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## **Women's Running Pioneer Kathrine Switzer Announces Team 261 Fearless Who Will Start 2017 Boston Marathon With Her**

**Port Washington, NY (January 24, 2017)**-- Running legend Kathrine Switzer is lacing up her sneakers to run the 2017 Boston Marathon again-- 50 years after she first ran it, and in celebration of an event that changed the world.

This time, she will be joined by over 100 other runners (95% women) representing 20 countries. Together this global team represents 261 Fearless, Inc., Switzer's new non-profit that empowers women around the world through a social running community.

Switzer had a rough start in the 1967 Boston Marathon when an angry race director tried to pull off her bib numbers—261—and throw her out of the race because the event was for men-only. The incident ignited the women's running boom.

One of the 100+ women who are running with Switzer and raising funds for 261 Fearless is Rosy Spraker, from Lorton, VA, who has run the Boston Marathon ten consecutive times. "Kathrine not only broke the glass starting line," says Spraker, "But she continued to champion the cause of women's running for the next 50 years. With the money our team is raising, we will create non-competitive running clubs, coaches' education and communication programs in local communities, whether that is in Massachusetts or Albania. We're asking women everywhere to start a club and join our empowering movement."

"It is a joy to run with this amazing group of women and men from all over the world in the 121st Boston Marathon," said Switzer. "What was a dramatic incident 50 years ago became instead a defining moment for me and women runners. The result is nothing less than a global social revolution; there are now more women runners in the United States than men, and these women are both fearless and compassionate, wanting to help other women around the world achieve their goals. Because of this team's great fund-raising, 261 Fearless will be able to spread our message far and wide."

"We have six men on our team, and they are very special," added Switzer. "They are a tribute to the guys who believed in me and helped me get to the start and through the finish of the 1967 Boston Marathon. 261 Fearless is a women's organization but it is not about exclusion; it's about giving women an opportunity. Most women in the world still live in a fearful situation and 261 aims to help empower them. These six guys, and most guys who run, understand and support our goal of inclusion and equality."

Despite an inauspicious beginning, the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) early on realized the seriousness of women's desire to participate and the potential of their endurance. In 1972, five years after the 'Switzer Incident', the BAA welcomed women as official competitors, becoming the first major marathon to do so. This year, the Boston Athletic Association has continued its commitment to women's running by inviting the 261 Fearless team to participate in the 121<sup>st</sup> running of the Boston Marathon on April 17, 2017.

"There is only one 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in our lives and this is a race that changed all of us," said Switzer, now 70. "I'm training hard, and I'm buoyed by the spirit of this wonderful team. But this race is not going to be about finishing time; it's about celebration, inclusion and gratitude. I'm running to say thanks to a race, a city, and thousands of wonderful people who have done so much to give strength and self-esteem to women."

For more information about 261 Fearless, Inc. please visit [www.261fearless.org](http://www.261fearless.org) . To view the 261 Fearless Team running the 121<sup>st</sup> Boston Marathon or to make a donation, please visit <https://www.crowdrise.com/261fearlessboston2017/>

**About 261 Fearless, Inc.**

261 Fearless, Inc. is a global non-profit organization founded by pioneer runner, Kathrine Switzer. 261 Fearless uses running as a vehicle to empower and unite women globally through the creation of local clubs, education opportunities, communication platform, merchandising and events. Through these networking opportunities, 261 Fearless breaks down the barriers of geography and creates a global community for women runners of all abilities to support and talk to each other, encouraging healthy living and a positive sense of self and fearlessness. For more information please visit, [www.261fearless.org](http://www.261fearless.org).

**About Kathrine Switzer**

Iconic athlete, sports and social advocate, author, and Emmy award-winning television commentator, Kathrine Switzer was the first woman to officially enter and run the Boston Marathon. At that time, the race was considered a male-only event, but using her initials, Switzer managed to obtain an official bib, number 261. Mid-stride in the competition, an angry race director leapt from the press truck and attempted to pull Switzer from the race. In one of sport's most dramatic moments, Switzer's burly boyfriend bounced the official off the course, allowing Switzer to go on to finish. The photo of the incident became one of Time-Life's "100 Photos That Changed the World." Switzer ran the Boston Marathon 8 times and won the New York City Marathon in 1974. She has been honored widely for her achievements, most recently being inducted into the USA National Women's Hall of Fame for creating positive social change. The ramifications of this work is both joyful and profound, changing forever the face of sports, health, and opportunities for women around the world and fearlessly empowering millions beyond the finish line, through the non-profit 261 Fearless, Inc. For more information please visit, [www.marathonwoman.com](http://www.marathonwoman.com)

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