

Slow and steady

BY ELIZABETH ASHLEY

Staff Writer

The tiny town of Marathon was established and named in 1882 by seafaring Captain Albion Shepard, who claimed the sprawling desert nestled amongst the majestic mountains reminded him of Marathon, Greece. Originally founded by Texas Agriculture Commissioner, Texas Comptroller, and local ranch owner Susan Combs in 2003, Big Bend's annual Marathon 2 Marathon race acts as homage to the infamous journey between Marathon and Athens in 490 BC to notify the city that the Persian army had been defeated.

In the largest event the tiny town hosts each year, contestants begin 26 miles south of Fort Stockton, and travel southwest along scenic Highway 385.

With just over 400 residents, Marathon's population doubles in a day, having profound impact on the local economy and bringing a surge of vitality to the entire community. Fundraising efforts over the past seven years have proven lucrative. In addition to the money spent by contestants at local businesses, over \$45,000 have been returned to various community organizations such as the Marathon Volunteer Fire Department, Marathon

Independent School District and Parent Teacher Organization, Marathon Public Library, and Marathon Baptist Church.

"It's a heartfelt race of appreciation," said race director and sponsor French Company Grocer owner Marci Roberts.

Significant amounts of money are raised by runners partaking in the race-sponsored meals as well. The 2017 participants raised \$7,200 for Marathon ISD and \$7,500 for the volunteer fire department from the pre race pasta dinner and post race barbecue lunch. This year's extracurricular activities promise to be just as successful and include dancing, a star party, and



Marathon 2 Marathon 5k participants endure the heat as they race towards the finish line.

Courtesy photo

plenty of food.

Two pasta dinners will be held on Friday, Oct. 26, and all proceeds will benefit the school district. A pasta dinner will also be held at the Historic Visitor Center in Fort Stockton.

The volunteer fire department will be sponsoring a post race lunch fundraiser again this year, and will be grill-

ing chicken, brisket, and sausage, as well as serving vegetarian beans, baked potatoes, and cobbler on Saturday. The evening will end with a star party beginning at 9 pm. Davenport will also serve breakfast at the French Company Grocer on Sunday morning, Oct. 28.

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