

# One of the Nation's Largest Women-Focused Running Events Descends on Walt Disney World Resort for Princess Half Marathon Weekend

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual Disney Princess Half Marathon Weekend presented by Children's Miracle Network Hospitals is **one of the largest women-focused running events in the U.S.** The race weekend has grown from **10,000 runners in 2009** to more than **56,000 expected participants this year**, including **214 "perfect" Princess runners** (runners who will have participated in every Disney Princess Half Marathon). The race weekend includes *runDisney* Kids Races, 5K, 10K, half marathon, a challenge race (running the 10K and half marathon in successive days) and a health & fitness expo, available Thursday-Sunday.

**Below are storylines from the weekend's events:**

**Cheri Srouer, from Brooklyn, N.Y., will attempt to walk the final 100 yards of the Princess Half Marathon, which would be a minor miracle given an autoimmune neurological disorder has left her mostly paralyzed since 2007.** Though she lost her mobility over a decade ago, she has been determined to not let her condition totally limit her opportunities. Aided by her brother-in-law who pushes her in a wheelchair, Srouer completed the 2016 Disney Princess Half Marathon. In 2017, she relearned how to sit, stand, and even walk again, and was able to switch places with her brother-in-law during last year's Princess Half Marathon and push him across the finish line. Now this year, the tandem are entered again but Srouer will try to triumphantly walk the final 100 yards of the race.

**Izabella "Bella" Niera from Gainesville, Fla., one of the youngest patients in the U.S. to have received a heart-lung transplant and the youngest patient in Florida, is participating in the *runDisney* Kids' Races on Saturday. Her doctors call it miraculous because she had to be revived multiple times as part of her heart-lung transplant ordeal, which involved more than 30 hospital visits over seven years.** Bella's fight for survival began when she was born at 28 weeks and was on life-support for nearly nine months. Her lungs, kidney and liver later began failing, as she had contracted four infections in her lungs, including pneumonia. Despite the odds, she overcame the illnesses and is now a much healthier 7-year-old who continues to defy the odds as she tackles her first major kids race at Disney.

The Disney Princess 5K starts at 5:30 a.m. on Friday, the Disney Princess 10K at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday, and the Disney Princess Half Marathon at 5:30 on Sunday. All races start and begin at Epcot, and the *runDisney* Health & Fitness Expo is located at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex.

***Media interested in covering weekend events must contact Aubrey Gravante a day in advance to arrange for credentials. Media must arrive at Epcot by 4:00 a.m. for live coverage of the 5K race on Friday and 10K race on Saturday and 3:30 a.m. for the half marathon on Sunday.***

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