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Legendary marathoner Bill Rodgers to participate in Waterbury 5K on Sept. 13

WATERBURY, Conn. (July 23, 2009) — [Bill Rodgers](#), the Hartford native who is one of the founding fathers of the modern running movement, will participate in the 4th annual Bob Veillette 5K Road Race and Walk on Sept. 13.

Rodgers, 61, is best known for his marathon victories in New York City and Boston. He won both races four times each between 1975 and 1980, twice breaking the American record at Boston with a time of 2:09:55 in 1975 and a 2:09:27 in 1979. In 1977, he won the Fukuoka Marathon in Japan, making him the only runner ever to hold the championship of all three major marathons at the same time.

Rodgers will run in the 2009 Bob Veillette 5K Road Race and Walk and be available to meet those who attend and sign autographs. The event will be held rain or shine at 1:30 p.m. at Library Park at Grand and Meadow streets in Waterbury. Once again this year, there will also be a shorter route for walkers and, later at about 2:30 p.m. in the park, there will be a Kids Fun Run for children 10 and under.



Photo by Damian Strohmeier

Due to Rodgers' participation, and the expected increase in attendance, pre-registration is strongly encouraged. The first 400 registered participants in the road race and walk will receive T-shirts, which this year will feature Rodgers' silk-screened signature.

To register, visit www.Bob5K.com. Pre-registration for the road race and walk is \$20 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. Race-day registration, which begins at 12 p.m. on Sept. 13, is \$25 for adults, \$15 for children 12 and under. Kid Fun Run registration is \$5 per child with a maximum of \$20 per family.

In addition to being an important figure in the running movement on a national level, Rodgers also has longtime ties with one of Connecticut's most popular races, the

Litchfield Hills Road Race (LHRR). He won the inaugural LHRR in 1976, took first place again the next year, and has continued to participate in the event over the years.

The LHRR was also a favorite race for Naugatuck resident Bob Veillette, 64, an avid runner who participated in the LHRR almost every year before a debilitating stroke in 2006 left him paralyzed from the nose down. During a LHRR in the 1980s, Veillette met Rodgers, shaking his hand and walking away feeling inspired.

“When we found out Bob had met Bill at a race both of them loved, we decided to contact Bill and ask if he’d consider participating in our event and he agreed without hesitation,” said David Krechevsky, race director for the 2009 Bob Veillette 5K Road Race and Walk.

“It seemed a perfect fit because an important part of Bill’s legacy is overcoming the odds and Bob is determined to do the same,” Krechevsky said. “Bob has lost the ability to speak and move and he knows the doctors say he won’t recover. But he’s not giving up hope that with help from his twice weekly visits to physical therapy some day he will walk and talk again. This fundraiser allows him to try to reach that goal while living at home with his wife Bonnie.”

Rodgers said he was the one who walked away inspired this time. “I was very moved by Bob’s story, that a fellow runner’s life was changed so much by a twist of fate,” Rodgers said. “I’ve always felt road races bring people together in a powerful way. They’re a place where religion, race, politics and income mean nothing, but where goodwill is king. To me, that’s what Bob’s race is all about.”

Veillette, who communicates through a method of blinking when letters are read aloud, said: “Bill has been a great running motivator. I’m proud to have him in the road race. Thank you again, Bill. Imagine, runners will be going three miles and I can’t even go three inches. Remember, my message to everyone: Don’t take anything for granted.”

Each year, the Bob Veillette Road Race and Walk has drawn more than 300 people to downtown Waterbury. So far it has helped raise more than \$89,000 to help pay for Veillette’s care at home. That money has played a critical role in allowing Veillette to remain at home where he and his family want him to remain. All funds raised by the event help pay for his ongoing medical expenses, which amount to thousands of dollars each month. Among other things, those expenses include physical therapy and professional caregivers who work with his wife in shifts to provide him with round-the-clock care.

Before the April 2006 brain-stem stroke that left him with the rare condition known as “locked-in syndrome,” Veillette was well known in greater Waterbury as an accomplished jazz pianist, performing regularly for numerous charitable causes. He was also a respected journalist, working at the Republican-American newspaper in Waterbury for more than 40 years as a reporter, city editor and most recently, managing editor. To learn more about Veillette, visit www.BobVeillette.com.

Due to the recent economic downturn, this year's race is especially in need of sponsors. To become a sponsor, visit www.Bob5K.com or call Race Director David Krechevsky at (203) 574-3636, ext. 1416. Organizers also need many volunteers to help the event go smoothly. To volunteer, contact Veillette's daughter, Stephanie DeLuca at bobroadrace@yahoo.com.

Those who wish to help the Veillettes, but are unable to participate in the event, may make non-tax-deductible donations by sending a check made out to "Locked-in 5K Road Race" to The Locked In 5K Road Race, 389 Meadow Street, Waterbury, CT 06702.