

10 women line up Tuesday for International Pancake Day Race

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- Pancake Day Board

Ten women will compete in the International Pancake Day Race Tuesday. Racers include last year's winner, Caitlin Demarest, 28; veteran racers Tessy Barnett, 40; Brooke Buchman, 27; Mikayla Knudsen, 24; and Rene Boaldin, 21. First-time racers are Hannah Belton, 23; Sandra Nash, 25; Lakeria Eatmon, 20; Summer Parsons, 25; and Destyni Lucero, 19.

Caitlin Demarest, who is the assistant women's basketball coach at Seward County Community College/Area Technical School, is returning to defend her local title. She won the Liberal leg last year, but lost the International Race to Olney's Devon Byrne (see related story). Demarest has lived here less than two years, but said she "loves the Pancake Day tradition and loved being a part of it last year." To those racers who are new like she was in 2013, she said, "Try your best, put your thumb on your pancake, and try not to trip in the last 100 yards."

It is quite likely that Tessy Barnett holds the record for racing the most times, as she will be competing in her 15th race this year. Barnett ran in the International Race for the first time when her children were small and has been at it long enough to see her daughter Tabitha join her in the race last year. Barnett operates a day care business in her home and is married to Cory Barnett. They have three children. She says she enjoys racing as a way to stay healthy.

Brooke Buchman ran in 2004 and 2005 and said her friends and family are excited to see her return to the race. One family member is especially excited; Buchman's sister Megan Graff is Liberal's representative to Olney this year and will be cheering for Brooke from England.

"This is a once in a lifetime chance (for me) to run here in our hometown where we grew up, and participate together, from across the ocean," Buchman said. "(Megan) will be awaiting the results of the race as the gun goes off in Liberal."

Buchman's nieces are running as honorary racers in Olney.

"I wish the best of luck to my nieces as well," she said. "I feel honored that our family was chosen to represent a town that we take so much pride in!"

Buchman works at Conestoga Energy Partners as a logistics billing specialist and has one son, Dawson Pipkin.

Another veteran racer is Mikalya Knudsen, who will be competing for the fifth time. She is a CMA at Emeritus at Liberal Springs and has three siblings running in the children's and youth races: MiLeah, Montana, and Joshua. Knudsen said, "I love the tradition of Pancake Day and for as long as I am able I will participate." She recommends first-time racers drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

Rounding out the list of returning racers is Rene' Boaldin, who placed second in 2013. Boaldin is a spinning instructor at Xtreme Fitness and is studying

cosmetology at SCCC/ATS. Her goal in the race is to shorten her time. She is training for the race by spinning—naturally—and wants to encourage newcomers with this piece of wisdom about the race: "It will eventually be over, I promise!"

One of those newcomers is Hannah Belton, a second grade teacher at Southlawn Elementary,

who also coaches soccer at South Middle School. Belton experienced her first Pancake Day just last year.

“When I moved to Liberal everyone talked about Pancake Day,” she said. “Last year I went to some of the Pancake Day events and watched the races. It looked like a lot of fun. I also have some students that will be running in the children's Pancake Day races.”

Belton's parents will be coming to Liberal to cheer her on in the race.

“My parents are very excited. My mother heard about the International Pancake Day Race when she was a little girl and wanted to run in it.”

Belton is training by running with her soccer girls and she is “trying to practice flipping pancakes,” she added.

Another first-timer, Sandra Nash, will have company on Pancake Day, as her two sons, Brendan and Jackson, will run in the children's races. She is a stay-at-home mom and is married to Austin Nash. Nash said she has always wanted to enter the race and “everyone tells me I should.” Training for the race is a family affair. She and her two racing sons are getting ready by running sprints together at the track.

Lakeria Eatmon is studying surgical technology at SCCC/ATS and also works at National Beef. She is a lifetime resident of Liberal and decided that this was the year to enter the race.

“I always said I would and figured, what the heck—go for it.” Eatmon said her family and friends are very supportive, and her brother Cruz is running in the Men's Pacer Race. Eatmon's race strategy is to “pray and take a deep breath.”

Summer Parsons is a P. E. teacher at Garfield Elementary who was encouraged to enter the race by her parents, who thought it “would be a good/fun thing to do,” she said. She is training

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by running, working out on the elliptical and trying to eat well. Summer is married to Alex Parsons and has one daughter, Charli.

Destyni Lucero plans on joining the Marines soon, so this might be her last chance to race in her hometown for a while. A lifelong resident of Liberal, Lucero was active in high school track, and said she “loves racing and hopes to win.” She added that she plans to “just stay calm and run my race.”

The International Race will get underway at 11:55 a.m. Tuesday. For a complete schedule of events, visit the Pancake Day website at www.pancakeday.net or call 620-624-6423 for more information.