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OTHER SPORTS

RUNNING: Run in a race this weekend and smell the flowers

April 27, 2006

BY DOUG KURTIS
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

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This weekend's calendar has many great races to discover. Here are a few to consider; enjoy the spring leaves and flowers as you run.

Herb's Run in Monroe: The fifth annual event begins at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at Munson Park. It has a new four-mile course (designed by me) that runs along the Raisin River, crosses the Roessler bridge and returns for a view of the park bench placed in memory of Herb Mell, a supporter of children's track, cross-country and running clubs in the Monroe area. The event is worth the trip just for the Monroe Miler and Island Road Runner Club homemade cookies. Proceeds support youth running and college scholarships. Contact Sandy Mell at snmell@peoplepc.com for information.

The second annual 5K walk/run for Autism Acceptance is looking to build on last year's great attendance. It's a road-and-trail race that winds through a beautiful setting around Hawk Island County Park and Scott Woods Park in Lansing. Locals remember the Hawk Island as the Sablin gravel pits. It has now been transformed with swimming beaches, pedal boats and natural areas. The kids run (including autistic kids) begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, the 5K a half-hour later. Go to www.austism-mi.org or call 517-882-2800.

The Gina Relays in Hillsdale begin at 3:15 today with the men's decathlon and women's heptathlon. The memorial Gina VanLaar 10K for women starts at 8:50 p.m. Friday. VanLaar was a seven time All-America at Hillsdale.

Saturday's events include the Wyld Bill Lundberg 10K, named after the Chargers' track and cross-country coach. Race time is 10 a.m. Go to

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www.hillsdale.edu/chargers or call 517-607-3155.

Belle Isle's Spring into Nature 5K run/walk at the Nature Zoo starts at 10 a.m. Saturday. The race is put on by the Detroit Synergy group, a nonprofit coalition of Detroit and metro area residents working across cultural boundaries. Go to www.detroit synergy.org for details. The entry fee includes access to the zoo.

The Borgess Run for Health in Kalamazoo has been around for 27 years. Although its distances have changed, the events continue to be sponsored and run from the Borgess Health and Fitness Center. The National City half -marathon begins at 8:15 a.m. Sunday and the 5K and one-mile shortly after. There is also a judged 5K race walk. Go to www.borgessrun.com or call Blaine Lam at 269-345-1913.

At 8 a.m. Sunday, the Running Fit trail marathon and half-marathon will have runners from all over the country. The course, a 13.1-mile single-track loop through Pinckney State Recreation area, is not for wimps. It's a rugged trail, and runners have been known to take a few falls. It's a wide, well-used trail with opportunity to pass. Call Susan Hodgson at 734-929-9027 or go to www.trailmarathon.com.

Contact **DOUG KURTIS** at Detroit Free Press, 600 W. Fort St., Detroit 48226 or dkurtis@earthlink.com.

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