

BANNER DAY

Marine to carry flag during Mankato Marathon

First-run marathon to draw a crowd

By Tanner Kent

tkent@mankatofreepress.com

Even before the inaugural Mankato Marathon begins on Oct. 23, organizers are already predicting an expanded event for year two.

This year's registration was capped at 2,000 runners. But with Mankato's run representing the last qualifying event for the famed Boston Marathon, the cap left more than a few latecomers disappointed.

"For a first-year marathon, (2,000 runners) is fantastic," said Jennifer Rath, marketing director for the Greater Mankato Convention and Visitors Bureau. "But we decided early on to cap it, and some people were upset because they couldn't run."

Anna Thill, president of the CVB, said the city expects upward of 4,000 to 5,000 out-of-town visitors for the marathon. Of the 2,000-plus registrants for the quartet of races — full marathon, relay marathon, half-marathon and 10K — Thill said only one-fourth are from Mankato and North Mankato.

The rest, she said, will be "eating out, staying at hotels, bringing their families and other spectators as well."

As for race day logistics, Rath said everything should be ready to go. (See race map on Page [A8](#) for more information.) Road closures along the

Please see [EVENT](#), Page [A8](#)



Pat Christman

Neil Schalk, a Purple Heart recipient and criminal justice major at Minnesota State University, will be running the Mankato Marathon while carrying an American flag. He is raising money for Marine Parents, a support organization for families of

Article Continued Below

[See EVENT on Page A08](#)

EVENT: Downtown traffic to be restricted

Continued from Page A1

route, she said, will be fairly minimal.

The race starts at 8 a.m.

on the Minnesota State University campus. The following streets will be closed from 7:55 a.m. to about 8:20 a.m.: Warren Street from Stadium Road to MSU's Lot 20 entrance, Stadium Road from Warren to Monks Avenue, and Monks from Stadium to County Road 90. Additionally, Front Street will be closed to only one lane for the entire race and several delays are expected along the route — especially at the crosswalks for the Red Jacket Trail and the stoplight at Riverfront Drive and Poplar Street (where runners pass twice during the race).

"If people want to avoid frustration, map out a way to avoid that intersection," Rath said.

The community, too, is preparing for marathon weekend.

At the Mankato Family YMCA, trainers have been working with a group of first-time distance runners to prepare for the race.

Fitness director Joy Leafblad said many in the group began training in April and have signed up for the full marathon.

"They've gone from zero to marathon and it's amazing," said Leafblad, who added the event has definitely generated increased interest in running: "A lot of our members are starting to run. It's been a real exciting year just to see how many people are giving it a try."

At the 14 local restaurants participating in the community-wide pasta feed, the rush is on to prepare kitchens for the feasting that takes place the night before marathons when runners load up on carbohydrates, typically by consuming large amounts of pasta.

In Mankato, \$10 tickets are available at the YMCA and are redeemable for a pasta meal at any of the participating restaurants.

At Pub 500, where the outdoor patio is expected to be a prime viewing point for the marathon's home stretch, operating partner Jay Reasner said spots will be open on a first-come, first-served basis.

At WowZone Family Entertainment Center, owner Pam DeMarce said she's already preparing for its pasta feed menu — a choice between spaghetti and chicken alfredo — as well as the kid-friendly activity zone it's sponsoring on race day at the Mankato Place Mall.

In partnership with the Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota and Minnesota All-Stars Challenge, several activities are planned for children between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., including two puppet shows, a build-your-own obstacle course, art stations and a toddler play area.

"It's all coming together fairly nicely," said Kristee Richards, special event coordinator for the Children's Museum.

Rath hopes individuals in the community are making their own preparations as well. She said she is encouraging fans, spectators and residents along the route to put up yard signs, cheer for runners, maybe even play some music or provide entertainment.

“Be a part of it,” she said. “It will be a lot of fun.”

Powered by [TECNAVIA](#)

Copyright 2010 Mankato Free Press