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The Heart Behind the Finish Line: How More Than 2,000 Volunteers Bring BSMF Events to Life

Big Sur Marathon Foundation

Jun 23, 2026



Volunteers from White Stag Leadership Development Program hand out strawberries donated from Driscoll's to boost runners up and over the hill at Mile 24.

CARMEL, Calif. – When you think of running an event like the Big Sur International Marathon, you typically think of the excitement of the race, the feeling of pushing your body to its maximum potential, the sense of accomplishment, and the community and

camaraderie. What you may not realize is that behind every memorable race experience are thousands of volunteers, community groups, sponsors, and supporters who make it all possible.

The Big Sur Marathon Foundation (BSMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is “to enrich and empower our community through charitable giving and to inspire a passion for healthy lifestyles by creating memorable running experiences.” As an organization rooted in service to the community, relationships with volunteers and volunteer groups are essential to fulfilling that mission.

Each year, more than 2,000 volunteers representing approximately 100 community groups help bring its events to life. These include the events of the **Big Sur International Marathon** weekend held in late April and the **Monterey Bay Half Marathon** in November. On race day, volunteers assist with aid stations, bus loading, medical support, gear check, finisher medallions and so much more. Pre-race volunteers help with start and finish set-up, participant shirt distribution, and packet pick-up.



Volunteers from the Central Coast Track Club, led by Coach Jon Powell, help to facilitate traffic and people moving during the race.

All volunteer groups receive a donation from BSMF as a thank you for their support. To date, the Big Sur Marathon Foundation has reinvested \$6.7 million into the community, including donations to its many volunteer groups, since being founded in 1986.

BSMF volunteers, however, are not limited to these specific volunteer groups. The Foundation’s 13 all-volunteer Board of Directors and its 80+ Events Committee members are key to all of the behind-the-scenes work that happens before, during, and after its events.



Above: BSMF Community Engagement Manager Betrand 'Coach B' Newson with Events Committee member, Rebecca Hernandez.

Right: Bill Burleigh Service Award-winner Frank Pinney and past BSMF Board Chair Hugo Ferlito.

“What inspires me most about the Big Sur International Marathon is the grassroots spirit of service that powers our event each year. In 2026, we celebrated record-breaking volunteer participation, bringing together a wonderful mix of legacy groups that have supported us for decades, new community organizations joining for the first time, and hundreds of individuals who simply wanted to give back,” says Betrand ‘Coach B’ Newson, BSMF Community Engagement Manager.

“Together, they represent the very best of Monterey County. Their passion and generosity create an unforgettable experience for runners from around the world.”

At this year’s BSIM, the second annual **Bill Burleigh Service Award** was presented to **Frank Pinney**, a retired

marine and early volunteer of the Big Sur Fire Brigade with 50 years of service (the last 17 as Chief) also recognized as the de facto "Mayor" of Big Sur played an incredibly important role in helping to convince local business owners –and the Monterey County Supervisors– to keep the road closed until 1PM to ensure runner and volunteer safety.



The Big Sur Marathon Foundation thrives off of community support and engagement. Volunteer Registration for the Monterey Bay Half Marathon events launches on July 1st. To volunteer or to make a donation to BSMF, please [click here](#).