

Mankato to have marathon next October

By Tim Krohn

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MANKATO — Mankato will be host to a marathon next fall, hoping to draw up to 1,000 runners and some additional funding for the visitor bureau's budget.

" It's very exciting. The people into running are really jazzed about it already," said Anna Thill, president of the Greater Mankato Growth Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The 26.2-mile route will likely start at the Minnesota State University campus, run along some of the bike trails, move through Sibley Park and end in the City Center.

" They'll make a route that avoids some of our treacherous hills," Thill said.

The Oct. 23 event will also include a half-marathon and a 10K run. An expo, pasta feed and Kids K event are planned for the night before.

Hy-Vee has signed on as the first major sponsor.

Thill said marathons are good events for communities because runners often bring family members, stay in

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MARATHON: Specific route not yet set

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town for a night or two and attract onlookers.

The CVB contracted with Final Stretch Inc. of Nerstrand to plan and manage the marathon.

"It took a long time to find the right race manager. Some of them take all the profits and leave little in the community, and some want you to pay all the upfront costs," Thill said.

Final Stretch will make money from some initial sponsorships and from the runners' fees, which have not yet been set. " We want the fees to be competitive with other races," Thill said. The CVB will make money from sponsorships, the expo and merchandise sales.

An inaugural marathon can be expected to draw 400 to 500 runners for both the marathon and half marathon, Thill said.

Rick Robbins, a Mankato professor and marathon runner, thinks a local marathon could do well.

" Some people like a smaller marathon than Grandma's or the Twin Cities."

And he thinks the river valley will make a nice route. " With all the bike trails and things, there could be some really scenic parts to it."

And while runners don't want steep hills, small hills are fine. " Your muscles get fatigued if it's all flat. If you have

some rolling hills, it helps."

The fall date was chosen to avoid the big spring marathons, including Grandma's in Duluth. The fall date will allow for cooler weather and will be one of the season's last chances for runners to qualify for the famed Boston Marathon.

The marathon will fill a void left when the Nature Valley Grand Prix organizers announced they will no longer hold an annual bike race in Mankato.

For more information, go to: www.mankatomarathon.com or contact the Greater Mankato Convention & Visitors Bureau at 385-6660.

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