**Introduction**

Destination Races, based in Sonoma, California, is the pioneer producer of the Wine Country Half Marathon Series. Founded in 2004, the Wine Country Half Marathon Series consists of seven races across prestigious wine regions in North America. Offering unforgettable experiences on and off the course, including the popular post race wine and music festival, runners travel far and wide for these boutique destination races. The race series attracts elite runners as well as food and wine enthusiasts who share their common bond of running and celebration.

Having just completed its 11th year, Napa-to-Sonoma is the flagship event in the Wine Country Half Marathon Series. The 13.1 mile course offers beautiful vistas of the Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Preserve, San Pablo Bay, and Mt. Tamalpais in Marin. The finish is a half mile stretch through downtown Sonoma to a throng of cheering spectators. In 2014 the race attracted 9,000 people from 50 states and 11 foreign countries to Sonoma Plaza on race morning.

**Problem**

By nature, running is one of the most sustainable modes of transportation: no gasoline, no tires, no oil, and no electrical charge. Yet while many races are created with the intention to enjoy and celebrate the beautiful outdoors, marathons and similar sporting events often have a negative environmental impact. The most obvious effect is the amount of waste generated. Thousands of plastic cups and bottles; countless packets of energizers; tickets, maps and coupons; medals and t-shirts all add up to a rather large footprint for major running events.

The New York City Marathon is the largest marathon in the world. In 2011, race officials handed out 237,200 free disposable plastic water bottles and 2,300,000 paper cups. This contributed to the more than 100 tons of litter and debris, six tons of paper, and nearly three tons of metal, glass and plastic collected by the New York City Department of Sanitation after the race.

Destination Races recognized the waste trailing behind its races and set out to improve their systems and reduce environmental impact at the Napa to Sonoma Race.
Solution

Destination Races made a concerted effort to reduce the event’s carbon footprint and make environmental strides by implementing green initiatives that reduced waste, reused resources, recycled materials, and composted both foodservice wares and food scraps. To accomplish this they recruited the services of Green Mary, a local waste management service specializing in zero waste events. Recycling, landfill, and composting stations were distributed along the race route and at the wine and music festival. A behind-the-scenes sorting station with dedicated staff guaranteed that items were distributed into the correct bins before being hauled to local facilities.

Destination Races chose World Centric’s certified compostable products to replace all the water bottles, coffee cups, paper plates, napkins, and plastic utensils that would typically be headed to the landfill.

“Destination Races reached out to World Centric because we have a shared goal of producing waste-free events and creating more awareness within our communities about how we can all reduce environmental impact,” says Destination Races’ Founder and Race Director, Matt Dockstader. “We are impressed with World Centric’s products, service and commitment.”

Conclusion

The success of the Napa to Sonoma Race has led Destination Races to adopt a new “Greening Mission” dedicated to further reducing the environmental impact caused by waste at their ever-growing events. This achievement in waste reduction is the result of collaboration between dedicated organizers, responsible waste management services, and sustainably made products. Working together we can continue to make strides in creating more sustainable events that celebrate the environment and protect it.