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FarmAid III Festival plans shaping up

By Chris McCubbin

FarmAid III, after just one week of ticket sales, is sold out. The city of Lincoln is determined that the Sept. 19 concert will be a big success for more than distressed farm families.

According to Deane Finnegan, Lincoln coordinator for the event, the city plans to turn FarmAid into a longweekend festival.

The almost 30-member steering committee has met only twice, but already many events are tentatively scheduled,

The FarmAid weekend will kick-off Thursday night with a parade, Finnegan said. The opening ceremonies, to take place in the Haymarket, will probably include a Willie Nelson lookalike contest and a musical performance by Lincoln Mayor Bill Harris and three of his brothers, she said.

his brothers, she said.

Later Thursday there will be a "battle of the bands" contest. Depending on the number of contestants, separate prizes may be given for rock and country acts, Finnegan said.

Food vendors, artists and crafts, informational displays and street musicians will be in the Haymarket throughout the festival. Finnegan said

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plans are in the works to make the Haymarket a pedestrians-only district for the festival.

Stan Herd, a crop artist, will turn two fields into works of art in honor of FarmAid. He will plant the fields with different sorts of seeds which will grow into living pictures.

Finnegan said all money-making events are being encouraged to donate a portion of their proceeds to farm

On Friday there will be a series of street dances in the Haymarket, sponsored by different local organizations. Proposed events include a chili feed and country dance, a polka dance with a beer garden, a classical concert with wine, and a concert of Hispanic music. Alcohol will be available in designated areas by coupon.

Other proposed Friday events include a benefit auction and an ice cream

There are few events scheduled for Saturday other than the concert itself, which will run from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Finnegan said there may be an early-morning pancake feed for concert-goers and the Goodyear Blimp may be in town for the concert.

Confirmed performers for the concert include: Bon Jovi, Neil Young, John Mellencamp, Merle Haggard, Kris Kristofferson, Emmy Lou Harris, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Roger McGuinn, Joe Walsh, The Unforgiven, John Denver, The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Asleep at the Wheel, Steve Earle, The Bellamy Brothers, Delbert McClinton, Lynn Anderson, Lyle Lovett, Johnny Rodriquez and David Lynn Jones. More acts are expected to confirm this week.

Saturday night there will be a presidential candidate forum at Pershing Auditorium. Two candidates so far have confirmed they will be at the forum.

"That's the fun part . . ." Finnegan the farm economy.

said of the special events. But "we're also thinking how we can get in enough porta-potties."

Finnegan said that other concerns include providing adequate campground space and arranging extra bus

Finnegan dismisses the idea that the fast sellout of concert tickets in Nebraska will reduce the event's impact on tourism. Finnegan said she knows of people from California and South Carolina who plan to attend. She also said that as of last week only a handful of local hotel rooms remained available for the FarmAid weekend.

Security concerns include protecting nationally-known performers at hotels, the airport and on the streets, Finnegan said

Regent Robert Koefoot expressed a concern a few weeks ago that FarmAid will be an occasion for illegal alcohol and drug use. Finnegan said limiting such activities is a major security priority. Last week Lincoln Police Chief B. Dean Leitner traveled to Champaign/Urbana, Illinois, the site of the first FarmAid concert, to see what sort of emergency medical and security situations arose during the first concert.

Alcohol will not be allowed in Memorial Stadium. Concertgoers will be allowed to bring small coolers to the show, but coolers will be searched upon admission. Any alcohol will be thrown away at the gate.

Finnegan said the concert's benefits will extend far beyond the agricultural crisis.

"It's exciting to see so many community organizations coming together," she said. The FarmAid event shows the connection between Lncoln and rural Nebraska, she said.

Finnegan said that as the festival plans progress the city intends to insure that the event's focus stays on the farm economy.



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