

Historical Highlights

1971 - July 24 - Zella and Jerry Swartsley, returning home from graduate school at Montana State University, stopped in Salt Lake City where a marathon was held and Jerry would finish 8th. An idea was born! Six years later it would become a reality - Pear Blossom Run.

1977 - Zella and Jerry Swartsley hold the first Pear Blossom Run. Frank Shorter, Olympic Marathon Gold and Silver Medalist, is the first winner of the event. About 200 runners were expected yet 546 finished!

1978 - The running boom was on! Pear Blossom became the first race in Oregon to have a "limited field" - 750 runners compete.

1979 - Computers were used for the first time in results. Governor Atiyeh started the race.

1980 - The race was broadcast on radio for the first time. Entries broke 1,000.

1981 - The race was changed from 13 miles to 20 kilometers. The race was televised for the first time.

1982 - The 1500 limit was reached in three weeks.

1983 - The race was dedicated in honor of former Medford resident, Olympic coach, and founder of Nike, Bill Bowerman.

1984 - Fred Spiegelberg, an institution among Oregon football coaches, fired the starting gun. Entries broke 2,000 for the first time.

1985 - Pear Blossom was part of Medford's 100 Year Centennial Celebration. A scholarship program was created. Zella & Jerry Swartsley inducted as charter members to Medford Sports Hall of Fame.

1986 - A wheelchair division was initiated.

1988 - A trophy and VCR was given to the school with the greatest percentage of participants in the Mayor's Cup. Mayor Lausmann started the event.

1989 - Mickey Mouse started the Mayor's Cup.

1990 - Due to traffic and safety concerns the event is changed to 10 miles.

1991 - Pear Blossom exceeds 3,000 participants. A monument is dedicated at the starting line by Medford City Hall.

1992 - A two mile event was added to the Mayor's Cup one mile event. Cash prizes were awarded to school libraries in the Mayor's Cup.

1993 - Pear Blossom tops 4,000 participants.

1995 - A 5K race was added. Pear Blossom topped 5,000 participants. It snowed for the very first time on Pear Blossom.

1997 - Thirty-four visitors from Medford's sister city, Alba, Italy participated in the event.

1998 - Pear Blossom and the Portland Marathon were Oregon's only selections as "One of the Best Runs in the U.S."

2000 - A website www.pearblossomrun.com was established.

2003 - Deanna Schiedler-O'Neil wins her ninth Pear Blossom race.

2005 - Former scholarship winner, Max King returns home to become the first male 3-time winner while shattering the course record.

2007 - The Rogue Valley Family YMCA took over the Mayor's Cup 1-mile and 2-mile fun run races. Online registration was added.

2008 - The chip, a state of the art, high-tech timing system utilizing a transponder attached to the shoe, was used for the first time in the 10 mile.

2010 - A disposable timing chip was used for the first time. Results for the 5K were kept for the first time.

2011 - The 5K takes on a new name - Rogue Valley Medical Center Heart & Sole 5K.

2012 - After thirty-five years, co-founders and race directors, Zella & Jerry Swartsley, passed the baton, giving the 5K & 10 mile races to the Rogue Valley Family YMCA under the leadership of Brad Russell. Rich Stanfield and Steven Buxton become the new race directors.

2013 - The 5K race sets new all-time record of 2,132 runners registered.

2016 - 40th Anniversary with special shirts and medals.

2017 - Marci Klimek wins her sixth Pear Blossom 10 mile race. Cole Watson sets new 10 mile course record.

2019 - Chuck Whiteley becomes the co-race director together with Rich Stanfield.