

= Mary Wittenberg =

Mary Wittenberg (née Robertson) was the President and Chief Executive Officer of New York Road Runners (NYRR) through May 18 , 2015 . Wittenberg oversaw the TCS New York City Marathon and several other races , events , and programs that draw over 300 @, @ 000 yearly participants .

Under Wittenberg 's leadership , NYRR helped develop new initiatives such as the World Marathon Majors Series and several community programs that have introduced running to underprivileged children . For her efforts related to the TCS New York City Marathon , an article in the New York Times stated that Wittenberg " has transformed the New York City Marathon from traditional to competitive to innovative . "

A former competitive runner , Wittenberg won the 1987 Marine Corps Marathon . She participates in many NYRR races .

= = Early life and career = =

Wittenberg was born in Buffalo , New York , and raised in a large and athletic Irish Catholic family . She was the oldest of seven children , and played softball , baseball and basketball ? sports that her father coached . In high school , she focused on cheerleading , and also starred on a champion West Side Rowing Club team . Wittenberg went on to attend Canisius College , and was a coxswain for the men 's crew team that won a championship for small colleges .

During her senior year in College , Wittenberg took up running . She won a few local races and trained with Canisius ' men 's cross country team . Wittenberg also trained with the men 's cross country team while attending law school at University of Notre Dame . While training with this group , she finished 16th at the Chicago Marathon with a time of 2 : 46 .

After law school , Wittenberg moved to Richmond , Virginia to work for the Hunton & Williams law firm . She would spend busy days working in the office , marathon training with the University of Richmond cross country team , and studying to pass the bar . In 1987 , she won the Marine Corps Marathon in a time of 2 : 44 : 34 . Wittenberg used a late surge to overtake the leaders in the second half of the race .

Wittenberg 's strong performance at the Marine Corps Marathon qualified her for the 1988 Olympic marathon trials . However , she soon required surgery for a knee injury , and a back ailment forced her to drop out of the qualifying race . Wittenberg ran in only two more marathons due to injuries and a focus on her law career .

= = New York Road Runners = =

= = = CEO = = =

In the early 1990s , Wittenberg worked as an attorney who specialized in international trade deals for U.S. banks . In 1994 , her firm transferred her to New York City . It was there that she was made a partner for her law firm . However , in 1998 Wittenberg opted for a career change , as she wanted to devote time to start a family .

Despite taking a significant pay cut , Wittenberg began work for New York Road Runners as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer . Her initial responsibilities ranged from overseeing NYRR publications to administering membership and race scoring . She helped secure the deal that made ING a title sponsor for the race . In 2005 , Wittenberg was named President and Chief Executive of NYRR , and became the first female director of a major international marathon . NYRR administers the TCS New York City Marathon .

Under Wittenberg 's leadership , a significant change was made for women marathoners to receive more prize money than their male counterparts . NYRR 's budget has increased significantly , as has the viewership for the TCS New York City Marathon . NYRR and Wittenberg also administered

the 2008 U.S. Men 's Marathon Olympic Trials . During this event , former collegiate star Ryan Shay suffered a heart attack and died while competing in the race . Wittenberg 's sensitive handling of the tragic news at the post @-@ race press conference was cited as an example of her " class and compassion " .

= = = Running = = =

While CEO of NYRR , Wittenberg spearheaded innovative programs to increase running 's popularity as a spectator sport . The NYRR has partnered with five other major marathons (London , Boston , Berlin , Chicago and Tokyo) to create the World Marathon Majors Series . Runners compete in these races to earn a cumulative standing , similar to NASCAR 's Sprint Cup .

NYRR also provides financial support for the USA Distance Project , which is composed of training groups throughout the country for post @-@ collegiate distance runners . As of November 2009 , the NYRR have donated \$ 750 @,@ 000 to the Distance Project in a three @-@ year span . After Meb Keflezighi 's victory and five other American men finishing in the top ten of the 2009 New York Marathon , Wittenberg was very optimistic about the future of U.S. men 's distance running . She said " I think this is just the start of delivering on the day " and " this has been a long time coming . " Wittenberg and NYRR 's financial support efforts for U.S. distance running was also noted after Keflezighi 's victory . NYRR is also a prominent supporter of National Running Day , which is dedicated to celebrate and promote the sport .

= = = Community = = =

Wittenberg expanded NYRR 's presence in the community by providing running classes for various levels of runners , establishing running programs for children through the NYRR Foundation , and setting up an online coaching network . Wittenberg is also involved with programs to prevent childhood obesity , and was a guest of Michelle Obama 's at the White House for the President 's Task Force on Childhood Obesity . The New York Daily News wrote in an article , " Wittenberg is emphatic in her conviction that her job isn 't just to put on top pro races , but to cultivate healthy living and be a force for good in the community . " The many programs , events and races that the NYRR administers draws more than 300 @,@ 000 yearly participants .

= = = In the media = = =

NYRR has received some attention for the high entry and application fees for the New York City Marathon . In 2009 , the entry fee was raised , for both NYRR members and non @-@ members , making it most expensive premium marathon in the United States . Also , there have been complaints about a non @-@ refundable fee for those who merely apply to gain entry to the race . Wittenberg said that the application fee is necessary due to the weak economy and to ensure commitment from those applying .

After both the Men 's and Women 's 2012 Olympic Trials were awarded to Houston , Wittenberg expressed surprise and frustration with the USATF 's process of picking a host city .

= = = Reception = = =

Wittenberg has received notable praise for her work at NYRR . Deena Kastor , an American record holder and Olympic Bronze medalist in the Marathon , said of Wittenberg : " In a very short amount of time , she has made so many positive changes in this sport " . Shalane Flanagan , also an American record holder and an Olympic Bronze Medalist in the 10 @,@ 000 m , commented " What Phil Knight is to Nike , Mary is to distance running . " Olympic Sportswriter Philip Hersh was so impressed with Wittenberg 's work with NYRR , he suggested that she be named CEO of USA Track and Field .

= = Personal life = =

NYRR holds over fifty races yearly , and though no longer a marathoner , Wittenberg participates in several of these races . In 2006 she competed in 18 races , and in 2007 , she ran 20 . Despite her busy schedule , she often runs and cross @-@ trains in Central Park , and starts the day of the New York Marathon with a pre @-@ dawn run .

Wittenberg lives in the Upper East Side of New York City , and is married with two sons . Her family attends St. Ignatius Loyola .