

Walt Disney World Resort Celebrates 25 Years of Marathons with Central Florida's Largest Sports Event

The 25th annual Walt Disney World Marathon Weekend presented by Cigna, ranks among the **nation's most popular destination races**, growing from **8,200 runners in 1994** to more than **100,000 athletes and spectators expected at the event this year**, including **76 "perfects"** (runners who have participated in every Walt Disney World Marathon). **As Central Florida's largest sporting event**, the four-day race weekend offers activities for runners of all ages and levels including the **5K, 10K, half marathon, marathon**, **runDisney Kids Races** and **runDisney Health and Fitness Expo**.

Storylines include:

Georgia Cleland (Ruxton, Md.) is attempting to tackle her first marathon, which is remarkable given she is still trying to overcome the lingering effects of the life-threatening acute lymphocytic leukemia she battled as a child. Now 33 years old and having grappled with intense treatments, including **cranial radiation and chemotherapy**, she is running with **Team in Training**, the campaign her father founded in her honor 30 years ago. Team in Training is the world's largest endurance sports fundraising and training program, raising more than \$1.5 billion for research to fight blood cancers.

Tony Randolph (Baltimore, Md.), who was once nearly homeless and wrestling with substance abuse, is an example for everyone that there is no hill too high to climb. Randolph, who is running the 5K this weekend, has **used running to help him leave his homelessness and substance issues behind**, and now has stable housing and **his own landscape business** with the help of the Back on My Feet organization. The national non-profit organization supported by the Cigna Foundation combats homelessness through running and community support.

Bindu Panapalli (Glen Allen, Va.) has tried to help cancer patients for years through her job as a lab technician. Now she is **a walking, talking - and running - example of how to courageously fight the disease. Despite several surgical procedures and chemotherapy treatments over an 18-month period**, Panapalli is running the 10K this weekend **as a testament to others** who are trying to overcome similar challenges. Afterwards, she will be back at work helping fellow cancer patients while also working toward a doctorate degree.

When & Where:

Walt Disney World 5K Race:

Date: Thursday, Jan. 4

Arrive at Epcot by 4:30 a.m. for live coverage of the start and finish line.

Start 5:30 a.m.

Walt Disney World 10K Race: Date:

Friday, Jan. 5

Arrive at Epcot by 4:30 a.m. for live coverage of the start and finish line.

Start 5:30 a.m.

Walt Disney World Half Marathon Race:

Date: Saturday, Jan. 6

Arrive at Epcot by 3:30 a.m. for live coverage of the start and finish line.

Start 5:30 a.m.

25th annual Walt Disney World Marathon Race:

Date: Sunday, Jan. 7

Arrive at Epcot by 3:30 a.m. for live coverage of the start and finish line.

Start 5:30 a.m.

Media interested in covering the weekend events must contact Disney Sports Public Relations a day in advance to arrange for credentials.

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