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CREDIT UNION  
**CHERRY  
BLOSSOM**

WASHINGTON, DC  
*April 11-12, 2026*

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THE  
**BLOSSOM BRIEF**

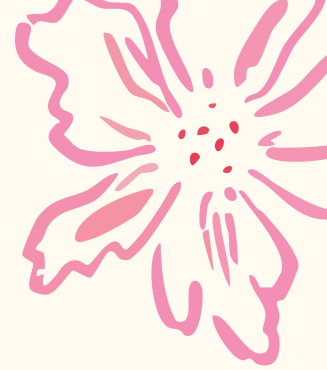
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT  
THE 2026 CREDIT UNION CHERRY BLOSSOM



(Photo Credit: Steve Dillard)



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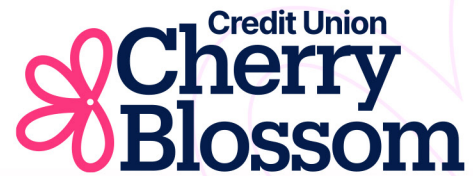
## Credit Union Cherry Blossom Sponsors 22

Visit our Sponsors page to recognize the generous partners whose support makes the Credit Union Cherry Blossom races possible each year.





(Photo Credit: Steve Dillard)



## ***EVENT DIRECTOR'S GREETING***

I guess the word is out. I am retiring after serving as the Event Director for 35 years. Yes, Spring is returning, Stumpy's offspring are now 3-4" tall at the National Arboretum and I will stand atop the start/finish scaffolding at the 10 Mile one final time as Event Director as my daughter sings the National Anthem. It doesn't get any better than that. I will be proud and I will be wistful. My profound thanks go out to everyone who comes together to make this event great.

We must be doing something right: Just three months ago, we had a record number of over 31,000 runners apply through our lottery for a spot at the 10 Mile starting line. Our 5K closed out in four days. (Will we need a lottery in 2027?) Since that time, we have been working hard to prepare for our event which goes by two slogans – *"The Runner's Rite of Spring"* and, as part of the [PRRO Circuit](#), one of *"America's Classic Road Races."*

We have had our challenges this year – moving our 5K across the Potomac River to Arlington, VA after we were unable to secure our permit because of our move from our traditional first weekend in April to the second weekend in April due to Easter falling on our traditional date, and our t-shirt screen printing company going bankrupt with our t-shirts locked up inside their plant. But our fantastic organizing committee met these unique challenges while continuing to do their regular duties in an outstanding manner. I've always said that it would be boring if everything went perfectly. This year was not boring.

We pleased to be hosting – for the fourth year in a row – the USATF Men's and Women's 10 Mile Championships. It will be exciting to see so many top Americans mixing it up with our traditional international field. I would not be surprised to see Americans as the overall winners this year.

We take great pride that the event serves a most worthy cause as well – helping children receive World Class medical care through the [Children's Miracle Network](#). Since the Credit Unions became the title sponsor, the event has raised over \$12 million dollars for the Children's Miracle Network. We will be announcing our 2026 fundraising total at the start of each race on Saturday and Sunday morning. Stay tuned for some impressive numbers and thank you to the runners and credit unions who made this possible.

I would, on behalf of myself, Deputy Director Becky Lambros, Programs Director Shannon Ross, the Cherry Blossom Inc. Board of Directors, the 100-member organizing committee and our 2,000 volunteers, like to welcome everyone to the Nation's Capital bursting with springtime.

We are deeply indebted to the generous support of our sponsors, headlined by Credit Union Miracle Day, a collective of credit unions and business partners serving the credit union industry which has served as the title sponsor since 2002, our two presenting sponsors, Asics, the presenting sponsor of the 5K, and Wegmans, the presenting sponsor of the Health and Fitness Expo, and all of our Supporting Sponsors who are recognized on page 25.

We would be unable to conduct these events without the full cooperation of the National Park Service, the United States Park Police, the District of Columbia Government, especially the Mayor's Special Events Task Group, the Metropolitan Police Department, and the Arlington County Police Department.

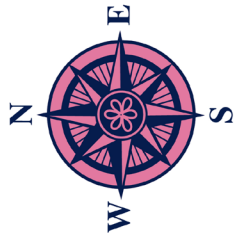
Sincerely,  
**PHIL STEWART**  
Event Director, Credit Union Cherry Blossom

# Credit Union Cherry Blossom

## Map Legend

- 10M Start/Finish
- 5K & Kids Run Start/Finish
- Course Routes
- 1 Mile Markers
- Information
- Runner Support
- Hydration Station
- Restrooms
- Bike Valet
- Bag Check
- Medals
- Packet Pick Up & T-Shirts
- Metro Subway

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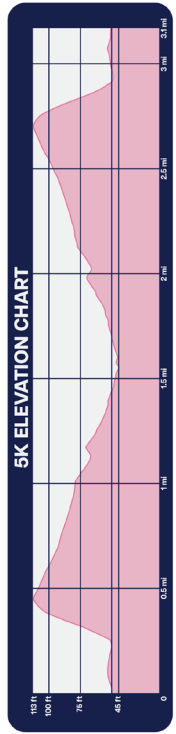
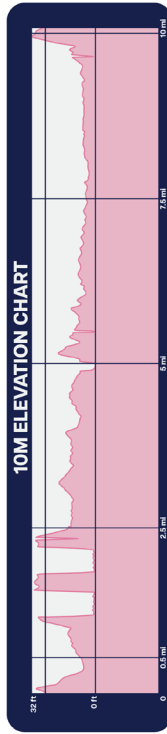
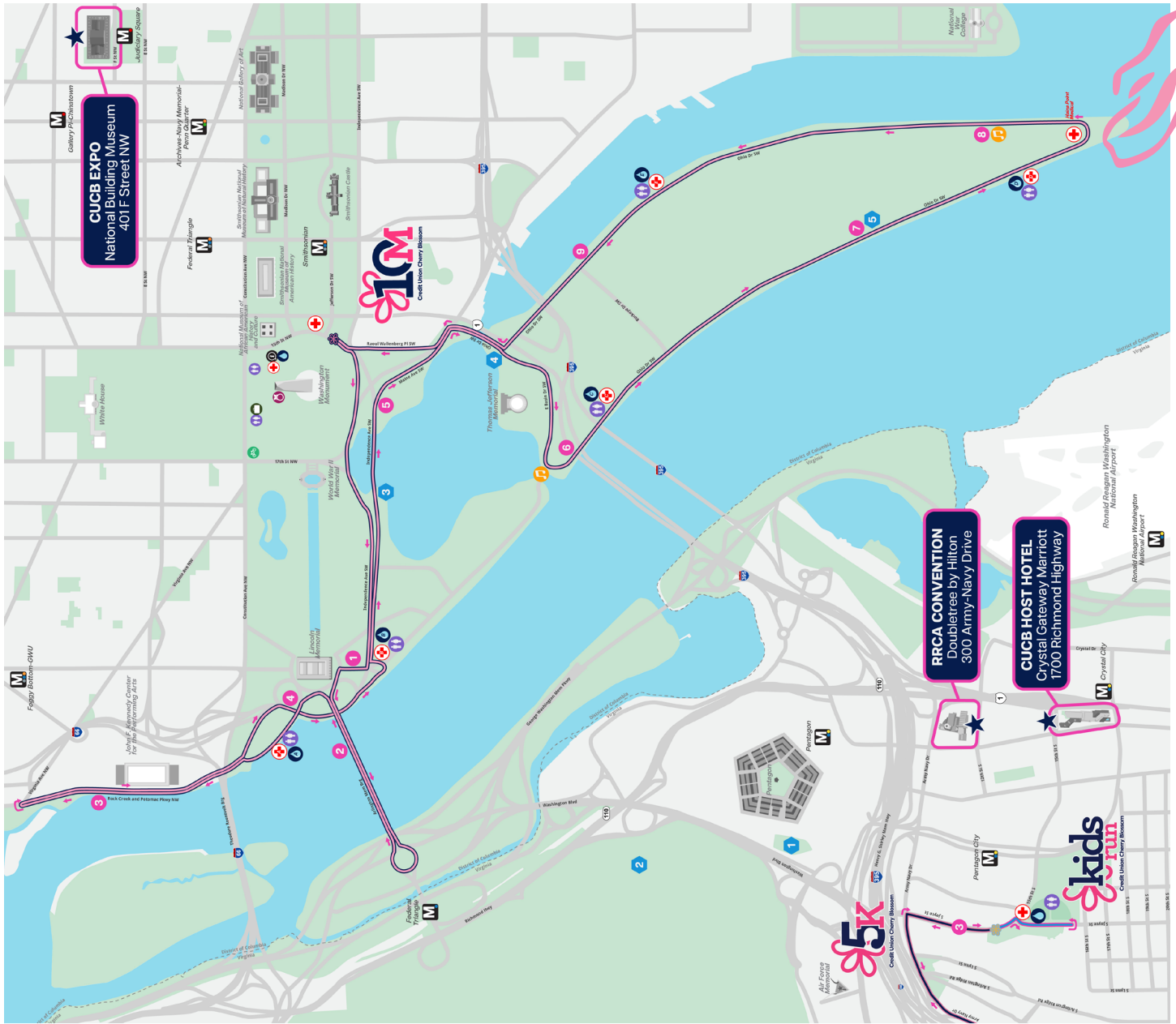


2026  
Washington, DC \* Arlington, VA

## Points of Interest

- 1** National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial
- 2** Arlington National Cemetery
- 3** Site of Original Cherry Trees
- 4** Indicator Tree for Cherry Blossom
- 5** Hains Point East Cherry Blossoms Area

CLICK MAP TO VIEW LARGER



# COURSE MAPS

## 10 MILE COURSE MAP

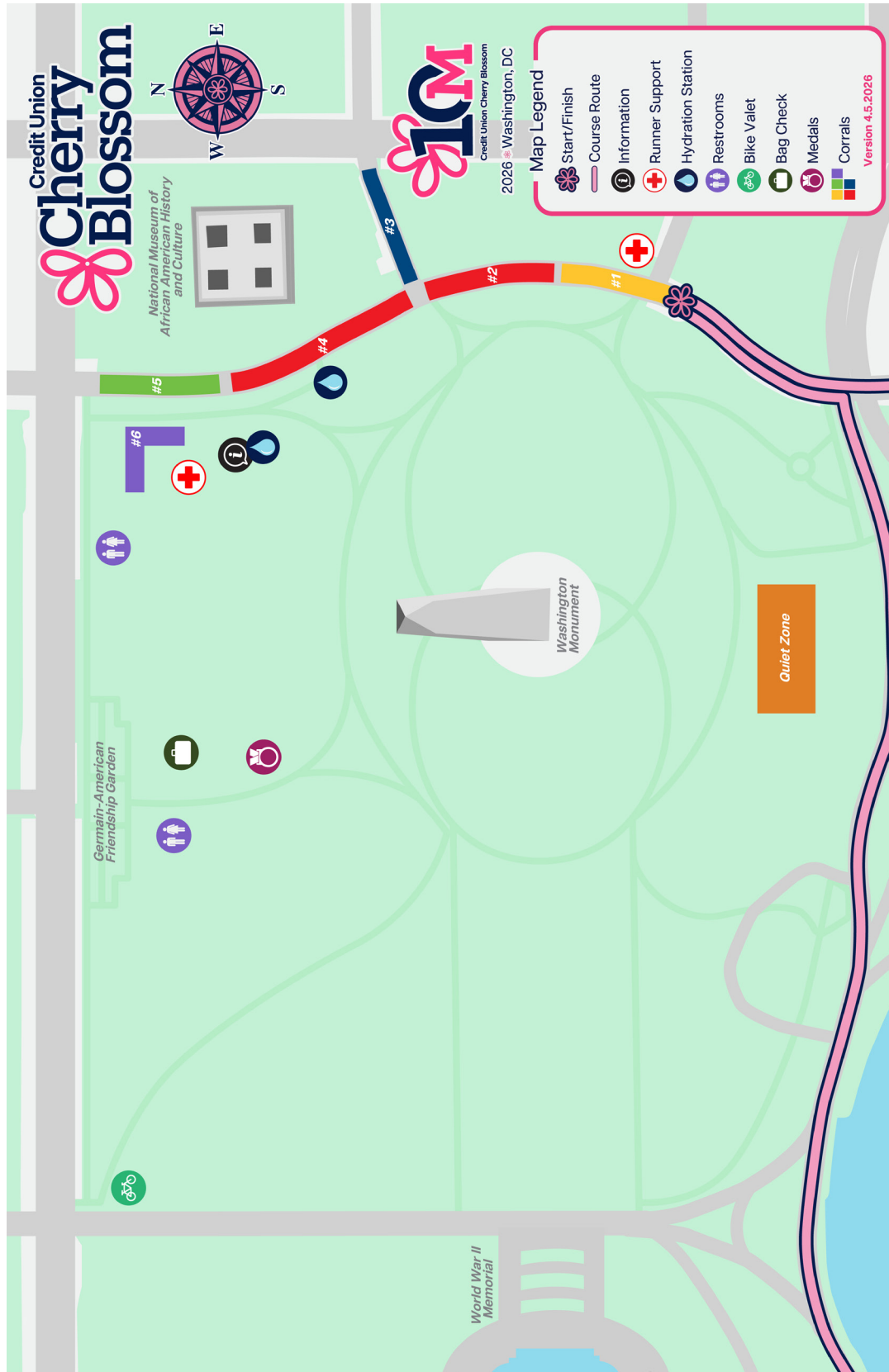
CLICK MAP TO VIEW LARGER



# COURSE MAPS

## 10 MILE STAGING AREA - CLOSE UP

CLICK MAP TO VIEW LARGER



# COURSE MAPS

## 5K COURSE MAP

CLICK MAP TO VIEW LARGER



# COURSE MAPS

## 5K & KIDS RUN STAGING AREA - CLOSE UP

CLICK MAP TO VIEW LARGER



# COURSE MAPS

## KIDS RUN COURSE MAP

CLICK MAP TO VIEW LARGER



# THE NEXT CHAPTER



***A LEGENDARY RETIREMENT***

*35 Years. Countless Miles. One Legendary Finish Line.*

# THE NEXT CHAPTER

## A LEGENDARY RETIREMENT

1988. The last time the Credit Union Cherry Blossom saw a change in leadership.

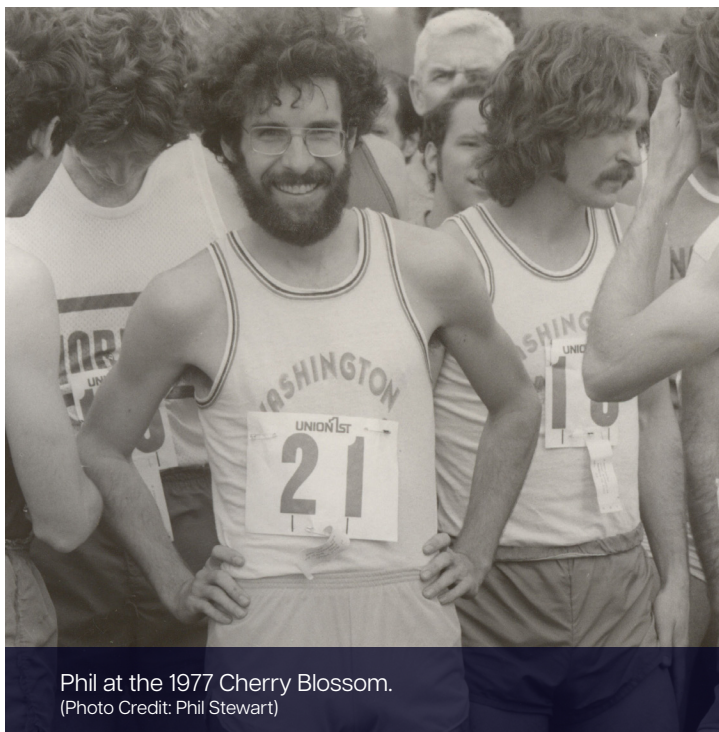
That is 38 years of changes, growth and lessons learned.

That was three title sponsors ago as Credit Union Miracle Day wouldn't come on board for another 14 years.

This weekend's event marks the start of the next chapter for the heralded race as long-time Race Director Phil Stewart prepares for retirement. What is a personal running achievement for so many, will be a weekend-long homage to a person who gave many miles over so many years. This weekend's event marks the start of the next chapter for the heralded race as long-time Race Director Phill Stewart prepares for retirement - three years as co-director and 35 as the solo Director.

## THE SEED

Phil graduated from Woodrow Wilson (now Jackson-Reed) High School in 1968 and immediately began his career in the event industry, working as part of the "Summer in the Parks" program and organizing activities and concerts at Fort Reno Park. Eventually, he followed his heart into the running industry when he co-founded Running Times magazine in 1977. At that time, it was one of two nationally circulated running magazines. This was also the door into many of Phil's publication credits.



Phil at the 1977 Cherry Blossom.  
(Photo Credit: Phil Stewart)

Phil wasn't just writing the content; he was also living it. Having ran in high school and college, Phil continued competing in races in Washington DC, emerging as one of the top area runners. He would place third in the National AAU 50 mile in 1974, 22nd in the Boston Marathon in 1975 and participate in the 1976 U.S. Olympic Trials. Even after his competitive years, Phil has continued to participate in many races over the years.

## THE GROWTH

His love for the sport was also his introduction into the Cherry Blossom Ten Mile, finishing in the top 10 twice, taking 5th in 1975 with a time of 52:55 and 6th in 1977 with a time of 51:01. He would run the race again in 1979 - his last time participating in the event - before joining the CUCB organizing committee as the volunteer race announcer and eventually teaming up with Jeff Darman as the volunteer co-race director in 1989. From there, it was no turning back for Phil and the Credit Union Cherry Blossom.

"I am most proud of maintaining the reputation of the race for 35 years. I felt from the moment I became the race director that this "Stewart" was simply the steward of something far larger than myself and I had to make sure it flourished under my leadership - with the entire race committee being a fabulous supporting cast," expressed Stewart.

In 1991, Phil officially became the solo Event Director. In that year, the race had 3,327 finishers. Now, the event welcomes over 20,000 participants for the 10 Mile and an additional 8,000 for the 5K. This growth also attracted the USA Track & Field (USATF) National 10 Mile Championships. The CUCB now having hosted the championship six times and being the site of seven world records and 11 American records.

Under Stewart's tutelage, the event has also had two long-term title sponsors, during which time the CUCB has provided increased prize money and raised millions in charity donations -- Northern Telecom (Nortel) from 1991-2001 and Credit Union Miracle Day (2002-present). Over the last 24 years the partnership between the CUCB and Credit Union Miracle Day has raised over \$12 million for the Children's Miracle Network.

The money raised specifically for Children's Miracle Network has been extra special for Phil, having a personal experience related to the local children's hospital.

"Knowing that much of that money goes to Washington, DC's own Children's National Medical Center touches me in a special way," said Phil. "Years ago I took my infant daughter

# THE NEXT CHAPTER

## A LEGENDARY RETIREMENT

Anna into the Emergency Room, in the thick of the Holiday season, with a collapsed lung and she received outstanding care. I have been able to return that favor.”

Perhaps the most fun Phil has had with the event is the adoption of the event’s distinct mascot: “I am also proud of instantly knowing that we had to make Stumpy our mascot after learning the story about the “little cherry tree that could”.

Stumpy, the official tree-turned-mascot of the CUCB, was introduced in 2024 as the event entered its 51st year of running. Its legacy stems from tales of resiliency and endurance, making it the perfect race mascot. Today, Stumpy greets runners at the Expo, runs with participants and even makes random appearances all year long. You never know where Stumpy may show up!

## THE LEGACY

When the last runner crosses the finish line on April 12, it will officially mark the end of an illustrious career. It will be a weekend celebrated with tens of thousands of participants and a reunion of past and present committee members honoring a person who spent miles on and off the road to make the race what it is today. Perhaps its serendipitous that it’s also the 25 anniversary of the Credit Union Miracle Day sponsorship and another year of hosting the USATF National 10 Mile Championships, both relationships cultivated under Phil’s guidance. While Phil’s impact is evident, he will be the first to tell you there is so much more to its success.

“I think the tradition, the time of year and the reputation for being well organized are the key ingredients. In many ways, runners like to return year after year to their favorite events and we have been around a long time. I think our motto, “The Runner’s Rite of Spring” pretty much sums it up. We are about the renewal and reawakening that comes with spring,” stated Phil. “Thanks to the incredible work of our volunteer organizing committee, we produce a superbly organized event. I also believe bringing in elite runners from around the world for Washington, DC’s only significant prize money race also plays well in this international city. There is a thrill running in the same event with Olympians and record holders from around the world competing for significant amounts of prize money. This makes us stand apart.”

Over the next few months, Phil will began working with his successor, Rob Wolfe, for a smooth transition. The two have known each for quite some time as committee members but also friends, helping keep the continuity and integrity of the event.



Phil’s advice for Rob as he steps into this new role: “Look to maintain the traditions and character of the race, but don’t hesitate to innovate as the race moves deeper into the second half century of its existence.”

Though Phil knows that he won’t be able to step completely away, this new free time will allow him to set new goals.

“I will stay connected with the sport through the work I do with Road Race Management, the organization I founded to provide information for the running industry, and I would like to be at the starting line in the near future,” said Phil. “I last ran the in-person race in 1979 in 1:03:57. I will set, as a retirement goal, to run it faster than twice that time. Plus, I only need two more completions to qualify for the 100 Mile Club, so I won’t need to face the uncertainties of the lottery!”

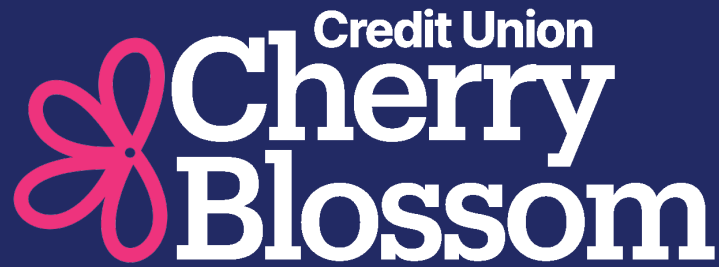
After so many years of working through course certifications, road permits and more, Phil will finally get to go back to where it all started – enjoying the event as a participant.

From the organizing committee and the road running industry, thank you for your leadership. You set the bar and led the way for so many. Your legacy is evident in every aspect of the Credit Union Cherry Blossom, but also in races around the world. It’s been an honor. Enjoy this well-deserved retirement.

*Wishing You*

**ALL THE BEST**

*in your future  
endeavors!*



# CHANGING LIVES TOGETHER!

## Thanks for Making a Difference with Us!

The Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile & 5K Run effectively showcases credit unions' core belief that doing good in, and for, our communities improves the financial well-being of the people we serve.

*Over 7,500 runners in this year's race are members of a credit union.*

A very special THANK YOU to all the runners who generously donated over **\$51,000** to Children's Miracle Network when registering for the Run this year! Your contributions are helping us raise funds so that millions of kids across the U.S. can have access to advanced and affordable healthcare through CMN hospitals.

Since becoming the title sponsor in 2002, credit union sponsorship of this race has raised over

**\$12 Million**

for  **Children's Miracle Network.**

## CREDIT UNION SUPPORTERS

ABNB FCU	Mid-Atlantic FCU
AgFed FCU	Mississippi Credit Union League
Andrews FCU	MNCCPC FCU
APG FCU	Money One FCU
APL FCU	NASA FCU
Apple FCU	Navy Federal
America's Credit Unions	NIH FCU
Bank Fund Staff FCU	Northwest FCU
Commonwealth One FCU	OAS FCU
Congressional FCU	Orsa FCU
Del-One FCU	PAHO/WHO FCU
Dept. of Commerce FCU	Patriot FCU
Educational Systems FCU	PenFed
EP FCU	Pepco FCU
Everwise CU	Point Breeze CU
FedChoice FCU	Seaport FCU
First Financial FCU of MD	Securityplus FCU
Four Leaf FCU	Signal Financial FCU
FRB FCU	Skypoint FCU
GPO FCU	Spectra CU
Healthcare Systems FCU	State Department FCU
Howard Co. Education FCU	State Employees of NC
HUD FCU	The League of Southeastern States
IBEW 26 FCU	The Summit FCU
IDB Global FCU	Tower FCU
Interior FCU	Transportation FCU
Johns Hopkins FCU	Treasury Dept. FCU
Library of Congress FCU	US. Postal Service FCU
Market USA FCU	United States Senate FCU
MECU Credit Union	

# PASSING THE BRANCH



The end of an illustrious career opens the door for a new chapter in the Credit Union Cherry Blossom history book. July 1 will officially mark the start of a transition between Phil and Rob Wolfe, allowing for a seamless turnover of responsibilities to ensure that the event you love will continue as the top choice for a spring race.

Rob is no stranger to the CUCB, having served on the committee since 2008. In his 19 years with the event, Rob has held various roles: Co-Race Director of the 5K, Assistant Event Director, Start-Finish Director and Corrals Coordinator. He has also served on the Cherry Blossom, Inc. Board of Directors and just finished a term as the Treasurer (2016 to 2025).

With over 40 years of running experience and a finisher of over 80 marathons and other distances, Rob brings a competitor's perspective to race leadership and event execution. He is leaving behind a 30-year career as a teacher, administrator and coach, with tenures at St. Stephen's and St. Agnes in Alexandria, VA from 2000-2012 and at St. Albans School in Washington D.C. from 2012-2026, where he coached students to championships and personal bests. As a certified race director and coach through Road Runners Club of America and USA Track & Field, Rob is primed to step into the new role.



Rob will become the event's sixth Director:

- Gar Williams (1973)
- Ralph Reynolds (1973)
- Ed Murray (1974 – 1982)
- Jeff Darman (1974 – 1990)
- Phil Stewart (1988 – 2026)
- Rob Wolfe (2026 – )

(Photo Credit: Rob Wolfe)

# MEET ROB!

## A Q&A WITH THE NEW RACE DIRECTOR

### First race you ever ran?

Almost 40 years ago, I was persuaded to enter the Virginia Western Community College 5K by some friends on my track team. I don't remember my time, but I do remember that it was really hilly, really hot, and REALLY fun!

### Last race you have run?

I've been injured for a bit and am working my way back to racing, so my last race was over a year ago. It was the Freedom's Run Marathon - it goes from Harper's Ferry, WV to Shepherdstown, WV. It's a beautiful fall race predominantly on the C&O Canal and through Antietam National Battlefield.

### Favorite pre-race meal?

Pizza and a salad, easy on the cheese and the dressing. Pizza is easy to find, always different, and almost never bad!

### Favorite post-race meal?

Same! Pizza and a salad - add French Fries :)

### Favorite thing about road running events?

I really love challenging myself, so when I pin a bib on my shirt, see a clock, and know other people are trying to beat me, I get really excited. Also, I love seeing new places through running. I have a goal of finishing a marathon in every state... I have completed 37/51!

### What do you enjoy the most about being on the committee and now stepping into the Event Director role?

Early in my coaching career, I remember setting up for our first home track meet. I got there early, put everything out, and waited for the other teams. They warmed up, raced, and went home. It's hard to explain how fulfilled I was knowing athletes were able to compete because I showed up. Fast forward 30 plus years, I now arrive at the very quiet (and dark!) race site by 4 a.m. on race day to do my part in getting things ready. A few hours later, there are thousands and thousands of people completing the races. Seeing all of this unfold, and knowing I played a part, makes me really happy.

### Favorite memory from the Credit Union Cherry Blossom?

Year after year, I love being at the Finish Line and watching people as they complete the race, totally exhausted and exhilarated at the same time. It's rewarding to have had a role in making it possible for runners to reach their goals.

### Other Credentials:

- DC Road Runners Board of Director former member
- DC Road Runners Hall of Fame Member
- Cherry Blossom Les Kinion Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service Recipient

# 2026 CREDIT UNION CHERRY BLOSSOM ELITE ATHLETE BIOS

We have an exciting array of elite U.S. and international athletes competing in the 2026 Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile. The top athletes appear below. Click [here](#) to view all bios of the top athletes or click on each name to view their bios.\*

## Elite Female Athletes

Asayech Ayichew, Bib 2  
Molly Born, Bib 30  
Joy Cheptoyek, Bib 12  
Biruktayit Degefa, Bib 20

Laura Galvan, Bib 8  
Jessica Gockley Day, Bib 16  
Emma Grace Hurley, Bib 10  
Norah Jeruto, Bib 6

Weini Kelati, Bib 4  
Everlyn Kemboi, Bib 22  
Ednah Kurgat, Bib 26  
Karissa Schweizer, Bib 14

## Additional Notable Female Athletes

Click [here](#) to view the bios for all female Additional Notable Athletes.

Anne-Marie Blaney, Bib 38  
Olivia Borowiak, Bib 56  
Cleo Boyd, Bib 50  
Jessie Cardin, Bib 36  
Lucy Dobbs, Bib 68  
Dana Feyen, Bib 52  
Caroline Garrett, Bib 62

Genet Habela, Bib 34  
Annie Heffernan, Bib 54  
Katie Izzo, Bib 32  
Eva Jess, Bib 48  
Annamaria Kostarellis, Bib 42  
Cailie Logue Hughes, Bib 40  
Danielle Page, Bib 70

Kassie Parker, Bib 44  
Micaela Rivera Wood, Bib 72  
Savannah Shaw, Bib 46  
Rachel Smith, Bib 76  
MaKenna Thurston, Bib 64  
Madison Trippett, Bib 66  
Annemarie Tuxbury, Bib 58

## Elite Male Athletes

Jack Aho, Bib 23  
Mohammed Ahmed, Bib 3  
Emad Bashir-Mohammed, Bib 25  
Benjamin Eidenschink, Bib 31

Mohammed El-Youssfi, Bib 13  
Chandler Gibbens, Bib 29  
Athanas Kioko, Bib 11  
Frank Lara, Bib 19

Graydon Morris, Bib 21  
Aidan Reed, Bib 15  
Kieran Tuntivate, Bib 7  
Jared Ward, Bib 27

## Additional Notable Male Athletes

Click [here](#) to view the bios for all male Additional Notable Athletes.

Cody Baele, Bib 69  
Alec Basten, Bib 61  
Mohammed Bati, Bib 65  
Tyler Berg, Bib 37  
Graham Crawford, Bib 49  
JP Flavin, Bib 57  
Merga Gameda, Bib 41  
Ethan Gregg, Bib 55

Damian Hackett, Bib 81  
Stephen Jones, Bib 63  
Collin Kirami, Bib 33  
Elkanah Kibet, Bib 35  
Thomas Madden, Bib 73  
Joseph Minor, Bib 77  
Will Norris, Bib 83  
Joel Reichow, Bib 39

Ben Rosa, Bib 51  
Ruben Sanca, Bib 85  
Cole Sprout, Bib 45  
Carlee Stimpfel, Bib 67  
Joseph Trojan, Bib 47  
Adam Walker, Bib 79  
Connor Winter, Bib 59

\*Additional stats are not available for all runners.



The 2026

# CREDIT UNION CHERRY BLOSSOM 10 MILE

## and USATF 10 MILE CHAMPIONSHIPS

For the fourth year in a row, the Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile will host the Women's and Men's USATF National Ten Mile Championships in Washington D.C.

As for the 10 mile race itself, the event will once more wrap four races into one: the women's "international" race with a prize purse open to all pro women, the Women's American Championships race with prizes for Americans only; and a corresponding pair of races on the men's side.

Elite runners will be contending for a guaranteed \$74,600 total prize purse. The U.S. Championships prize money totals \$42,600 and prizes go 10 deep; the "International" purse open to all pro runners totals \$32,000, with prizes also going 10 deep. The U.S. Championships winners get \$10,000; the international winners get \$6,000. American runners may "double dip"—for example an American placing third in the U.S. Championships but fifth overall would get \$2,500 in championships money plus \$1,000 in international money. There are additional prizes for Americans in the RRCA's RunPro Camper program, team awards, and time bonuses available to all runners. For a breakdown of the prize money click [here](#).

The 10 Mile is part of the Professional Road Racing Organization (PRRO) Circuit, which comprises six events in the U.S. The male and female winners at Cherry Blossom

***“The quality of this year’s field creates the potential for another World Best.”***

will be eligible (as will be winners of other events in the circuit) to compete for the \$10,000 PRRO Super Bonus to be awarded at this year's PRRO Championships at the Quad-City Times Bix 7 Mile, on July 25th. Top non-winning finishers will earn PRRO points which could qualify them to compete for the Super Bonus as well. For details click [here](#).

### **WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL FIELD** **Strong Credentials of Top Runners Augur** **Close Contests at the Front**

The quality of this year's field creates the potential for another World Best at 10 Miles to follow last year's triumph by American Taylor Rowe, the first woman to crack the fifty-minute barrier at the distance.

The 2026 edition is likely to depart from the character of the last two years, where relatively wide margins separated the women's top places: in 2025, **Taylor Roe**, while setting a 10 mile World Best of 49:53, left runner-up **Emma Grace Hurley** 1:11 back, and it was another 45 seconds back to third-place **Fiona O'Keeffe**; altogether the spread between first and fifth place was two minutes, 17 seconds. In 2024 there were smaller but still decisive gaps, where 12 seconds separated winner Ugandan **Sarah Chelangat** from

runner-up **Emily Durgin**. Behind Durgin came Ethiopian **Kasanesh Baze** another 12 seconds back; then it was another 12 seconds back to fourth place Rachel Smith, and 21 seconds between Smith and fifth place Annie Frisbie.

No such margins are likely this year, particularly because of three closely matched international stars among the top seeds: **Asayech Ayichew** of Ethiopia, **Norah Jeruto** of Kazakhstan, and **Joy Cheptoyek** of Uganda. Most recently, on March 7, 21-year-old Ayichew led the Bilbao, Spain, 10K in 30:01, leaving the runner-up more than a minute behind. Ayichew boasts a 10K road personal best of 29:43, set last year in the Valencia, Spain, 10K. More to the point of a 10 mile race, last September Ayichew ran the Dam tot Damloop 10 Mile in Amsterdam in 50:56, beaten only by three-time New York City Marathon and two-time Boston Marathon champion Hellen Obiri, by a mere five seconds.

On April 12, Ayichew may find her closest rival to be the 24-year-old Cheptoyek, who placed second in the World Cross Country Championships last January, a full 34 seconds ahead of fourth-place Ayichew. The Cherry Blossom 10 Mile could be a demonstration of how well stardom in cross-country translates into stardom at 10 miles on the road. On the roads Cheptoyek has the distinction of a Ugandan 10K record of 30:03 set in 2024, and last year ran a half marathon personal best of 1:08:00.

If half marathons are any measure of prowess at 10 miles, American Olympian **Weini Kelati** (more on Kelati below) will give the international standouts a literal run for the money. Kelati owns the U.S. half marathon record 1:06:04 (surpassing her own previous national record), set two months ago in Barcelona, ESP, and excelled at both the 2024 and 2025 Aramco Houston Half Marathons in 1:06:25 and 1:06:09 respectively. **Laura Galvan** of Mexico could race with the lead group through nine miles and more on Sunday. She placed eighth in this year's Aramco Houston Half Marathon in 1:07:31. Ever a fighter at any distance, American **Emma Grace Hurley** (see more below) could mix it up with the leaders, having placed second in last year's Cherry Blossom 10 Mile in 51:04, and last month set the American 8K record 24:29 at the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle in Chicago.

Something of an outlier in the 10 mile favorites, Kazakhstan's **Norah Jeruto** has credentials mainly at the 3000m steeplechase, having won gold in the 2022 World Championships and placed sixth in 2025 at the distance. Still, she finished third in Flanigan's Rockin' Rib 10K (Miramar, FL) in a time of 31:34 last November--23 seconds before **Ednah Kurgat**--as well as fourth in the 2025 Prefontaine Classic steeplechase in 8:59.46.

Coming into 2026, Kenyan **Everlyn Kemboi** had only modest results, but this year shone in winning the Gate

River 10K in 48:40 and the Cooper River Bridge 10K in 31:14.30, becoming a realistic bet to finish in the top five . . . but to do so Kemboi will have to stay in front of Americans **Emma Grace Hurley**, **Karissa Schweizer**, **Jessica Gockley-Day**, **Biruktayit Degefa**, **Ednah Kurgat**, and **Molly Born**. Schweizer finished ninth in the 2024 Olympic 10,000m (30:51.99), and this year chased Emma Grace Hurley in Chicago's Shamrock Shuffle 8K, posting a time of 24:56 behind Hurley's American record 24:29. Gockley-Day was 14th in 1:09:00 in the Aramco Houston Half Marathon three months ago, 15th in 2025 (1:09:37), and 19th in 2024 (1:11:25). Degefa's most recent high placing was second in the 2025 U.S. 20K Championships in 1:05:42. Ednah Kurgat's half marathon time of 1:08:25 took her to fifth in this year's Prague Half Marathon two weeks ago, which could take some zip out of her legs in a 10 mile road race. Molly Born was first across the line at this year's U.S. Half Marathon Championships in Atlanta in 1:09:43 and won last year's California International Marathon in 2:24:10.

More on the American female athletes in the next section. Athlete bios for all the runners male and female can be found [here](#).

## WOMEN'S AMERICAN FIELD One Clear Favorite Followed by a Big Fast Bunch

While the international field finds **Weini Kelati** a favorite among other favorites, she is the clear choice to lead the Americans in the USATF 10 Mile Championships. Besides being the American half marathon record-holder (1:06:04 this year in Barcelona), Kelati finished second in the Aramco Houston Half Marathon in 2025 (1:06:09) and fourth in 2024 (1:06:25). Kelati was eighth in the 2024 Olympic final 10,000m in 30:49.98--one second ahead of ninth-place **Karissa Schweizer**. She took second place in last year's women-only New York Mini 10K in 30:49, trailing Hellen Obiri by five seconds and leaving, among others, rivals **Emma Grace Hurley** and **Laura Galvan** 53 seconds and 1:25 behind, respectively. Add to her road heroics 10,000m times of 30:38.60 and 30:33.82 (The TEN, 2025 and 2024), you have a candidate for first place even in the international field.

Anyone can have an off day, and if Kelati has one on April 12th, six others are eager to challenge her for top Championships honors. Any of the six could end up on the podium of the U.S. Championships. They are: the aforementioned Emma Grace Hurley, Karissa Schweizer, Jessica Gockley-Day, Biruktayit Degefa, Ednah Kurgat, and Molly Born. Hurley is coming fresh off a brilliantly run American record 24:29 at 8K in Chicago's Shamrock Shuffle;

besides placing second American in the Cherry Blossom 10 Mile in 51:04, her 2025 was marked with sizzling runs, topped by a sixth place finish at the Valencia Half Marathon in 1:08:02.

Schweizer finished 27 seconds behind Hurley in the Shamrock Shuffle, but such a big gap is not representative of her overall excellence: she holds a 10,000m personal best of 30:18.05 finishing ninth in the 2022 World Athletics Championships; Schweizer also placed sixth at last year's U.S. Championships in both the 5000m (15:16.87) and 10,000m (32:10.82). In the 2024 Olympics, she came in ninth, a tick behind Kelati in 30:41.99. Gockley-Day showed she was ready for hard running at distance this year with a time of 1:09-flat in the Aramco Houston Half Marathon; Degefa came in second place in the U.S. 20K Championships in 2025 in a time of 1:05:42, and third in this year's Chevron Houston Marathon in 2:28:07.

Ednah Kurgat finished 10th in the World Cross Country Championships in January (33:28 for approximately 10K), and followed it up with a fifth place in 1:08:25 in the Prague Half Marathon on March 28. Rounding out the highest seeds is Molly Born, whose win at this year's U.S. Half Marathon Championships in Atlanta in 1:09:43 on March 1st signaled her readiness for another U.S. Championships in April. Last year she won the California International Marathon in 2:24:10, took fourth in the Beach to Beacon 10K (31:55) and eighth in the B.A.A. Half Marathon in 1:10:11.

To view qualifications of many additional candidates for top places in the women's 10 Mile, click [here](#).

## **MEN'S INTERNATIONAL FIELD** **As with the Women, Close Finishes** **Should Rule the Day**

To get a sense of how the international competition stacks up, click [here](#), where you will find capsule running bios of all the elite runners.

On the basis of background alone, Canada's **Mohammed Ahmed** towers above the rest of the men's international field, having twice placed high in the Olympics--fourth in the 2024 10,000m (26:43.79) and second in the 2021 (Tokyo) 5000m (12:58.61)--and holds the Canadian national records at the two distances, 26:34.14 for 10,000m in 2022, and 12:47.20 for 5000m in 2020. You can find more of Ahmed's impressive credentials by going [here](#). But since all of these performances are at least two years old, it could make you question if he's up to the sub-46 minute performances that have recently become the standard for

winning the Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile. Ahmed did win the Shamrock Shuffle 8K in Chicago last month in 22:59--a fast time, but roughly equivalent to a 10 mile time of 48 minutes (using Riegel's formula for you nerds).

Signs are that the 35-year-old Ahmed will be very hard-pressed to stay ahead of a cohort of contenders in the 28-31 age range, headed by 28-year-old Moroccan Mohammed **El Youssfi**, who scored his country's national record 59:21 finishing third at the Aramco Houston Half Marathon in January--a time which if ratified would be [23rd on the all-time list](#) (assuming the two times ahead of him also get ratified). Aramco was not a one-off for El Youssfi: last year he won the Philadelphia Half Marathon in 1:01:47, and six weeks ago he won the Gate River Run 15K in 43:26 in hot and humid conditions in Jacksonville, Florida. This year's performances indicate that a sub-46:00 10 mile on a good day is well within his reach.

El Youssfi will have at least five rivals to contend with for the top spot, all capable of taking the fight to him for nine miles plus. Leading the charge could be 28-year-old American **Aidan Reed**, 31-year-old Kenyan **Athanas Kioko**, and the USA's **Frank Lara**, **Graydon Morris**, and **Jack Aho**. Aidan Reed has already cleared 46 minutes for 10 miles--last year placing sixth in the Cherry Blossom 10 Mile in 45:58. Reed has a half marathon best of 1:01:50, finishing third in the 2025 Pittsburgh Half Marathon, and could be the strongest challenger to El Youssfi.

Kioko's membership in this group of five chasing El Youssfi is backed by a win in last September's Philadelphia Distance Run Half Marathon in a time of 1:01:01, and a second place in the 2025 Los Angeles Marathon in 2:10:56. For his part, Aho boasts a win in this year's Greenville Half Marathon in 1:01:18. The 31-year-old Lara has a marathon personal best of 2:09:53 in last year's Rotterdam (NED) Marathon, and ran this year's flat and fast Seville Marathon in 2:10:06 on February 15th. After Rotterdam, the Seville result for Lara is promising, but gave him less than two months to recover before this weekend's 10 mile. The youngest of this group, 24-year-old **Graydon Morris**, ran his best half marathon in Houston this year, placing 20th in 1:01:09.

What the drumbeat of 1:01-something for a half marathon as you try to size up this year's elite competition tells you is that these runners are uncannily evenly matched--with the likely exception of El Youssfi, who was on fire in Houston (the 59:21 half marathon) and Jacksonville (the 15K win in Gate River).

Shorter races have not been all that clarifying: Athanas Kioko, Frank

***“If ‘anything can happen,’ the return of Mohammed Ahmed to the top could be in store.”***

Lara, and Jack Aho went head-to-head in the Cooper River Bridge 10K on March 28th, with Aho third in 28:07.57, Kioko fourth in 28:15.28, and Lara eighth in 28:36.80. These kind of results remind one of the old saying about the National Football League: “on any given Sunday, anything can happen.” This may be more true about the 2026 Cherry Blossom 10 Mile than your typical NFL game. It portends one of the most competitive races in recent memory on both the men’s and women’s side.

If “anything can happen,” then the return of Olympian Mohammed Ahmed to the top of the heap could be in store--the idea comes to mind that his 22:59 romp in the Shamrock Shuffle 8K was a way of tuning up for a big moment in a longer race.

## MEN’S U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS FIELD

With four citizens from other countries--Canada (Mohammed Ahmed), Thailand (Kieran Tuntivate), Kenya (Athanas Kioko), and Morocco (Mohammed El Youssef)--crowding the lineup near the top, opportunities open up for Americans to key off the foreigners in a tactical battle for the generous U.S. Championships prize money, and coupling it with international prize money through double dipping. The aforementioned Aidan Reed, Frank Lara, Jack Aho, and Graydon Morris will be watching each other closely. They will be joined by Emad Bashir-Mohammed, Jared Ward, Chandler Gibbens, and Benjamin Eidenschink, along with a score of others who have a shot at making their mark in a national championships and gaining experience that will further their careers going forward.



The men’s elite runners stay packed together during the early miles of the 2025 Credit Union Cherry Blossom. (Photo Credit: Karen Mitchell)



# BEST 5K RACE

Credit Union Cherry Blossom

# WINNER

# ***RUNNING*** 13.1 MILES PAST THE ***BLOSSOM-FILLED DAYS*** ***FOR MORE***

For some, running is a hobby to assist with health. For others, it is a passion that brings found community, a euphoric runner's high or even an avenue to give back. Many races around the world offer charity bibs, which gives participants an opportunity to run on behalf of a non-profit for which they are fundraising. Sometimes, a race may have an extensive charity program that allows many non-profits to participate. Other races may only partner with one charity. This is the case for the Cherry Blossom 10 Mile and 5K.

A unique charity opportunity presented itself in 2001 as race organizers were searching for a new title sponsor. That year marked the beginning of a great partnership between the event and Credit Union Miracle Day, Inc., a consortium of 100 credit unions and credit union suppliers, and the race officially became known as Credit Union Cherry Blossom or CUCB for short, starting with the 2002 event. Together, Credit Union Miracle Day and Credit Union Cherry Blossom have

united to benefit Children's Miracle Network – helping create a brighter future for all kids nationwide.

“Back in 2001, we had just lost Nortel Networks after 11 years of sponsorship – the company was a victim of the internet bubble bursting in the late 1990s – and we were launching the search for a new title sponsor,” explained CUCB Event Director Phil Stewart. “I barely made a call back to what was yet another of the frequent calls to the office from someone looking for advice about starting a fundraising 5K. But after a few days, I did call back a fellow named Bill Brooks, who indeed was looking for such advice. After telling him that it was hard for a new 5K to break into the local running calendar, I told him that there just happened to be a major DC race looking for a new title sponsor. He took the bait and the rest is history.”

Bill Brooks was a longtime Credit Union Miracle Day Board Member, opening the door to what has become a great partnership. Bill's contributions led to



Credit Union Miracle Day CEO John Bratsakis (center) and the CUCB team celebrate the \$460,000 in charity raised by the race in 2025. (Photo Credit: Bob Burgess)

his induction into the CUCB Hall of Fame in 2024, a testament to the relationship from all sides.

“It almost sounds like a cliché, but our relationship with Credit Union Miracle Day, the umbrella organization of sponsoring credit unions, has evolved so far beyond most title sponsorships,” expressed Phil. “We have a true partnership, now over two decades old. CUMD has a full-time staff person, Leigh Philobosian, who works on the race. We brainstorm together about how we can make the event better, both for Credit Union Miracle Day and Cherry Blossom, Inc.”

Founded in 1983, Children’s Miracle Network (CMN) supports funding needs for 170 children’s hospitals across the United States and Canada through the efforts of individual donors, corporate partners and caring communities. Understanding that each hospital and community is different, all the funds raised by CMN are unrestricted, allowing for flexibility in how these donations are used – letting hospitals address the most urgent needs right away.

“At Children’s National Hospital, unrestricted funding means we can meet every child where they are, in the moments that matter most. It gives us the flexibility to respond quickly, support our care teams, and invest in what our patients truly need, ensuring every child has the best possible chance at a healthy future,” explained Shelby Stallings, the Assistant Director, Community Giving, Children’s National.

Children Miracle Network member hospitals provide 38 million patient visits to treat 12 million kids a year with 72 kids being seen a minute. This high-volume visitation rate stresses the importance of the 9 billion plus dollars that CMN has raised over 43 years.

The Credit Union Industry has been a part of the Children Miracle Network since almost the beginning, joining the cause in 1986. In those 40 years, credit unions have collectively raised 225 million dollars and that number continues to grow year after year.

“Surpassing \$225 million is an incredible milestone, but what makes it truly special is how it was achieved - credit unions, no matter the asset size, coming together to support children’s health,” said CU4Kids National Program Manager Melissa Gehl. “CU4Kids is built on collaboration, bringing together credit unions, leagues, chapters, and industry partners across the country to support their local children’s hospitals. In 2026, CU4Kids is celebrating 40 years of fundraising for CMN. We’re celebrating this incredible milestone and fundraising amount because of the industry’s

incredible superpower to collaborate and uplift their communities.”

Each winter and into the spring, prospective runners have the opportunity to fundraise for Children’s Miracle Network. This can be done by individual donations at the time of registration or later through the Cherry Blossom website. A small number of runners are able to secure access to the race through charity bibs.

The total raised by participants is then combined with those raised through the Credit Unions. These collective efforts have led to over 12 million dollars raised by the Credit Union Cherry Blossom for CMN since 2002. The year’s total is presented at the start line of the 5K and 10 Mile, celebrating the amazing efforts with all those who contributed.

The CUCB takes place over one weekend in April, but the impact is far more substantial. There are 170 CMN hospitals within the U.S. and Canada. The money raised through the Credit Union Cherry Blossom supports over 100 of those hospitals, making the weekend one of Credit Unions for Kids’ largest reaching events.

“The Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile Run and 5K has not only raised transformational funds for children’s hospitals - but it’s also influenced additional fundraising efforts across the country. This event is extremely effective in building awareness for Children’s Miracle Network and the credit union industry - with tens of thousands of runners each year and hundreds of Capitol Hill staffers,” stated Nick Coleman, Managing Director of Program Development at Children’s Miracle Network. “We are extremely grateful to get to partner with the credit union industry and the race organizers on this event.”

Whether someone is running 3.1 miles on Saturday or 10 on Sunday, it is 13.1 miles toward improving a child’s life.

Since becoming the title sponsor in 2002, credit union sponsorship of this race has raised over **\$12 MILLION** for Children’s Miracle Network.

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Even the smallest runners can have big moments at the CUCB Kids Run, where families proudly race to the finish line in the heart of Washington D.C. with the U.S. Capitol in view.  
(Photo Credit: Bob Burgess)



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Blossom**