

# **For Parents: Q&A on the Manhattan Cross Country Club**

*By Pat Melgares, Head Coach*

## **Who is eligible for membership?**

Right now, we encourage youth in grades 8 and under, or homeschool youth who are not in a high school cross country program, to participate in our activities. Most of the meets that we are scheduled to participate in are for middle schoolers. However, we will have a three-week program in September for youth in grades 3-5, and the Manhattan Youth Cross Country Festival will be Sept. 24 for kids of all ages...and everyone who finishes gets a medal.

## **Is this only for Manhattan kids?**

Not at all. Any youth with an interest in running is welcome to join the team.

## **What distances will youth run in races?**

These will vary from one-quarter mile to 2 miles, depending on the meet. Kids who so choose to run after our official club season could go to some regional and national meets that run 3 miles for boys and girls. In practice, we will gradually work kids up based on their age and skill level.

## **Are youth required to have a sports physical?**

First of all, they SHOULD have a sports physical, to keep an update on general health. But it is not required to be a member of this club. I do encourage all families and youth to schedule a physical with their physician and discuss this activity with their doctor.

## **Will youth be separated into teams based on the school they attend?**

No. Everyone's a member of the Manhattan Cross Country Club. It's not important to me whether they're at a particular school or being homeschooled, except that I may need to know this information for verification purposes.

## **How often are races held?**

In 2005, it looks like five meets between Sept. 10 and Oct. 8. Depending on individual interest, additional opportunities – not necessarily paid for in the club membership – may be available, such as local road races. There also are state and regional meets (to qualify for national meets) sponsored by AAU and USA Track and Field, typically held in early November.

## **Where are the races?**

In 2005, we plan to go to Wamego, Manhattan, Rock Creek, Emporia and Riley. There is no organized team transportation. Parents will be responsible for driving youth to meets.

## **Where will practices be held?**

We practice three days a week (Monday-Tuesday-Thursday) at Northeast Community Park I prefer Northeast Community Park because there is better protection from roadways. Middle schoolers will practice from 5:45-6:45 p.m.; the younger runners will go from 5:15-5:45 p.m.

## **What is the entry fee?**

\$10 for each athlete. That covers entry to all meets, practices and team events -- such as a watermelon party, etc....that we may have after some practices. Some need-based scholarships may be available if the entry fee can't be covered by the individual.

**Are there club benefits that are included with the membership?**

First of all, we promise fun...lots of it! But we do also plan to offer membership cards that give you discounts at local businesses. Also, depending on our fundraising success, we will provide at least one t-shirt to all youth. We have weekly “treat nights”, and also plan “scavenger hunt” runs and other fun activities. The club pays entry fees for all youth into club-scheduled races.

**What if my daughter or son has other activities that conflict with practices or meets?**

We don't mind if you can make practice only on certain days. It's up to you, but please communicate with the coaching staff about days you think you can make it. The more you show up, obviously, the more your daughter or son will benefit in terms of developing an interest in running. We think our practices are a lot of fun, and they'll want to come!

**The membership cost (\$10) is pretty low. How are you able to fund this program?**

We approach Manhattan-area businesses for donations, and we have ongoing fundraising efforts. Currently, we sell Panera Bread Coupon Strips; Gatorade; and Bottled Water. Also, we have club software which we use to support local road races, and are paid a fee in return for our services. And we are a co-sponsor of the annual St. Patrick's Day Road Races in Aggieville, from which we receive a portion of the race proceeds. In 2005, the club plans to host the first-ever Manhattan Youth Cross Country Festival, which may turn out to be a modest fundraiser, as well.

**For more information:**

Pat Melgares; work -- 532-1160; home -- 770-9530  
melgares@oznet.ksu.edu

