post course map and other instructions for runners to view.
- Organize and set up aid stop. Should be located near halfway point or other convenient location. Water in paper cups is essential although Gatorade may be provided as well. On short runs not all runners will stop for water. On exceptionally warm days, more will be required. Have trash receptacle available and have volunteers pick up discarded cups.
- Set up tables and put out runner food and drink. Water or Gatorade should be available at or near the finish line.
- Set up start and finish line.
- Send out course monitors. Communications with course monitor may be useful. Consider means to read out split times at mile marks.
- Organize finish line help. Timer, chute monitors and tag pullers.
- Start the Race. A PA or loudspeaker is helpful. Give course instructions and cautions. Thank everyone. Personnel on bicycles to lead and trail the runners are helpful to keep runners on course.
- Winner/Award selection. Having a form or board to fill out with winners in all award categories makes this more efficient.
- Awards Ceremony including Random Drawings. Having drawings for random awards can be used to entertain the crowd while waiting for results to be tabulated. Remember to thank everyone including help and sponsors.
- Post race results
- Organize Cleanup

**THE DAYS AFTER:**

- Final Course and Set-up Cleanup. Remove all posted signage. Monitor all areas for trash.
- Tabulate and Publish Final Results. Mail to all runners if resources are available. Send to Steeplechasers and Washington Running report for publication. Consider a press release with results to local media.
- Return Borrowed Equipment
- Tabulate expense, pay any residual bills
- Send thank you notes to sponsors and volunteers. Consider a party as a means to thank volunteers.
- Make note to help with future runs
- Start Planning Next Year's Run

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**APPENDIX:**

Contact Information for support organizations

Frederick Steeplechasers Running Club – Course marking and finish line services  
[www.steeplechasers.org](http://www.steeplechasers.org)

Mark Lawrence - President – [markruns50@comcast.net](mailto:markruns50@comcast.net)

Ken Anderer – Race Committee – [chronico@aol.com](mailto:chronico@aol.com)

Frederick City Police – City Permit  
301-600-2100

Capital Running Company - Electronic Timing Services  
[www.runwashington.com](http://www.runwashington.com)

Sources for trophies, medals, awards and other race premiums.

Trophies Unlimited  
920 E. Street, Frederick MD  
301-662-5585

Crown Awards: [www.crownawards.com](http://www.crownawards.com)

Quick Trophy: [www.quicktrophy.com](http://www.quicktrophy.com)

K2 Trophies and Awards: [www.k2awards.com](http://www.k2awards.com)

Trophy Outlets: [www.trophyoutlet.com](http://www.trophyoutlet.com)

Sources for Race Supplies: generic and custom printed race numbers, course marking materials, timing supplies, signage:

Rainbow Racing: [www.rainbowracing.com](http://www.rainbowracing.com)

Commercial Sources for Tee Shirts: Custom Graphics, Screenprinting.

Grimes Graphics  
7800 Biggs Ford Road, Frederick, MD  
301-898-0024

Matlin Signs & Graphics

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5715 Industry Lane, Frederick, MD  
301-846-0880

Color Craze Screenprinting  
106 W. Main Street, Middletown, MD  
301-371-4247

List of Local Print Media

Frederick Newspost  
200 East Patrick Street/P.O. Box 575, Frederick MD 21701  
301-662-1177  
[www.fredericknewspost.com](http://www.fredericknewspost.com)

Gazette Newspapers  
13 East Patrick Street, Frederick MD 21701  
301-846-2100  
[www.gazette.net](http://www.gazette.net)

Washington Post  
1150 15<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20007  
800-627-1150  
[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

Washington Times  
3600 New York Avenue, N.E., Washington D.C. 20002  
[www.washingtontimes.com](http://www.washingtontimes.com)

Baltimore Sun  
501 North Calvert Street, Baltimore MD 21201  
800-829-8000  
[www.baltimoresun.com](http://www.baltimoresun.com)

Herald Mail  
100 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown MD  
301-733-5123  
[www.herald-mail.com](http://www.herald-mail.com)

Brunswick Citizen  
Valley Citizen  
101 West Potomac Street, Brunswick MD 21716  
301-834-7722  
[www.citizennewspapers.com](http://www.citizennewspapers.com)

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Montgomery County Sentinel  
615 S. Frederick Ave., Gaithersburg MD  
[www.sential.com](http://www.sential.com)

Washington Running Report  
[www.runwashington.com](http://www.runwashington.com)

Carroll County Times  
[www.carrollcountytimes.com](http://www.carrollcountytimes.com)

Emmitsburg Dispatch  
9 E. Main Street, Emmitsburg MD  
301-447-5993

List of Local Radio/TV Media

WAFY – Key 103.1  
5742 Industry Lane, Frederick MD 21701  
301-620-7700

WARX  
880 Commonwealth Avenue, Hagerstown MD 21714  
301-416-7300

WFMD/ WFRE  
5966 Grove Hill Road, Frederick MD 21701  
301-663-4181

WTHU  
10 Radio Lane, Thurmont MD 21788  
301-271-2188

WXTR – 820AM 82Q  
6630 Mt. Phillip Road, Frederick MD 21701  
301-663-5400

WWVZ - Z104  
6630 Mount Phillip Road, Frederick MD 21701  
800-987-2104

NBC 25  
13 E. Washington Street, Hagerstown MD 21741  
301-797-4400

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Comcast  
5300 Westview Drive, Frederick MD  
301-668-3140