



Inline skating marathon ready to roll

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Organizers expect more than 300 skaters to compete at Saturday's Chicagoland Inline Marathon in Hoffman Estates.

At best they were hoping for 1,000 skaters, but they're still happy. The skaters come from 25 states and Canada, says race director Peter Starykowicz. Competitive races are scheduled featuring some of the sport's elite - Jordan Nelson, Norm Kirby and Hernan Diaz - plus recreation races.

A total of \$4,500 in prize money will be given away for the 26.2-mile marathon, sprints and youth races. The races start at 8 a.m. Saturday, with awards at 11 a.m.

Meanwhile, the weekend's events kick off today with a skate expo that's open to the public from 4 to 9 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn in Hoffman Estates.

Inline skating companies will show off the latest gear, and novice and experienced skaters can receive expert advice.

"This is the perfect opportunity for someone who wants advice," Starykowicz said. "To say, 'This is the kind of skater I am, what is the proper equipment I should be skating on?'"

The event is in its second year but in Hoffman Estates for the first time. The starting line is near the Prairie Stone Business Park, at Freeman Road and Lakewood Boulevard.

Last year skaters raced the streets of Mundelein, but Starykowicz says Hoffman Estates' hospitality has allowed the event to grow.

Linda Scheck, the village's tourism and business retention coordinator, said the marathon is attracting visitors, adding that she's helped book 150 hotels rooms for guests this weekend.

"This is a wonderful, free event for people to be with their families and to be outdoors," she said.

Starykowicz said he's made some tweaks to the route, as the course no longer takes skaters east of Freeman Road.

"They'll have to make an extra lap," he said.

The event will be the country's third-largest inline event, Starykowicz said. The largest is the NorthShore Inline Marathon in Duluth, Minn., which hosts about 4,500 racers each year.

Starykowicz hopes to achieve the same sort of success Elk Grove Village has found over the last two years with its Tour of Elk Grove cycling race. There are even plans to add a stage race at next year's inline marathon, which would make it even more similar to cycling, Starykowicz said.

Scheck said the village will talk with Starykowicz after the race to begin to plan next year's race.

"It's just going to get bigger," he promised.

Skaters from Chicago-based Team Rainbo have been practicing on Hoffman Estates roads since 1989. That sparked the idea to approach Hoffman Estates village officials about hosting the event.

Road closures will start at 6 a.m. from Lakewood Boulevard, to the east of the entrance to La Strada and Jersey's, as well as Huntington Boulevard between Lakewood and Central Road.

Central from Ela Road to east of Claire's will also be closed.

Roads will reopen by noon, and access to businesses will still be granted.