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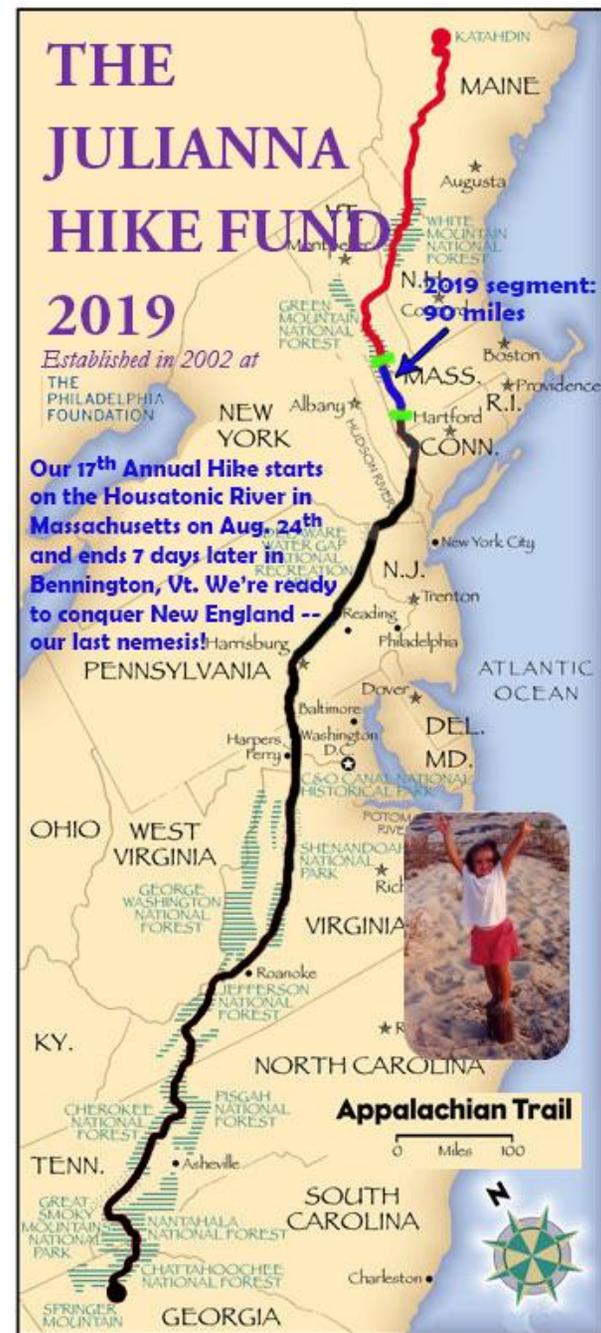
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The Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia

Julianna's Hike began August 17<sup>th</sup>, 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. To say we were unprepared for this adventure does not give justice to the word unprepared. In retrospect, we were really bad hikers overmatched by the challenge we committed to endure: hiking the entire 2,191-mile trail seemed an improbable dream.

I have been told you will enjoy great success if you find something you love to do. Unfortunately, this philosophy was never going to get us to Maine since Julianna's hikers don't really like hiking. Fortunately, after 16 attempts, I now 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's core has always revolved around love. Love is why we endure. My love for Julianna, plus the love of my friends who dared to start this quest with me -- Jeff Price, Dave Guyer and Murphy Barton -- have made this decades-long marathon the greatest success in the world...one miserable step at a time. Misery must be contagious as new friends have joined us: Dave Lafferty, Matt Lynch, Dan Castaldi, John Rogers, and Joe Innes.



When we end this year in Vermont we will have completed 11 states – Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

Last year's hike with its never-ending rocks and climbs was another doozy. Although we traveled almost 94 miles, the most valuable team member was the Zinger, our RV that followed and comforted us during the week. I am embarrassed that we ate hamburgers and drank cold refreshments after each hiking day, but I am alone in this feeling. I now believe that Barfy, Streek, Giggles, Tuba, Mateo, and Ricky Bobby would not go on without it.

They are acting like millennials, not the hardy baby boomers that they are.

Every year brings a new challenge. After Day 3, I was so overwhelmed with exhaustion I forgot my password on my phone/camera. I kept inputting the wrong code and Apple eventually wiped it clean including all the photos taken to date.

Still, we reached 1,500 miles on the AT. Connecticut, with bountiful views and bubbling waterfalls, was the most alluring state. John "Ricky Bobby" Rogers in his second year absorbed the torment of the trail when he noted, "The mountain just seems to grow as I climb."

2019 promises to be memorable as well for the same incorrigible nine-man team. We'll hike 74.6 miles through the rest of Massachusetts and summit Mt. Greylock, at 3,491' our steepest elevation in seven years and the highest point in the state. We are back to the high Appalachians with several 2,000+' climbs, a harbinger of our home stretch through Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Massachusetts will also give us a taste of history as we walk through the historic towns of Dalton and Cheshire, settled in 1755 and 1766. We'll also be near Beckett, founded over 300 years ago and the home of the Cookie Lady who provides homemade cookies for hungry hikers. This will be more appealing to this squad than any AT trail hike!

As many of you can attest, as you get older your talk becomes focused on food and your health. We're all older now and the sands of time have turned us into our parents. Our conversations go like this: "What's for dinner? Anything but hamburgers!" Or, "Holy crap, my hip is killing me – got any Advil?" We've already had one joint replacement on the team, with several more slated over the next few years. Thank God we haven't lost our sanity yet... maybe.

Though my partners are halfwits, the hike remains a meaningful part of my life. Although Julianna was the impetus for this journey, each of us has endured tragedy and the pain of sudden loss of love. The hike evolves, but the core purpose remains the same for all of us. We hike to gain perspective, give love and find peace.

We'll begin at the Housatonic River, Mass., and finish 90 miles later on Route 9 in Bennington, Vt. After 17 years we will have completed 1,613 miles – 73.6% of the AT. I can't wait to conquer New England – our last nemesis.



We will also give generously. Since 2003, we have raised and donated over \$1,300,000 to share the love so many people provided us when we needed it most. True to our mission, 100% of the money raised goes to organizations that support grieving, ill and needy children. The largest beneficiaries continue to be the **Center for Grieving Children, Teens and Families** and the **Breathing Room Foundation**. The Center supports children and families who have experienced tragic loss and cannot afford counseling. Many of these kids experience severe personal trauma which often leads to self-destructive depression, drug use, giving up, or a recurring feeling that no one cares. The Center allows children to channel their grief and gives them a feeling of hope and community. The Foundation helps families living with cancer to live more stable lives in the face of disease. We also support the **Take A Breather Foundation**, which grants wishes to children living with cystic fibrosis.



**Our 17<sup>th</sup> annual hike will begin on August 24<sup>th</sup> and end August 30<sup>st</sup>, 2019.** Although the hike is arduous it pales in comparison to the struggle many of the families we support face on a daily basis.

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.