



Nicole Christenson (CENTER) is bringing rock-star appeal to an event that will attract some 30,000 participants.

evening of November 17, is Christenson's biggest project of the year, and she's been training for this job for a long time. An enthusiastic runner, she studied marketing at UNLV, graduating in 2011, but her love of a good spectacle goes back much further.

"I grew up obsessed with events and entertainment," she says. "All through college I worked around events and entertainment." This passion for putting on a show runs very much in the family: Her father, 1976 NCAA wrestling champ Pat Christenson, is president of Las Vegas Events and a luminary of local event planning.

Like father, like daughter: After college, when an opportunity came up with the San Diego-based Competitor Group, an industry leader in large-scale endurance events and owner of the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon franchise, it was, Christenson says, "a no-brainer." Kicking off in San Diego more than 15 years ago, the concept adds live music along the course and a post-race concert, creating a dynamic and fun event that's become wildly popular, spreading to dozens of cities around the world.

Including, of course, Las Vegas. It's Christenson's third year working the race and her first in the driver's seat. But what excites her more than pulling off a successful race, she says, is the chance to be responsible for an event that brings thousands of visitors to her hometown. "We're looking at over 30,000 runners this year," she says. "It's about 90 percent out of area. We bring people from all 50 states and more than 40 countries. It really does impact the city."

Before the runners hit the finish line, however, there are major hurdles to overcome. "The biggest challenge," says Christenson, "is also the greatest part of the race: shutting down one of the most famous streets in the world, and doing so at night. That challenge, I think, is not only working with the city; you're working

with all of the hotels—communication is important. "Last year I was at the finish line," she adds, "and I remember taking a second to look around, thinking, 'We did this.' Watching someone accomplish something they thought they'd never do, being a part of that and being able to do it in my home city, is really incredible." *The Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Las Vegas starts on November 17 at 4:30 PM at the Luxor Festival Lot; runrocknroll.com* **V**

INSIGHT

Favorite run: "Sunset Park, around the pond. It's the only place to run near water in the desert!"

Pre- (or post-) race splurge: "Serendipity 3 has desserts like no other. Comme Ça is by far my favorite restaurant in Las Vegas."

Marathon Woman

MARKETING PRO NICOLE CHRISTENSON IS HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING AS SHE PLANS THIS YEAR'S VEGAS EDITION OF THE ROCK 'N' ROLL MARATHON. BY DAVID LANDSEL

Years before Green Valley native Nicole Christenson became event manager of the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Las Vegas, she had it in her sights. "I am going to run that race," she recalls telling her family. And while she has yet to actually run the marathon, that's only because she's too busy, well, running it.

The Rock 'n' Roll Marathon, which will take over the Strip on the