

Press Release

Prague, February 8, 2017

## Could a convict complete marathon training in the prison? Answer sought at the first Yellow Ribbon Prison Run training.

Can a criminal who is currently serving a sentence in prison complete a marathon? How can one train for a marathon while in prison? And what motivation might they have? Marian from the Kuřim Prison, and ex-convicts Milan and Marie are clear about: if they are persistent, and society engages to help them fit back in, they have a unique chance to start a new and a better chapter in their life. That is the reason they participate in the Yellow Ribbon Prison Run that advances public awareness and acceptance of reintegrating ex-offenders into society. Today, this trio is being trained along fellow prisoners and ex-convicts, as well as managers and politicians at the first official Yellow Ribbon Prague Run training of 2017.

The specific aim of the Yellow Ribbon Run project is to encourage employers in fighting prejudice, and to give ex-convicts a chance to work. Why is that so important? *"Once ex-offenders served their sentences, they find themselves back at the starting line. Giving them a chance to work is often the only chance for them to start a new chapter in their lives. Then it is only up to them to determine how persistent they will be in running to better their lives. But, if you run alongside them, you will show your support. Together, we turn second chances into first place,"* said Gabriela Slováková, director of the women's prison in Svetla nad Sazavou.

An idea to create the Yellow Ribbon Run came to Gabriela in 2011. At that time, she attended the run with a yellow ribbon in Singapore, where more than ten editions created several thousand working places for former prisoners. The concept of the project inspired Gábina, and since then she wished to organize a similar action in the Czech Republic. The event was organized for the first time in 2016.

The 2017 edition is co-organized with help from the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, the Business Leaders Forum platform, which associates socially responsible firms, the nonprofit organization Rubikon Centre, the Czech Probation and Mediation Service and RunCzech, the organizer of the most prestigious run in the Czech Republic – the Volkswagen Prague Marathon.

Races with a yellow ribbon - marathon, half marathon and relays - will be held in April, May and June under the auspices of three RunCzech races. Runners will wear

T-shirts decorated with a yellow ribbon aiming to draw attention to the problem of difficult employability of people released from prison.

*"Today, we are getting ready for the second edition of the Yellow Ribbon Run. It is attended by even more runners than in 2016. For me, this is a sign that we started a great and meaningful project that has a future. When you get thousands of people clipping yellow ribbons to their shirts, you are simply sending a clear message to the ex-convicts. You are telling them that they are welcomed back,"* said Carlo Capalbo, president of the RunCzech Organizing Committee.

The motto of the Yellow Ribbon Runs is, „*Run from prejudices!*“ It is very often a mere prejudice that ruins an ex-convict's prospect of getting a job. Last year, 10,271 people were released from Czech prisons. According to a survey conducted by the LMC Company, more than two-thirds of Czech companies require background checks when recruiting. Moreover, 55 percent of employers never employ people with a criminal record. The numbers say only a third of ex-offenders that are motivated to work succeed in securing a job.

Do you want to join us? What can you do? You can buy a registration and run with us during the spring in Prague, the heart of Europe. Just go over to [yellowribbon.cz](http://yellowribbon.cz). Or, if you have a business, you can become a race partner. Right now, the company Kostelec sausages, Inc. is our golden partner, silver partners include: Lion Products Ltd., LMC Ltd., Czech Forests Czech Republic and United Bakeries Inc. Bronze partners - Arriva Transport Czech Republic Inc., Hamerník Ltd. and Schindler CZ. There are also partners supporting individual runners like Haryservis, Jevišovice Agro Inc. and IP System Inc. The project is also supported by individual runners from the Ashoka Society and Helping Hands o.p.s. Lagardere is our partner for media.

The Yellow Ribbon Run is held under the auspices of the Czech Minister of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Public Defender of Rights.

### Highlights of the Yellow Ribbon Run 2017

- In 2017 Yellow Ribbon Run celebrates its **second anniversary**.
- This year the Yellow Ribbon Run will be included in two races of the **RunCzech Running League**. **Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon, held on April 1<sup>st</sup>** and **Volkswagen Prague Marathon, held on May 7<sup>th</sup>**. Most of the runners will be a part of the charity running event named **O2 Prague Relay 4x5, held on June 14<sup>th</sup>**, which is also organized by RunCzech.
- **In 2016**, when the Czech Republic held the first edition of the Yellow Ribbon Run, **32 runners** participated in the race wearing the yellow ribbon. Among them there were **five runners from prisons** and **three runners** that had already been released from prison.

- In 2017, the project will be supported by **856 runners**, **480 of them will run in the O2 Prague Relay 4x5** and **300 will run in the full marathon distance**. Currently there are participants registered from **19 countries**, such as France, Sweden, Denmark, Brazil, Thailand, Belarus, Israel or Kazakhstan.
- The interesting thing is that **among the runners and supporters** there are also people, who have become **victims of crime**.
- This year the project involves **20 out of 35 prisons** located in the Czech Republic.
- The entire **marathon distance of 42,195 km** within the Volkswagen Prague Marathon will have **six runners that were actually sentenced in jail** and **one former prisoner**.
- The **O2 Prague Relay 4x5** will include **13 prisoners**, **12 runners already released from prison** and **seven of them are clients of the non-profit organization RUBIKON Centre**.
- 10,000 hand-made yellow ribbons were made by prisoners in Světlá nad Sázavou women's prison.
- **90 employees of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic** will participate in various events during the year.
- Other supporters of the project, the **Probation and Mediation Service**, will be represented by a total of **sixty participants**. The other involved international organization created by **Prince Charles** called, the **Business Leaders Forum** will have two runners and from the RUBIKON Center they will have **12 employees participate**.

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