

700 runners coming to C.R. for NAIA races

Written by Jim Ecker

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Nearly 700 runners from 30 states will be descending upon Cedar Rapids this week for the NAIA national cross country meets at Seminole Valley Park.

The women's 5-kilometer race is set for Friday at 10:30 a.m., with the men's 8-kilometer event scheduled for 11:30.

Mount Mercy University is the host school and has received automatic berths in the championships, which feature 36 women's teams and 36 men's teams in each race along with nearly 200 individuals who qualified as at-large contestants.

Mount Mercy has been working with city officials and more than 100 community volunteers to stage the event. It's the first time the 63rd annual NAIA national meet has been held in Cedar Rapids and will bring an estimated \$500,000 economic boost to the local economy.

"It's quite an enterprise," said Jamie Jimison, the director of cross country and track at Mount Mercy. "There have been a lot of cogs in the machine that have helped this thing go."

Mount Mercy has a solid cross country program, among the best in the Heart of America Conference, and Jimison is confident the national meet will boost their program in terms of exposure, recruitment and a commitment to compete on a national level.

"Mount Mercy is a small school, but we have aspirations to do big things," he said. "I think this is a sign of what our goals are.

"It shows our commitment and dedication to continue to put a good product out there and make ourselves visible and do exciting things in the community."

