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Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Honors Marla Runyan with the Kara MacDonald Aspire Award

BROOKLINE, MA – The Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI) has announced that Marla Runyan will receive the 2020 Kara MacDonald Aspire Award. The presentation will be presented at MABVI’s annual pre-marathon dinner for [Team With A Vision](#), MABVI’s international team of blind, visually impaired, and sighted runners. The event is being held virtually this year on Sunday, September 6, at 6:00 PM. [via Livestream](#).

The award was created to celebrate the life and work of the late Kara MacDonald, and her dedication to athletes with disabilities. Through her work with the Boston Athletic Association, Kara MacDonald was an early thought leader for, and valuable contributor to, athletes with disabilities, establishing policies and procedures that are in use today.

Marla Runyan is an American track and field athlete, road runner and marathon runner who is legally blind. Runyan was born in Santa Maria, California, and in 2000, captured the world's attention when she became the first legally blind American track & field athlete to qualify and compete for the United States Olympic Team. A 5-time Paralympic Gold Medalist and holder of numerous world records among visually impaired athletes, Marla won three consecutive USATF National Outdoor Track & Field Championship titles at 5000 meters, and 7 U.S. Road Championship titles. Marla made her second Olympic Team in 2004 and was the USATF National Marathon Champion in 2006. With a high jump personal record of 5 feet, 11 inches and a 5k best of 14 minutes, 59 seconds, Marla might very well be one of America's most versatile track & field athletes of all time. To date, she remains the only visually impaired U.S. athlete to qualify and compete in both the Paralympic and Olympic Games.

The Boston Athletic Association (B.A.A.) originally appointed Runyan as the organization’s first Athletes with Disabilities Manager, a role dedicated to the growing field of athletes with disabilities participating in all B.A.A. races and community service programming. In this role, Marla led a sea change in the division, now the Para Athletic Division, a first-of-its-kind competitive division for Para athletes in major marathon events. Her current title, B.A.A. Manager of Para Athletics and Adaptive Programs, reflects her leadership in bringing Para athletes into their own among racers, and making the Boston Marathon, the organization’s premier event, a platform for showcasing the achievements, and competition of elite and aspiring Para athletes.

“Marla has inspired athletes around the world with her performances, and her work to give Para athletes their rightful place at the starting line,” said Barbara Salisbury, CEO of Massachusetts

Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. “The Kara MacDonald award was created for people like her, who show others that with the proper tools and support, people who are visually impaired can do anything.”

Following tradition, Joe Walsh, President of Adaptive Sports New England., last year’s MacDonald Aspired Award recipient, will present this year’s award to Marla Runyan.

Sunday evenings event will celebrate a year of resiliency, community, health, and running. Hosted by Peter Sagal from NPR's *Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me!* and former Boston Marathon TWAV Guide. Special guest for the event, Ultra Marathoner, Mirna Valerio, "The Mirnavator", will share her very personal story of overcoming negative voices that say she does not belong. The evening will also feature many interviews with runners, volunteers, and supporters of Team With A Vision. **This free event [via Livestream](#) is Sunday, September 6, at 6:00 PM EST**

Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

The Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI) is the oldest social service organization in the country that serves adults and seniors who are blind or visually impaired. MABVI's dedicated staff provide high-impact, cost-effective services, including vision rehabilitation, adjustment to vision loss, peer lead support groups, and assistive technology training to those who are aging into vision loss. MABVI also partners with community and medical groups and grateful to hundreds of volunteers.

Team With A Vision

Team with A Vision is proud to be a part of the Boston Athletic Association Charity Program.

Team With A Vision has raised visibility and critical funds for the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired for over 25 years. Our international team is made up of Boston Qualified athletes in the Para Athletic Division and the Adaptive Programs, and Charity-bib runners. While some visually impaired runners have enough sight to run on their own, most are tethered to guides who provide verbal cueing along the course.

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