

Marathon effort for Hamptons races

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Barbara Gubbins remembers the day in 2005 that Diane Weinberger and Amanda Moszkowski marched into her store in [East Hampton](#). Along with their well-toned biceps, the two came armed with a big idea.

"They wanted to start a marathon in [East Hampton](#)," said Gubbins, whose eponymous running apparel store -- Gubbins Running Ahead -- has been a longtime fixture on the East End. "I said, 'That's a great idea, but . . .'"

Previous attempts at staging any event longer than a 10-kilometer (6.2 miles) race in the town were unsuccessful. That was mainly because there are only a few major roads in [East Hampton](#), and closing them at any time except in the dead of winter would be out of the question. Even if a course were found, residents in the area might not be thrilled to have their driveways blocked by runners on a Saturday morning -- especially if those residents were named [Martha Stewart](#), Paul McCartney or any of the other celebrities with homes there.

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Aside from the inherent difficulties in staging a race in [East Hampton](#), Gubbins said, "I told them that being a race director is a huge task. They were both runners, but neither had ever organized a race before." Weinberger, now 46, and Moszkowski, 44, listened patiently. But, Gubbins recalls, "I could see they were not going to take 'no' for an answer. Diane said, 'OK, thanks, but we're going to make this happen.' "

And they did: The fifth annual Hamptons Marathon -- which consists of the 26.2-mile race, a 13.1-mile half marathon and a 5k (3.1 miles) -- is this Saturday, and it has become one of the biggest little success stories in the sport.

After its debut in 2007, the race was named one of the 10 best new marathons in the country by Runner's World magazine. It has grown from 670 finishers the first year to 1,870 last year to a sellout field of 2,500 for Saturday's event -- with most participants (about 2,000) entered in the half marathon. The 5k was added to the lineup last year.

'Wall of opposition'

The races are run on a course in the rustic [Springs](#) section of East Hampton, with minimal impact on the town's main arteries. This was achieved despite what Weinberger calls "a wall of opposition" from the community. Some of the naysayers weren't as polite as Gubbins (who, despite her initial skepticism, agreed to become part of the race's advisory board and now competes in the half marathon). What some people didn't like was that the two would-be marathon maestros spent summers in East Hampton but lived during the year in Manhattan.

"Even though Amanda has been coming out since she was a child and I had been here for 10 years, we were considered outsiders," Weinberger said.

Although both are now stay-at-home mothers, Weinberger was a practicing attorney and Moszkowski worked for a major financial firm.

The two longtime runners and fitness enthusiasts met at an Upper West Side playground and found they had the Hamptons in common. One day while lying on the beach after a run, they envisioned a marathon in the place they had both come to love.

Earning town approval

A key to town approval was to show how the community would [benefit](#). A marathon in the off season, they pointed out, would bring in business and generate funds that could support local charities.

Friends in the community helped steer them to those charities: Last year \$55,000 -- the net proceeds of the race -- was split among Project Most, an after-school program for children in East Hampton; [Southampton](#) Hospital; and the East Hampton Day Care Learning Center.

Weinberger and Moszkowski "are unbelievable," said Tim Bryden, executive director of Project Most. "They ask for nothing and are making available this vehicle that raises funds for the children of East Hampton."

But good staging of the race is just as important, and without it there would be no runners, and no funds to donate. "We tried to put on a race the way we would want it, as runners," Moszkowski said.

That involved measuring the course and professionally timing the race. In addition, Weinberger and Moszkowski hired technical race director David Katz of [Port Washington](#), who handles the [New York City Marathon](#) finish line; provide gifts for runners (registrants in this year's race get a gym bag, a fleece ski beanie and a T-shirt); and hold group training runs on the course during summer to help familiarize runners with the route.

That attention to detail has not gone unnoticed among marathon participants.

"It's one of the best-organized races I've done," said veteran runner Paul Buscemi, of East Hampton. He has competed in both the New York City and Boston marathons, and is doing the 5k on Saturday.

Weinberger and Moszkowski have made a believer out of Gubbins. "I think Diana and Amanda have proven that they can run the show," she said.

The longest-"running" show in the Hamptons, in fact.

Race details

What: Hamptons Marathon

When: Saturday, 8 a.m.

What: 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) race

Where: Both begin at [Springs](#) School, East Hampton

Fee: \$25

All the half and full marathons are sold out. Online registration for the 5k ends Sept. 21; on race day, it ends at 7:30 a.m.

Learn more: hamptonsmarathon.com