



For Immediate Release

29 March 2018

Media Contact Information:
(not for publication)

Keith Peters, Media Coordinator
307-690-6803 or kpeters@cherryblossom.org

Website: www.cherryblossom.org

2018 Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run Organizers Take To Social Media To Ramp Up Education About Carbon Impacts And Offsets

Seattle University Research Prompts Gold Level Inspire Certified Event to Develop Communications Strategy to Encourage Runners to Learn More About Carbon Offset Programs

March 29, 2018, Washington, DC: For the second consecutive year, the 2018 Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run, to be held on April 8th, has been awarded Gold Level Inspire Certification by the Council for Responsible Sport, an Oregon-based non-profit promoting sustainability in sports. The Council's Inspire Certified events represent the pinnacle of achievement and stand as an example and inspiration to others.

Inspire Certified event status is awarded by invitation to events such as the Credit Union Cherry Blossom that have achieved multiple certifications from the Council to recognize the legacy that sporting events committed to sustainability and thoughtful resource management provide to their audiences and communities. One of the principal benefits of Inspire status is an overall reduction in required documentation, which is intended to give event organizers more time to focus on key sustainability initiatives that require their ongoing attention - in the case of the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run, the key sustainability initiative involves effectively reducing the event's carbon footprint.

For years, the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run has had two primary CO2 reduction programs: 1) a carbon offset donation program available to all runners during online registration, and 2) an early open arrangement with Metro that allowed runners and spectators to take the subway to the race. Since 2010, the events' runners have contributed \$45,768 to NativeEnergy carbon offset programs through online registration, and nearly 100,000 event participants have taken advantage of Metro's early opening.

Initially, the sale of carbon offsets was paired with the campaign to boost ridership to and from the race on Metro. (Event organizers first started working with Metro in 2004 as an initiative to reduce traffic congestion and parking issues on the National Mall during peak cherry blossom season). In 2017, Metro construction eliminated the option of riding the subway to the race; and this year, Metro officials chose not to offer event organizers a financially-viable option to open early on race morning. Consequently, the loss of Metro as a transportation option for Credit Union Cherry Blossom entrants has become a major challenge to the event's long-term goal of reducing its carbon footprint.

In effect, the carbon offset donation program with NativeEnergy has become the primary means of carbon impact reduction for Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run organizers.

With that in mind, and to increase their understanding of why runners do or do not purchase carbon offsets, event organizers reached out to Drs. Galen Trail and Brian McCullough of Seattle University's Masters of Sport Administration and Leadership program for help. Their research findings suggest a considerable opportunity to grow carbon offset sales - 43% of runners polled said they were interested in purchasing carbon offsets - but identified a number of different market segments that would each require a specific communications strategy. From uneducated and unaware runners, to loyal Credit Union Cherry Blossom participants, to runners who identify closely with sustainability issues, each market segment requires a different message. While the uneducated and unaware might not even know what a carbon offset is, loyal event participants simply need a little encouragement to purchase offsets, and the "sustainable runner" wants to know specifics about the carbon offset program they are being asked to fund.

To be sure, the simple goal of selling carbon offsets as one way to reduce the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run's carbon footprint presents a complex set of challenges to event organizers, and requires a systematic approach to communications. To kick off this long-term initiative, the event's social media team has undertaken a campaign intended to meet the following objectives this year: 1) increase understanding of what carbon offsets are and how to purchase them, 2) create specific awareness of the specific carbon offset program(s) event organizers support through their purchase of NativeEnergy offsets, and 3) promote ways to supersede once strong Metro ridership with commensurate participation in other carbon footprint reduction efforts, like bike valet parking and carpooling.

Bottom line: The more runners are aware of and understand their carbon impacts, and the benefits of a viable carbon offset program, the more likely they are to support Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run organizers' many carbon footprint reduction programs.

The 2018 Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run will mark the 17th year of title sponsorship by Credit Union Miracle Day. Since 2002, over \$8 million has been raised for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

About the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile

The Credit Union Cherry Blossom, organized by Cherry Blossom, Inc., a 501c(3) chapter of the Road Runners Club of America, is known as "The Runner's Rite of Spring®" in the Nation's Capital. The staging area for the event is on the Washington Monument Grounds, and the course passes in sight of all of the major Washington, DC Memorials. The event serves as a fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, a consortium of 170 premier children's hospitals across North America. About one-third of the funds raised support Washington, DC's own Children's National ("Children's Hospital"). The event also funds two \$5,000 Road Runners Club of America "Roads Scholar" grants designed to support up-and-coming U.S. distance running talent.

The event is a proud member of the **PRRO Circuit** (PRRO.org), a series of non-marathon prize money road races in Tampa, FL; Washington, DC; Spokane, WA; Utica, NY; and Pittsburgh, PA, with the 2018

PRRO Championships to be hosted by the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile on April 8. The circuit is committed to a drug-free sport and funds Clearidium to conduct drug testing at all circuit events in compliance with the standards of international and U.S. drug testing authorities.

In addition to being sanctioned by **USA Track & Field** and the **Road Runners Club of America**, the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run has earned Gold Level Inspire Certification from the **Council for Responsible Sport** in recognition of its legacy of commitment to sustainability and thoughtful resource management. To learn more, visit www.CherryBlossom.org.

Credit Union Miracle Day, Inc., a consortium of credit unions and credit union suppliers in partnership with CUNA Mutual Group and PSCU, is the title sponsor of the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run, 5K Run-Walk and Kids' Run. Hood Cottage Cheese is the presenting sponsor of the 5K Run-Walk. Supporting sponsors include Baroody Camps, E-Trade, Garmin, Gatorade, GEICO, Gold's Gym, Mamma Lucia, MedStar Sports Medicine, Navy Federal Credit Union, Old Ox Brewery, Potomac River Running, Suburban Solutions, and Under Armour.

About America's Credit Unions:

Credit unions provide consumers choices for financial services such as checking accounts, investments and loans of all kinds including mortgages. Funds are federally insured, but unlike banks, there are no stockholders at credit unions. Earnings are returned to member-owners in the form of lower loan rates, higher savings rates, low or no-fee products and services. The credit union philosophy of placing members' needs first is why more than 113 million Americans do their banking at one of America's 5,800 credit unions. Credit unions are for everyone - no matter where you live, there is a credit union to meet your needs.

About the Council for Responsible Sport:

The mission of the Council for Responsible Sport is to provide objective, independent verification of the socially and environmentally responsible work event organizers are doing, and to actively support event organizers who strive to make a difference in their communities. The Council for Responsible Sport is an Oregon-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. www.CouncilForResponsibleSport.org

-- End --