

As we wrapped up 2019 and headed into 2020, Run Regina had big plans for the coming year. We were set to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the GMS Queen City Marathon and in addition to the First Responder Run, Canada Day Run and GMS Queen City Marathon we were excited to be bringing back the I Love Regina Run. With four events on our calendar this was to be our biggest year ever.

Registration for all four events opened in early December and by March had over 2,500 participants registered. During the beginning of 2020, Run Regina was also fortunate to have the opportunity to support many community events as well;

- The YWCA Coldest Night of the Year – supporting people experiencing homelessness, hurt and hunger in our city,
- The Secret Marathon 3K – supporting equality and the belief that everyone should have the freedom to run,
- parkrun Wascana - International Women's Day Run and New Years Day Run

And then things changed. On March 12, Saskatchewan had its first presumptive case of Covid-19 and by March 18, had declared a provincial state of emergency. Events, like the GMS Queen City Marathon, were put on hold as the world scrambled to address the pandemic.

For Run Regina this was a time to scramble as well. What was the year going to bring? How were we going to do what we do best? Bringing people together with events to celebrate running and walking was what we do. Would events be able to happen in 2020? Reflecting on our mission statement of, “being dedicated to engaging our community in running and walking experiences that promote the wellbeing of the individual and pride in our community,” it was clear we would need to reinvent how we met our mission in 2020.

One of the key learning's from the past year has been the need to communicate, collaborate and work collectively together both locally as well as globally. The mass participation event industry has come together like so many other industries to find new ways to move forward and find new ideas to succeed. In Saskatchewan we took the lead in bringing races together. On Canada Day, along with the Provincial Capital Commission and a dozen other races, we got Saskatchewan moving. The first Canada Day Virtual Run/Walk/Roll saw over 650 participants, including 280 from Regina, move locally in their own communities. On Global Running Day in June Run Regina partnered with races across the country to get over 2350 Canadians moving. Regina was the fourth largest city represented behind only Toronto, Calgary and Ottawa. Globally races are talking

more, sharing expertise and working collectively to bring the industry back stronger than ever.

Races looked very different from what we have been used to this past year. We sadly had to cancel our three spring and early summer races. This was an incredibly hard decision and one we did not take lightly. The decision to cancel had impacts not only on Run Regina organizationally but impacted participants, sponsors, charity partners and the entire Regina community. Our races are important for the physical and mental health of our participants as well as being economic drivers for our city. Fortunately, with the help of our incredible volunteers, we were able to still bring the community together for the Virtual GMS Queen City Marathon in September.

The Virtual GMS Queen City Marathon was an incredible success albeit very different from the norm. With 3426 runners and walkers we were a little smaller than years past but still worked diligently to give them a great experience. Some of the successes of the 2020 event included;

- Introduction of the Scribbly BEAST and having 42 participants complete two 5K's, the 10K, the half marathon and the full marathon. Many of these participants completing their first full marathon ever!
- Hosting a Covid safe package pickup and never allowing more than 30 people in to the room was a switch from the hundreds at a time we were used to. The feedback from those attending was that they felt incredibly safe and that the volunteers did a fantastic job of creating at least a small piece of our traditional experience.
- Our social media presence was greater than ever before. From the almost 30 local runners and Queen City Marathon celebrities that shared their stories on Facebook to the Virtual Event Group encouraging each other and posting their photos it was an event like no other. We even managed to still partner with the Regina Public Library to host a virtual event and hear the story of Martin Parnell, the founder of the Secret Marathon.

What could have been a very bad year for Run Regina ends with some hope in sight. With the support of the community, our sponsors and our volunteers we can see a day when live, in-person events will return. Having so many runners and walkers stick with us in this last year as well as being able to access some government supports has guaranteed that Run Regina will be around for many years to come. Heading into 2021 we are excited to offer a combination of virtual experiences and, fingers crossed, a live, in-person event or two.

In conclusion, 2020 was once again an interesting year to lead our organization.

Thank you to the Board of Directors for entrusting their organization and events to our volunteers and myself.

Thank you to the volunteer race committee for ensuring that the races come together each year so that each and every participant has an opportunity to meet their goals.

Thank you to our countless volunteers who give hundreds of hours each year.

Thank you to our sponsors who trust us to put on world-class events, with a special thank you to GMS for being the title sponsor of the Queen City Marathon Race Weekend and to committing to our event in new and exciting ways each year.

And thank you to our participants who continue to run, walk and roll in our events in record numbers each and every year.

A special thank you to my parents, Terry and Darwin, who due to the pandemic had to give up their entire running travel plans for 2020/2021, a year they should have completed their 100th half marathon and 300th full marathon respectively, and instead dedicate their time to supporting Run Regina events.

Shawn Weimer – Executive Director, Run Regina