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Inspiring People and Stories Behind the 2023 Bank of America Chicago Marathon

CHICAGO, IL – The Bank of America Chicago Marathon returns on Sunday, October 8, 2023, for the 45th running of one of the world's most iconic road races, and it promises to be historic in athleticism, inspiration and milestones.

This year, participants from around the world, all walks of life and all levels of skill are running for themselves, their family members and their communities. The inspiring stories of those taking on 26.2-miles in Chicago make each year's race special, and this year will be no different. One of the deepest and most decorated professional athlete lineups in the event's history will lead the way on race day. Following in the footsteps of the front runners, more than 47,000 participants will make up one of the race's largest finisher fields, which will include the event's millionth finisher – both extraordinary milestones and a testament to the race's significance and global popularity.

From athletes breaking barriers and records to those running for a cause, below is a collection of the unique stories and 'whys' from the 2023 Bank of America Chicago Marathon participant field.

NEW IN 2023

- The **2023 Abbott World Marathon Majors Wanda Age Group World Championships** will be held as a part of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon on Sunday, October 8, with 2,700 top age group runners from across the world vying for podium positions in their respective age categories. One of these participants is 60-year-old Jenny Hitchings from Sacramento, CA. Jenny has run 33 marathons and hopes to break the American record, if not the World Record, as she enters a new age category this year. She already holds five American Records and a World Best for her age group (60-64).
- Twenty-six couples will dash to the altar race weekend during [Weddings At Wrigley™: A World of Love](#) on Saturday, October 7. Each couple will have a connection to Sunday's race with one or both individuals signed up to participate in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon the following day. The once-in-a-lifetime marriage ceremonies will take place between 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. CDT underneath the iconic Wrigley Building Bridge (410 N. Michigan Avenue).
- The inaugural **Bank of America Chicago Distance Series** culminates at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. Participants who completed the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K in March, the Bank of America Chicago 13.1 in June and the Chicago Marathon will receive a unique medal and a guaranteed entry into the 2024 Chicago Marathon. Paula Gutierrez and Veronica Laureano, members of the Windrunners, a Chicago-based all-female racing team, have completed both the 8K and half marathon, and upon their finish in Grant Park on October 8, will be among the first Chicago Distance Series finishers.
- The Bank of America Chicago Marathon introduced the opportunity for individuals in the mass participation race to register as non-binary in 2022 and celebrated 41 finishers in the new division. This year, the **non-binary division has seen meaningful growth** with more than 130 runners registered to participate. Participants in this year's division include Cal Calamia, the 2022 division second place finisher, sports activist, and founder of Non-Binary+ Run Club; Jake Fedorowski, a non-binary inclusion advocate and Executive Director of Queer Running Society;

and Justin Solle, the Race Director for the NYRR FRNY Pride Run who has the goal to be the first non-binary person to run all six of the Abbott World Marathon Majors.

- The 2023 Bank of America Chicago Marathon will feature the deepest and **most-decorated professional athlete fields** in race history, including all four 2022 race champions. [The full professional field roster can be viewed here.](#)
- Since 1977, over 960,000 participants have crossed the Bank of America Chicago Marathon finish line. This year's field of more than 47,000 participants will help the event to make history as we **welcome the millionth finisher** across the line in Grant Park. Throughout race weekend the event will celebrate past finishers who helped to reach this milestone, as well as announce the 2023 participant who will push the event past the millionth finisher mark on race day.

NOTABLE RUNNERS

- [Chris Nikic](#) is an American amateur triathlete. In 2020, at age 21, he became the first person with Down syndrome to finish an Ironman triathlon. As a part of the Runner 321 Movement, Chris will wear bib #321 to represent trisomy 21, the medical term for Down syndrome. In 2023, the events that comprise the Bank of America Chicago Distance Series made a commitment to reserve bib #321 for a neurodivergent athlete moving forward.
- [Monica Puig](#), former professional tennis player and ESPN commentator, is the first-ever Puerto Rican to win an Olympic Gold Medal. Monica is an Abbott World Marathon Major Six Star hopeful, and the Bank of America Chicago Marathon will mark her fourth star.
- [Lauren Ridloff](#) is an actress and Executive Producer. Lauren's meteoric rise as an actor began five years ago, but prior to that, she won the title of Miss Deaf America and was a kindergarten teacher in Manhattan for almost a decade. Last year, she participated in the TCS New York City Marathon, which was her first marathon. She is excited to return to her hometown to run her second marathon.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

- **Joelle Barenak, Lemont, IL** – Joelle's Bank of America Chicago Marathon journey started as a volunteer at a water station while fulfilling community service hours. Inspired by the runners she was supporting, she decided to give running a try and now calls herself a marathoner. She has completed both the Chicago and Boston Marathons and is excited to compete once again this year on the streets of Chicago.
- **Nicole Bubolz, Largo, FL** – Nicole is proof it's never too late to build on a new passion, as the mother of nine children (three single and three sets of twins) makes her Bank of America Chicago Marathon debut. After picking up running 15 years ago to lose weight, Chicago will be her third marathon where all nine of her children will be waiting to celebrate with her following her finish.
- **Mary Ellen Clifford, Chicago, IL** – Inspired by Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski's speech at the high school where she coached cross country, Mary Ellen has now run seven marathons and will be running with her three daughters at this year's race.
- **Kassoum Doumbia, Chicago, IL** – When Kassoum, a member of the Black Chicago Runners club, moved to Chicago, he was a spectator at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and used his skills as a photographer to capture photos of Black participants throughout the 26.2-mile race. Since then, Kassoum has found a sense of community with other fitness enthusiasts in Chicago, and he is excited to move from the sidelines to the participant field for this year's event.
- **Joe Drake, Seattle, WA** – Joe plans to run all six Abbott World Marathon Majors in 2023. Joe was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2018 and learned that vigorous exercise slows the

progression. He ran his first marathon at 58 and has since done 16 marathons, raising more than \$500,000 for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

- **Quinn Fuechsl, Chicago, IL** – As one of the brewers at Goose Island Brewery, Quinn knows the strong relationship runners have with beer, especially in Chicago. This year, he'll get his own 312 Wheat Ale commemorative finisher can to go with his Bank of America Chicago Marathon medal. Quinn is one of several other Goose Island employees participating this year.
- **Juan Hernandez, Chicago, IL** – Juan makes his Bank of America Chicago Marathon debut with an incredible weight loss story: he started at 400 pounds and is now down to 180 pounds. He runs with Chicago-area run clubs Viento Little Village Run Club and 7onSundays.
- **Ismat Khimani, Crystal Lake, IL** – Ismat emigrated to the United States from Pakistan in 1984 and while always interested in health and wellness, running wasn't a part of her culture growing up and she didn't begin running until she was in her forties and completed her first marathon in 2013. Now, at 56, she plans to run three marathons this year. She is a Financial Advisor at Merrill for the past 25 years.
- **Peter Kline, Bellevue, WA** – At the age of 71, Peter a senior vice president at Merrill has not only run more than 100 marathons but has also completed more than 60 of those with "rider athletes," giving people with disabilities the chance to experience the thrill of crossing a marathon finish line. This year, Peter is once again running with rider athlete Peter Ruiz, a Chicagoan with spina bifida.
- **Bruce Konstant, Chicago, IL** – Along with being the Official Starter of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon (this year marks the second time!), Bruce is a longtime runner, 5-time marathon runner (in 1986 he ran a 2:45 marathon), eight-year veteran of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon Officiating Crew and 17-year employee of Bank of America.
- **Liliana Martin, Chicago IL** – Liliana was diagnosed with an aggressive form of bladder cancer while training for the 2022 Bank of America Chicago Marathon. One year later, she's in remission and feeling strong and ready to run again to raise funds for the American Cancer Society.
- **Peng Ratchaworapong, Honolulu, HI** – Tata Consultancy Services celebrates the transformational impact of teachers in the lives of their students and in their communities through their Team TCS Teachers program. This year, Peng is running for his students, especially girls who are interested in computer science and engineering; he's passionate about inspiring them to believe that nothing is impossible. After running the TCS New York City Marathon in 2022, he's excited to get his second Abbott World Marathon Major Star in Chicago.
- **Paul Robinson, Chicago, IL** – Paul works for Chicago CRED, a gun violence prevention organization, to work directly with gang-involved young men and women who are deemed to be at high risk to shoot or be shot. Paul runs as a form of meditation to process his day, ones that are often filled with trauma.
- **EJ Scott, Los Angeles, CA** – EJ runs blindfolded due to an eye disease that is causing him to go blind. He has run 15 marathons, 8 half marathons, and on all 7 continents, fundraising for various blindness-related charities.

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

The Bank of America Chicago Marathon welcomes thousands of participants from more than 100 countries and all 50 states, including a world-class elite field, top regional and Masters runners, race veterans, debut marathoners and charity participants. The race's iconic course takes participants through 29 vibrant neighborhoods on an architectural and cultural tour of Chicago. The 2023 Bank of America Chicago Marathon, a member of the Abbott World Marathon Majors, will start and finish in

Grant Park on Sunday, October 8, 2023. In advance of the race, a three-day Abbott Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Thursday, October 5, Friday, October 6, and Saturday, October 7. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

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