

I'll just be frank y'all. 2020 sucks. This whole year has been a complete wash. I know that most of you have received this same email a dozen times over. I have lost count of the number of races or events I intended to participate in that have cancelled.

Well, there's no easy way to say this other than plainly. The 2020 Magnolia Marathon/Half is cancelled. Our 9<sup>th</sup> Running will be held on **November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021**, making our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event coming in 2022. We will NOT be offering a Virtual option. We WILL be offering all registered participants 3 options:

- a deferral to 2021
- donate 100% of registration fee to Alzheimer's Mississippi
- a full refund (minus transaction fees charged by raceentry.com).

**An email has been sent to all who have already registered. In that email, there is a link to a Google survey where you can make your choice. You must complete this survey by SEPTEMBER 4, 2020. Refunds will be postmarked by SEPTEMBER 15, 2020. Those who do not complete the survey by the deadline will forfeit their choice and their registration fee will be donated to Alzheimer's Mississippi.**

This decision was definitely not made easily. In fact, we were 100% going forward until the last few weeks. 6-8 weeks ago, when the local COVID-19 rates began rising exponentially, we still had hope that it wouldn't affect Magnolia. But here we are-3 months from Magnolia and the numbers have increased 3 times over for our area and they aren't decreasing. It took one afternoon of conversations with several medical professionals and loyal friends to basically slap us in the face and make us realize that it wasn't just about the runners and making sure the starting gun goes off on November 21. It's about the volunteers, police, vendors, spectators, the community.

For those who know me, you know I am not a conformist. I am not cancelling Magnolia "because everyone else is cancelling their races too." I have read every State and City mandate and our crew has discussed ways we could modify our event to stay within guidelines. There is a point to which something gets modified and changed so much that it just isn't justifiable to call it by its original name. The bottom line is this: We must have the full support of the City of Meridian, the Police Department, over 100 volunteers and the entire community. We won't be getting that this year. Because our course is entirely on city streets, our race requires more support from our city officials and community than they can currently offer us.

Our Number 1 goal is to provide a safe, exciting race worthy of our name and your efforts. Regardless of what the numbers are on November 21, 2020, maintaining the reputation and integrity of our event in the current environment is not possible.

We hope to see you on November 20, 2021.

Evelyn Watkins

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