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The Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia

Julianna's Hike began on Aug. 17th, 2003 on a steamy afternoon in Springer Mountain, Ga. In our initial foray on the famed Appalachian Trail we hiked a negligible 2.5 miles. In retrospect, we were really bad hikers overmatched by the challenge we committed to endure. Hiking the entire 2,200 mile trail seemed an improbable dream.



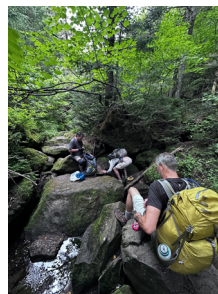
I have been told you will always enjoy great success if you find something you love to do. Unfortunately, this philosophy was never getting us to Maine since Julianna's hikers don't like hiking. Fortunately, after 22 attempts, I realize you don't need to love what you do to find success. You can move mountains (or climb them!) if you do something because you love.

This journey has always revolved around love. Love is why we endure. My love for Julianna together with the love of my friends who dared to start this quest with me. Jeff Price, Dave Guyer and Murphy Barton have made this two-decade marathon the greatest success in the world...one miserable step at a time.

Our quarter-century-plus effort will continue in 2026 in Southern Maine -- commonly known as the hardest section of the AT (with the White Mountains a close second). We have completed 13 states. Maine, our final state, will require hiking 282 rocky miles.

In 2025, we knew Northern New Hampshire/Southern Maine was going to be a major challenge, so we planned a modest 60-mile goal over 8 days. We took our first step on Stony Brook Trail, which led us back to the Appalachian Trail (2.6 miles straight up). I cursed Stony Brook in the months prior to our hike as nothing is worse than climbing a steep rock-strewn overgrown trail to get to another steep rock-strewn trail (the AT). Fortunately, we were treated to decent weather this first day and hit a major milestone when we crossed our 1,900th mile on the AT.

The rest of the week can be described in three words... brutal, stupid and cold. The epitome of brutal was Mahoosuc Notch, "the hardest mile on the AT" -- three hours to traverse a canyon littered with giant boulders and moss. The epitome of stupid was when our water pump broke down and we had no backup. We had carried a backup every year except 2025 as everybody was stripping weight to deal with this section of the trail. With no water, we hiked back down the mountain 3 miles to a dirt road to get a replacement pump. That day was gone. Day 4 was a scratch for stupidity. Lastly, I cannot begin to describe how cold we were each morning, afternoon and night. Our theme of packing light haunted us each day as we eliminated much of our cold weather gear. When we stopped to break, we froze. When we went to bed, we froze despite wearing every stitch of clothing in our bag. The worst was getting out of the sleeping bag in the morning, which felt like jumping into an ice bath.



Although the White Mountains had greater elevation, Southern Maine was far worse. The boulders and uneven terrain required more technical rock climbing skills than hiking prowess. Our hiking poles proved useless. The best part of this week was just getting through it. Although we covered only a meager 50 miles, I view 2025 as a huge success...mostly because we have the Mahoosuc Notch and 35 miles of Southern Maine in the rearview mirror.

In 2026, we will be hiking through the heart of Southern Maine again with a goal of 70 miles over 8 days. I am not sure this is realistic, but we do need to chew up miles if we plan to reach Katahdin this decade.

The hike brings pain and joy. The pain comes from the physical strains our bodies endure and the intense feeling of loss I relive each year for a 3-year-old child I have not hugged or seen in 25 years. My joy comes from the love I feel in my heart for Julianna and the ability to appreciate this journey

amid unrivaled beauty, ruggedness and friendship.

This hike remains a painful, but meaningful part of all of our lives. We are determined more than ever to finish together. Although Julianna was the impetus to start this journey, each of us has endured tragedy and the pain of the sudden loss of love. The hike is evolving, but the core purpose remains the same for all of us. We hike to gain perspective, give love and find peace.



We will begin our 23rd hike on **August 28** on East B Hill Road, near Andover, Maine and finish 69.5 miles later at the Stratton Brook Pond Road near Stratton. We hope to have hiked 2,010 miles, 91.5% of the Appalachian Trail.

We will also give generously. Since 2003, we have raised and donated over \$1,900,000 to share the love so many people provided us when we needed it most. 100% of the money raised goes to organizations that support grieving, ill and needy children. The largest beneficiaries continue to be **Uplift Center for Grieving Children** and the **Breathing Room Foundation**. Uplift supports children and families who have experienced a tragic loss and do not have the means to pay for counseling, allowing kids to channel grief correctly and giving them a feeling of hope and community. The Breathing Room Foundation supports families living with cancer, helping them live a more stable life. We also support the **Take A Breather Foundation**, which grants wishes to children living with cystic fibrosis.

We want to thank everyone who has shown interest and sponsored us in this Hike for Jules. You have all helped us heal and, more importantly, helped keep Julianna's love alive.