

WHAT: 100th Anniversary for Southland Marathon doubling as New Zealand Marathon Championships
WHEN: November 29, 2009
WHERE: Riverton to Invercargill
WHO: More than 800 participants expected including some of New Zealand's top runners.

PARTY CELEBRATIONS FOR RACE'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

Celebrating a 100-year-old birthday needs a huge party with great presents.

The organisers of this year's Southland Marathon in November are planning just that for its 100th running. The race is the oldest marathon in the southern hemisphere, and this year's will have special honours as it doubles as the New Zealand Marathon Championships.

Sport Southland event manager Richard Pasco said organisers wanted to make this a race to remember.

"It's all about the celebration. We're hoping people will think 'if I'm ever going to do one I may as well do this one'."

It was hoped the temptation of some substantial prize money would attract top runners.

"As part of attracting top athletes to Invercargill we are offering a cash incentive prize of \$10,000 for the first male finisher under 2:16.00 and \$10,000 for the first female finisher under 2:37.00.

"An added bonus of \$2000 is also offered to men and women who can break the respective Southland marathon records.

"The mens record is 2:12.20 (set by John Campbell in 1987) and the womens record is 2:37.58 (set by Gabriella O'Rourke in 1994)."

If the winner happens to be from Southland and breaks both records they could win \$15000, Pasco said.

The ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust have donated \$30,000 towards the event with the ILT providing a further guarantee of \$24,000 in prize money if the records are broken.

ILT Foundation and ILT chairman Alan Dennis said it was an awesome occasion for the Southland community.

"This is a great race which has grown throughout the years, encouraging Southlanders of all abilities to get out there and give it a go."

"It's great Southland's history has been acknowledged with the incorporation of the New Zealand Marathon Championships in this year's race. The Invercargill Licensing Trust and ILT Foundation are thrilled to be involved in such a momentous birthday."

Included in the race will also be the half marathon, 10km and 5km run-walk sections.

Pasco said he was expecting about 800 people to take part in this year's event.

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