

Runners to compete in sister city

By Bill Atwood
Emerald Contributor

Three runners from the Eugene-Springfield area will have an opportunity to take an all-expense-paid trip to compete in the third annual Ogasa/Kakegawa Japan Marathon on April 15.

The Eugene-Kagegawa Sister City Committee is accepting applications until Feb. 16 from Eugene-area marathon runners who would like to participate.

Runners who wish to be considered must meet the marathon organizers' time requirements and must also "be willing to act as ambassadors of friendship from Eugene," according to Henry Rust, head of the marathon selection committee.

Time requirements for application are two hours, 30 minutes for men and three hours, 10 minutes for women. The three-member delegation of runners "can be made up of any mix of men and women," Rust said. The three runners will be selected Feb. 22.

Tentative plans call for the delegation to leave Eugene on Thursday, April 12 and return on Tuesday, April 17. Last year the delegation stayed the first night in Tokyo before traveling

by train to Kakegawa. Travel arrangements will be made by the sister-city committee.

Travel times are flexible, according to Rust. "During the interview period, we find out if the runners want to stay an extended period of time," Rust said. "If so, we will arrange for a later return date."

The committee decided to make the itinerary less structured at the suggestion of Jeff Sharp, a selection committee member who ran the marathon in 1988 and 1989.

"The first year was really structured. We didn't have time to explore on our own," Sharp said. "It was a little more relaxed last year. With an extra day before and after the

"The whole route is over rolling countryside, passing by freshly cut tea fields and through smaller towns outside Kakegawa," Sharp said. "The last ten miles are gradually up hill. With about a mile to go there is a really steep hill."

Sharp said that he "would like to go and reclaim the title," but a back injury is preventing him from competing.

Other runners who have competed in the marathon as representatives of Eugene are: Mara Siegel, who won the women's division in 1988; Amy Robertson, who placed second in the women's division in 1989; Steve DiNatale; Jenifer Lacey; Paul Bolin; and Steve McChesney.

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— Jeff Sharp

race, we had a little more time to look around Kakegawa and go shopping."

The runners' travel, lodging and other expenses will be paid for by the Kakegawa International Friendship Association and marathon organizers.

In 1988 and 1989, five runners were invited from Eugene to participate in the marathon. The Kakegawa association informed Rust that only three runners were invited this year because the marathon organizers are "expecting two runners from Korea."

Sharp, who won the men's division in 1988 and finished second in 1989, said that he "felt like a mini-celebrity over there."

"There are people lining the streets in the small towns, waving paper flags that are provided in the province's daily newspaper," Sharp said.

The 42 kilometer (26 mile) Ogasa/Kakegawa marathon course is challenging, according to Sharp.

Siegel and McChesney met and fell in love while they were in Kakegawa in 1988. They were married later that year and currently are living in Boston, according to Sharp.

The committee also is asking for "cheering visitors" to accompany the marathon delegation. Housing with Japanese host families for up to three nights will be provided for non-marathoners while they are in Kakegawa, Rust said, but they must cover all other expenses themselves.

Running events other than the marathon also are open for those runners who wish to travel at their own expense. The entry fee for these runs will be paid by the marathon sponsor. These events include a 3.5-kilometer family run, a 3.5-kilometer mixed-pair run, and a 10-kilometer run for people over 15-years-old.

For more information contact Henry Rust at 465-1212.

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