

# Calendar

## A Run for (a Little) Money

*The San Diego Marathon*

**S**an Diego Marathon owner Lynn Flanagan had just returned from her lunchtime run, when she paused to consider what ownership of San's Diego's oldest marathon means.

It confers "a pretty stressful burden," the 61-year-old Flanagan said. "What it means is that I have total financial responsibility."

Flanagan was speaking from the Solana Beach offices of her event

marketing and management company, In Motion, Inc., where she and four other full-

time employees have spent an entire year planning the race that takes place in Carlsbad this weekend. What did Flanagan buy in 1990, when she went from being the event's promoter to its proprietor? A marathon is not exactly a tangible asset. "Actually, I bought just the name — and the history and the mailing list." She likened a marathon to a concept, an idea — "something, really, that you create."

Asked if she draws a salary or profit, and what the figures have been in recent years, Flanagan would say only that she isn't getting rich but makes a living by producing special events, including several other major road races in San Diego.

Flanagan used to run the San Diego Marathon herself before becoming its manager in 1985. Then, 11 years ago, she bought it from Bill Burke, the L.A. Marathon's controversial president. Los Angeles owns that race, but Burke has been criticized for using his entrepreneurial skills and political connections for making the annual occasion a personal profit center.

That criticism is unfair, some argue. Such a monstrously complicated and expensive entity as a marathon can no longer be left to those who would organize it purely for love of the sport.



2001 San Diego Marathon

Back in the late 1950s, when the San Diego Track Club founded the San Diego Marathon and the runners raced from Oceanside to Mission Bay, there was no traffic to divert. No field hospital to set up at the finish line. No crew of bicycle-riding doctors to be enlisted to monitor the course. No professional race-timing company to be hired for computing finishers' times as well as their "splits," which are the times they register at certain mile markers along the way. ("Runners expect so much more now," said the owner of a 21-year-old race-timing company in San Diego, who reminisced about the days when a marathoner merely handed over a numbered Popsicle stick at the finish line.)

Nor were there corporate sponsors that could determine the financial success or failure of a race.

All runners take home the "goody bags" that are filled with those sponsors' products. In a Carlsbad warehouse one long day last week, volunteers for the San Diego Marathon prepared 9000 of them, each containing 50 products. Working on every aspect of the race, there are 2000 volunteers in all,

coordinated by Flanagan's daughter Ellen.

Some runners like to feel as if their energy is being expended for a good cause. The San Diego Marathon has 13 nonprofit sponsors this year.

Competitors may or may not realize that no part of their entry fee goes to the sponsoring charities. According to Nancy Palo, Flanagan's event coordinator, who spoke during a break from assigning the 24 entertainment groups their locations along the course, "The fee goes for things like the medal that a finisher gets at the end, the marketing, and the T-shirt, which is actually a \$40 value for the Cool Max shirt alone."

The charities do reap rewards, of course. Participants are encouraged to make donations directly or to collect pledges, earning premiums (a sweatshirt, for example) for reaching various dollar goals. On race day, the groups are given space along the route to create "awareness."

Capping registration at 5000 half-marathoners and 3000 marathoners was Flanagan's idea. "Gradually, we may add to that, but we're not interested in becoming a mega-marathon," she said.

Walkers, breakfast burritos, and chalk art for kids don't harm the marathon's image as a serious runner's event (an official qualifier for the Boston Marathon), in Flanagan's opinion. "We do have a little bit of prize money," which ranges from \$3000 for first place

to \$100 for fifth. "The elite runners are not paid; we have a very small budget." But Flanagan makes an effort to attract them. "We do have some plane tickets and some hotel rooms, and we take very good care of them when they're here."

Bill Burke gave up ownership of the marathon because he "didn't feel he had enough local support to get the community behind him," Flanagan said. It does require finesse. The least of it is knowing how to handle the neighbors, not all of whom may be delighted by P.A. systems starting up with the Kahuna Cowboys at 7:30 on a Sunday morning. Flanagan recently moved from Solana Beach to a house right on the race route. So this year she walked that neighborhood, informing everyone of the "times of impact," since, "if people know what's coming far enough in advance, they can prepare for it."

— Jeanne Schinto

**San Diego Marathon  
Sunday, January 20**

**Starting line:**

**Plaza Camino Real, Carlsbad**

**5:30 a.m., walkers (non-competitive);**

**6:30 a.m., race walkers and early-start marathoners;**

**7:00 a.m., half-marathoners;**

**7:25 a.m., wheelchair competitors;**

**7:30 a.m., marathoners**

**\$40-\$70**

**Info: 858-792-2900 or**

**www.sdmarchon.com**



Lynn Flanagan (2nd from left) and Flanagan daughters: Christine Adams (far left), Ellen Flanagan (2nd from right), Katie Johnson (far right)

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