

## **Montana Governor's Cup**

The Governor's Cup had its start at the Montana State Capitol building in 1973 when the new governor Thomas L. Judge created the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Recreation and Lifetime Sports.

Clayton Linebarger was the director, and sole employee of the Council. His main job was to visit all 126 incorporated towns of Montana and help start, improve or advise on recreational opportunities for the citizens.

The Governor's Cup races began as a way to involve many people at one event at one time.

The first Cup was held on Memorial Day May 27, 1974 at Bozeman near Montana State University. The races were the: 3-mile, 7-mile, 13-mile and a full marathon. The long races went up the road towards Hyalite Canyon. Sixty-eight people signed up for the races. The winner of each race received a gold Cup.

The next year, 1975, the Cup moved to Missoula during the first weekend in June, and had 150 runners. The marathon course went from near the University of Montana campus to Milltown, then Bonner, and then returned on the same course.

The following year, 1976, the Cup moved to Helena. With help from the Last Chance Runners Club, a marathon course was set from Vigilante Campground, through York, over the Trout Creek Bridge, into town, and ended at the track at Capital High School. That year 225 runners signed up for races.

The first four Cups were sponsored by the Council. In 1977 these funds were cut from the budget. With state funding gone, Last Chance Runners Club kept the race going in '78. At this time, it appeared the races would be limited as the LCRC couldn't handle more entries. And then fate smiled when Blue Shield of Montana asked to sponsor the race beginning in 1979.

From their associates in Spokane, Washington, Blue Shield of Montana was encouraged to become a race sponsor of the Governor's Cup. The Spokane group were sponsoring the Lilac Bloomsday Race which started in 1977.

With Blue Shields involvement the races kept going and growing, and by 1995 there were 6,831 entries.

Next year, 2024 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Governor's Cup. It will be an exciting, historical event: a time to remember the old days, be thankful for the community it has become, and the knowing there will be many, many more Cups.

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