

Feeding The Thousands:

Food Operations On Race Day

BY EMILY CAHILL



Each October, thousands of runners flock to Connecticut's capitol city to participate in the Hartford Marathon races. Over the course of twenty-one years, the marathon has grown astronomically in its number of runners and spectators for the marathon, half marathon, and 5k races. Such large groups call for a staggering amount of snacks, fruit, soups and sandwiches to greet the exhausted runners at the finish line, which begs the question, who manages all this food?

It's a collaborative effort spearheaded by Ellen Smith, who has worked with HMF in varying capacities for the last fourteen years. While she still wears many hats by coordinating the Elite Athlete team and the organization's charity program, Ellen also takes the lead on food tent management for race day.



ELLEN SMITH (RIGHT)

It's her seventh year running the food operations for the Hartford Marathon, a project that begins each summer to facilitate vendor communication, donations, and volunteer coordination. This year, the food tents will serve the classic comfort combination of grilled cheese and tomato soup in addition to a variety of fruit and snack options. In 2013, staff and volunteers served more than six thousand sandwiches and 135 gallons of soup, numbers that are likely to be surpassed this time around.

what it takes...

Once the ingredients are either purchased or donated by generous vendors, the task of preparing, transporting and organizing is at hand. Prior to the race, the soup is heated by Salute, a great Italian restaurant adjacent to the park, put into insulated air pots, then dispensed into serving cups onsite. Ellen also works with the students and staff at Howard Cheney Technical School in Manchester to make dozens of sheet pans of apple crisp; the partnership has flourished as HMF provides the ingredients and the school incorporates the process into their student learning. Before the race, Ellen and her team rent a refrigerated truck to transport and store all ingredients onsite at Bushnell Park. "We drive

The making of the largest sporting event in Connecticut

It takes a lot of time, energy and stuff to stage the largest sporting event in Connecticut.

Here's a look at some of what it takes:

34,350

VOLUNTEER HOURS



1,200

HOTEL ROOMS

350

GALLONS of COFFEE



19,000

FINISHER MEDALS



500

PORTABLE TOILETS

52,400

THE NUMBER OF STEPS EACH RUNNER IN THE MARATHON WILL TAKE TO COMPLETE THE COURSE.

The average person's stride length is about 2.5 feet long. That means it takes just over 2,000 steps to walk one mile, and 52,400 steps to complete the 26.2 mile marathon.



85

PANS of APPLE CRISP



339,200

PAPER CUPS

H2O

21,478 GALLONS

REUSABLE WATER BOTTLES

17,000

it any place we need to pick up prepared food, then as food deliveries come in, they get stored in the refrigerator truck overnight and parked next to the food tent," she explains.

When race day arrives, two identical food tents are assembled with two service lines each. "It's all about streamlining operations and making the most of our space, time, and volunteers," Ellen says. Seasoned volunteers and newcomers alike pitch in to ensure an efficient process throughout the day, with long-term volunteers taking the lead to manage the tent. Morning and afternoon shifts of sixty volunteers apiece take place from 7am-11am and 10:30am-2:30pm, with an additional shift of twenty focused solely on the grilled cheese.

"It's pretty labor intensive," says Ellen. "In the back [of the tent] we have four large propane griddles with tables set up for sandwich assembly. Some volunteers just layer bread and cheese on sheet pans, then those trays come over to the griddles, and we have servers who run in and out of the tents with the grilled cheese to be served. It's a constant flow." The food tent runs nonstop from around 8:30 in the morning until 2:30pm.

Beyond the prepared food, thousands of fruit bowls, energy bars, bagels and other snacks are laid out in each tent before runners reach the hot selections. Any leftover food is donated to a local food bank or soup kitchen following the race, ensuring that no food is wasted.

"It's really a system of preparing and making sure everyone knows their role," says Ellen. "You have to be flexible but you have to have a plan."

You don't have to run to take part in all the fun.

SIGN-UP TO VOLUNTEER!



350
Autumn
mum plants
along the finish line



6 ANNOUNCERS calling
15,000 NAMES for
6 CONTINUOUS HOURS



8,000
COWBELLS
More Cowbell!!



\$73
MILLION

Contributed to the local economy from the NU Hartford Marathon

24,000
T-SHIRTS

\$6,000,000

Raised for charity by marathon participants

Thousands of
acclaimed physicians.

One number to
remember.

1.800.
DOCTORS

Hartford
HealthCare

Backus Hospital | Hartford Hospital | The Hospital of Central Connecticut | MidState Medical Center | Windham Hospital | Institute of Living | Natchaug Hospital | Rushford | Hartford HealthCare Medical Group | Integrated Care Partners | VNA HealthCare | VNA East | Clinical Laboratory Partners | Hartford HealthCare Rehabilitation Network | Central Connecticut Senior Health Services | Hebrew Health Care | Jefferson House | Cedar Mountain Commons |

HartfordHealthCare.org

ORGANIC
RECOVERY

New

26g
PROTEIN

- ⊕ Powered by Organic Milk
- ⊖ Lactose Free
- ⊖ Never GMOs



FLEET FEET Sports



More Than Just A Shoe Store

BY EMILY CAHILL

To the running community, the collaboration between the Hartford Marathon Foundation (HMF) and Fleet Feet Sports has always seemed like a natural partnership. While a passion for running has always been their common ground, the joint sponsorship has strengthened in recent years to bridge the gaps between running, training, and building the athletic community.

Located in West Hartford Center, Fleet Feet is the area's premier store and resource for athletic footwear and apparel, making it an essential stop for local runners. "We're not just a shoe store—we're a starting place," says co-owner Stephanie Blozy. "We're really a resource for anybody motivated to get out there and get fit."

Since taking over Fleet Feet Sports in 2008, sisters Stephanie and Carrie Blozy have gone beyond the emphasis on retail and continue to support the Hartford Marathon Foundation's races and overall mission.

"Little by little we grew the sponsorship into something more," Stephanie says. "Now we host joint training programs on opposite days—the Hartford Marathon does theirs in Glastonbury, and we do ours in West Hartford. It's great to offer them in both locations to make it convenient for more people to participate."

Training programs are hosted throughout the year, from programs for 5k novices to first time marathon runners. "One of our biggest training programs

is for the O'Hartford 5k; we usually have around 150 people signed up for it," says Stephanie. Training programs consist of coached group runs with guidance on proper form, as well as additional optional runs throughout the week.

While working to connect customers with training programs and HMF races, the Fleet Feet team provides additional support through in-store promotion, social media, and the store newsletter.

"I love what the Hartford Marathon has done to support the community—if we can help them build their registration base, it makes [our partnership] that much better," says Stephanie. "When we work together to create excitement about the races, we might originally get a mom training for her first 5k to sign up—but then she gets her husband and daughter on-board and word spreads from there."

Beyond the training programs, Fleet Feet Sports also provides a location for HMF race packet pickup, which

enables runners to experience the store firsthand while they prepare for their race. "We did that for the Iron Horse half marathon and the Red Dress Run; the packet pickup worked well because we also have an annex space where runners can ask questions" to experts in the field.

With more than 32 races each year, it's safe to say that Fleet Feet Sports and the Hartford Marathon Foundation keep pretty busy with no sign of slowing down soon. "It's a cool reciprocal relationship where [Fleet Feet] can help with product, shoes and location and HMF is able to provide that race experience," says Stephanie. "It's a great partnership where we can help each other out and grow the running community."



At mile 6.55, you're half way through and on your way home. Lots of cheering spectators here to help you celebrate!

THE UNSUNG HEROES

Our Marathon Collar Crew



It takes months and many, many hands to produce the Eversource Hartford Marathon each autumn. At the heart of the race, a remarkable group of volunteers serves in dozens of roles essential to supporting all runners, spectators and sponsors. Comprised of more than sixty-five dedicated volunteers, the Hartford Marathon Collar Crew ensures that the action-packed race day goes off without a hitch. Through their hands-on coordination of all aspects of the race, the Collar Crew volunteers don't run the marathon – they run the show.

Race planning commences each spring, when the Collar Crew first meets to prepare for October's event. The crew, made up of runners and non-runners alike, works with the staff to manage more than 2,300 volunteers that dedicate their time and efforts on race day. Their collective talents and insights ensure that all technical and logistical aspects of the race and day-long event are covered seamlessly from year to year.

For more than thirteen years, Lydia Messerschmidt has led the charge with supply management on race day. "I introduce myself as the supply queen," she laughs, and it's hardly an understatement. Lydia anticipates what essential items will be needed on race day and makes sure all bases are covered, from garbage bags to paper towels to aspirin. "I make sure everyone has what they need," she says, "whether that's a marker or a bandage; I've been doing this for so long that I've basically memorized the yearly shopping list." Messerschmidt first started volunteering with the race on behalf of United Technologies Corporation, and despite her first marathon being a rainy one, she "was hooked" and joined the Collar Crew a year later. Now, she even devotes work vacation days to volunteer with the running community each October.

While Messerschmidt's supply-focused position is a more independent role, a strong spirit of collaboration exists between all Collar Crew members. "We think of our-

selves as a family," she says, "It's a huge event and obviously we can't get it done without all of the volunteers, but those of us on the crew represent a core group who have known each other for a long time."

The sense of community also drives Carla Cabrera, who began volunteering with HMF in 2002 and coordinates the race's water stations and PRE-perks area. Cabrera is responsible for training and prepping twenty-one water station captains supported by more than four hundred volunteers. On race day, she oversees the PRE-perks area that offers preferred parking and other VIP benefits. The excitement of the day keeps her coming back year after year. "Are there days where you get drenched and you're completely wet by the time you get home? Yes, but to me that's the fun in all of it," she says. "It poured on my first year; I came home soaked to the skin but I had fun. People just love being out there to help and support the runners."

Her connection to the other volunteers at HMF is part of what makes the Collar Crew experience so special. "You create friendships with people and there are some that you stay in touch with beyond marathon season," she says. "Between the staff and other volunteers, it's a fun group to work with. I like encouraging the runners and now that I've started running myself, I see the importance of what we do at the marathon."

Lifelong runner Tom Buckley began volunteering with the race in 1997 and is

responsible for the marathon's downtown Hartford course section. "My role has been virtually identical since '97, although the course has changed many times since," says Buckley, who has played a crucial part in implementing course modifications. "Since I've started, the race has exploded into so many other areas," he says. "I'm still primarily involved in the technical aspects – but the logistics of putting on a race are far different than the logistics of putting on the entire event."

Beyond the races, the Hartford Marathon represents a momentous community event that showcases months of dedication from everyone involved. Between the marathon, half marathon, 5K race, VIP section, food tent, charities, beer garden, sponsors, elite runners, and events surrounding the marathon, he adds, "The Collar Crew is part of all these areas, and by necessity it's expanding every year."

Joe Anastasio similarly brings a runner's perspective to the Collar Crew and oversees the 5K course on race day. "It was and still is fun to see the growth from hundreds to thousands of participants over the years," he says. Whereas Anastasio once required the help of eight volunteers during the 5K, now more than twenty-five are needed to support the growing number of participants.

Aside from the marathon, he serves as the course manager for numerous other races throughout the year, including the Surftown Half Marathon and Niantic Triathlon. "Getting involved with the marathon led me to become more involved with other races, as well as with the United Way," he says. "You can't help but feel good about volunteering. It pushes you to want to do more."



LEFT: LYDIA MESSERSCHMIDT;
CENTER: CARLA CABRERA;
RIGHT: JOE ANASTASIO;
TOP: TOM BUCKLEY AND BETH SHLUGER

Favorite Haunts

BY EMILY CAHILL



LEFT TO RIGHT: LISA BUTLER, DANIELLE ALT & JOSH MILLER

Each year, the remarkable staff at the Hartford Marathon Foundation produces dozens of inspiring races throughout the community. In their downtime, these marathon experts gravitate to favorite haunts in and around the towns they live and work in. Local hot-spots abound, from hiking destinations to drive-ins, happy hour hangouts and hole-in-the-wall eateries. Here, the Hartford Marathon Foundation staff share their favorite local haunts for dining, drinking, running, and relaxing.

IN GLASTONBURY, home to Hartford Marathon offices, Merchandising Manager Diane DiBerardino opts for ice cream at **Robb's Farm** to savor a sweet treat after an afternoon of hiking in **Blackledge Falls**. An area staple for more than a century, Robb's continues to make dozens of ice cream flavors onsite. Among other HMF staff, Operations Intern Steve Flanagan agrees that **The Spicy Green Bean**, also in Glastonbury, is a top contender for best local lunch. From Steve's lunchtime pick—a chicken salad sandwich, to weekend breakfast, this quirky eatery offers dozens of lunch options and a BYOB dinner with a menu that changes weekly. In the fall, a hearty seasonal brunch and apple picking session at **Rose's Berry Farm** in South Glastonbury is not to be missed.

After a day at the office, you can find Sponsorship Manager Danielle Alt scoping out the lively happy hour scene **IN WEST HARTFORD**. "I love the happy hour at **Grant's** and **Treva**," she says. "Especially Grant's smoked salmon flatbread" topped with arugula and dill and tarragon crème fraiche. Danielle and her coworkers also give a nod to West Hartford's **Bartaco** for its spicy jalapeno margarita and

cocktails made with fresh-pressed juices. Down the road **IN HARTFORD**, HMF Operations Manager Matt Anderson relaxes at **The Half Door**, a popular Irish Gastropub and local watering hole in the West End neighborhood. During Wednesday evening happy hour, his beloved Guinness drafts are just \$2 a pint. A short drive away, Hartford's downtown Italian restaurant, **Salute**, is another celebrated restaurant, renowned for its gourmet pasta menu and perfect for pre-race carbo-loading.

IN EAST HARTFORD, the HMF staff concurs that Main Street's **Pho501** is a top pick for soup that warms the soul. As the name suggests, this Vietnamese eatery specializes in spicy, steamy, beautifully seasoned pho in several comforting varieties. For a quick, satisfying lunch break, **Carl's BBQ & Jerk**, also in East Hartford, features everything from barbecue rib sandwiches to jerk pork and curried goat platters. Its authentic home cooking and casual ambiance make it a delightful local haunt.

A stone's throw from Hartford, Genevieve Lattimer heads to her tried and true **WINDSOR** bakery, aptly named **Get Baked**. As Registration Manager for the Hartford Marathon,

she raves about the ice cream with seasonal fruit mix-ins, not to mention the case brimming with fresh baked goods. Lattimer is also a fan of **Bart's Drive-in**, a Windsor landmark for sixty-five years with a casual, cozy vibe that embraces the local community.

IN MANCHESTER, you'll find Technical Director Josh Miller enjoying a chipotle bleu cheese burger with a frosty IPA at **Corey's Catsup and Mustard**—especially after running or hiking the **Case Mountain trails**. Race Director Beth Shluger also heads to Manchester for a burger at local landmark **Shady Glen**. Their famous fried cheeseburger is her ideal way to wind down after the annual Manchester Road Race—especially when finishing up with a peppermint ice cream cone. Down **IN ROCKY HILL**, Kim Neurath hits up **Puket Café** for a spicy dose of drunken noodles and basil fried rice. As Sales and Marketing Manager for HMF, she's a fan of the Thai eatery for its hot and spicy cuisine. "The more stars the better," she says. "I like my sinuses to burn!"

Hole-in-the-wall favorites also abound off the beaten path, where gorgeous rural scenery pairs with delicious dining options. For office manager Jill Hallet, the "divey, yet perfect" **LITCHFIELD** bar **Dittos** connects with **Bohemian Pizza** to provide a range of gourmet options for the ideal combination of cheap drinks and excellent food. Out **IN COLCHESTER**, HMF Training Manager Lisa Butler hits the **Airline Trail** and then relaxes at **Angelico's Lake House** near Lake Pocodopaug **IN EAST HAMPTON**; its tropical bar "makes you feel like you're sitting in Key West." She also recommends **Sadler's Ordinary IN MARLBOROUGH** for their excellent breakfast and family-friendly atmosphere.

JESS HALLET

MATT ANDERSON



HMF STAFF: Danielle Alt, Matt Anderson, John Barresi, John Bornhorst, Lisa Butler, Jen Clark, Diane DiBerardino, Jess Hallet, Jill Hallet, Tom Hutchinson, Genevieve Lattimer, Shari Maglio, Josh Miller, Kim Neurath, Sarah Roberson, Beth Shluger and Ellen Smith