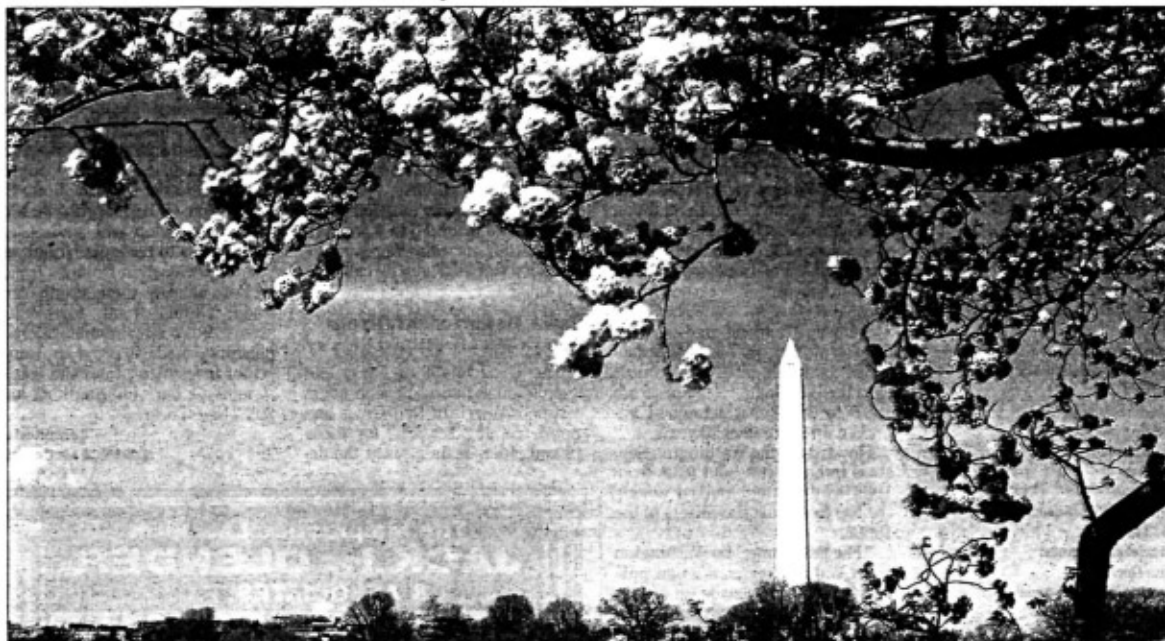


District

EXTRA

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2009

It's Peak Time to Peek at Cherry Blossoms



BY HAZEL N. SPANBAE — ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Washington Monument is framed by cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin. The National Cherry Blossom Festival continues through April 12.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival continues through April 12. Cherry trees along the Tidal Basin and elsewhere in the District will be at their blooming peak through Saturday, the National Park Service said.

Floats, balloons and bands from across the

nation and around the world will promenade on Constitution Avenue between Seventh and 17th streets when the Cherry Blossom Festival Parade steps off at 10 a.m. Saturday. Clowns, horses and antique cars will be a part of Washington's largest annual spectator event. Alex

Trebek, host of the television game show "Jeopardy!," will be the grand marshal of the parade.

The parade is free. Reserved grandstand seats are \$15 and are available through Ticketmaster at 202-397-7328.

District To Host 204-Mile Relay Race

Teamwork Is Key In Two-Day Event

By TIMOTHY WILSON
Washington Post Staff Writer

Bob Fleshner has found what he calls "the next big area of running" and brought it to the Washington area. All 204 miles of it.

After participating in several long-distance relay races, Fleshner said, he decided that the region, with its many runners and scenic pathways, would be a good host for such an event.

"I knew people here would embrace it," said Fleshner, 54, of Bethesda. He was right.

With the help of volunteers and runners from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District, the first annual American Odyssey Relay Run Adventure, a two-day, 204-mile relay race from Gettysburg, Pa., to the District, is scheduled to begin April 24.

"It's the most fun you will ever have running," Fleshner said.

The deadline for teams to register is April 10. The registration fee for a 12-member team is \$1,140; a portion of the proceeds will go to the Wellness Community-Greater Washington, a network of nonprofit organizations that provide free assistance to people affected by cancer.

Long-distance relay-race teams are often made up of six or 12 members of various skill levels. Each participant runs several legs of three to six miles.

The 204-mile course for the American Odyssey Relay is made up of 36 legs of varying lengths, terrain and el-

DISTRICT NOTEBOOK

Some Words From the Fenty-Rhee Mutual Admiration Society

By DAVID NAKAMURA and NIKITA STEWART
Washington Post Staff Writers

Mayors from across the country were in town this week for a conference, including a seminar on education reform. Not surprisingly, D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) and Schools Chancellor

Michelle A. Rhee were among the featured speakers, continuing a series of national platforms — the Democratic National Convention in Denver, the National Action Network in Memphis and a Time magazine cover story — for the duo to boast about their strategy since taking control of the District's public schools.

Fenty led off by detailing how he moved

aside the Board of Education when he took office and how he hired Rhee after getting a recommendation from New York schools chief Joel Klein. Anticipating that his fellow mayors might ask about the political blowback from such moves, Fenty said: "People ask me as

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Relay Race Expected To Be Annual Event

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evation; the legs are run at various times of the day. For this event, each team has 12 runners, with each member running three legs for a total minimum of 13 miles.

More than 110 teams from 30 states and Canada have signed up. When not running, team members will navigate the course in two vans. Teams with members who live within 50 miles of the course are required to supply at least two volunteer drivers.

The first leg begins at 7 a.m. April 24 in Gettysburg and goes 5.4 miles, to the American Civil War Museum. The final 5.6 miles of the relay will begin the evening of April 25 in the District at the C&O Canal and end near the Jefferson Memorial.

The shortest leg is 3.1 miles; the longest is 8.8 miles.

"Each leg of the race is different with respect to difficulty," said David Landau, captain of Beauties and the Beasts, a coed team based in Montgomery County. "From a runner's standpoint, it's a very interesting course. It's very scenic."

Leg 23 is one of the more notable stretches because it runs through Antietam National Battlefield, the site of the bloodiest day of fighting in U.S. history.

First-time relay runner James

Byles, who has run a number of marathons, said the race poses a unique challenge. "I've never done a 24-hour relay," he said. "I'm looking forward to doing the trail portions through the battlefields."

Byles is a member of Mayor Adrian M. Fenty's team, Fleet Feet AOAT. The team is made up of people who train with Fenty (D) weekly. The team name is a combination of the name of Fenty's parents' Adams Morgan shoe store and the mayor's motto: "All out all the time."

"It's going to be an all-out race with each of the legs," Byles said.

Maybe for some runners, but not all.

"You can treat these as a competition, but the common theme for everybody is it's an adventure," said David Wittenstein, a member of Beauties and the Beasts who will participate in his fourth long-distance relay. "Most of the time, you're not running. You're really spending two days in a van with your buddies."

Six teammates are allowed in each van. The first vehicle drops off the runner for the first leg and then drives ahead to provide the runner with water, snacks and encouragement. The vehicle will stop at the first exchange point to drop off the second runner and pick up the first runner when the leg is



COURTESY OF DAVID WITTENSTEIN

Members of the Beauties and the Beasts, a coed American Odyssey Relay Run Adventure team based in Montgomery County: front row, from left, Kelly Cameron, David Landau, Cathy Horvitz, Alan Weiner, Nancy Porten and David Wittenstein. Back row: Rich Garfinkel, Russell Fox, Cyndi Hann, Bob Fleshner, Gary Faigen and Arthur Dubin.

complete.

The pattern is repeated for six legs until a hand-off to teammates in the second van, who will start the seventh leg: This alternating pattern between vehicles continues until the finish line.

Fleshner said the format and

miles traveled in a long-distance relay race can foster a strong camaraderie among teammates within a sport that people often do alone.

"We've taken a sport that was an individual pursuit and turned it into a team sport," Fleshner said. "Every single person wants to run

the hardest for their team. You don't want to let your teammates down."

For information or to register for the American Odyssey Relay Run Adventure, go to www.americanodysseyrelay.com.