

From: cathy scott [scottcathy4@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2013 1:13 PM
To: Zenaide Swenson

Hudson native hikes AT to raise money to fight bone marrow cancer

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Photos



John Koning, at right, is hiking the Appalachian Trail to raise money for Andrew's Helpful Hands, which was organized by Zenaide Swenson, left. Contributed photo.

Events Calendar

By Jeff Malachowski/Daily News staff

[The MetroWest Daily News](#)

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HUDSON —

With each step John Koning takes on his 2,180-mile hike from Georgia to Maine along the Appalachian Trail, the financial burden on families with children fighting bone marrow cancer eases.

An avid hiker, Koning, 21, decided to hike the AT and after talking with his friends about the trip, he chose to use his love of hiking to raise money for a local charity.

After researching several causes, Koning chose Hudson's Andrew's Helpful Hands, which was organized by Zenaide Swenson in memory of her son Andrew and pays the mortgages of families with children undergoing bone marrow cancer treatment.

"I really like what her charity is all about," Koning said while taking a break from hiking in northeast Tennessee.

Koning receives pledges for each mile he will hike on the six-month journey and he has already raised more than \$4,000.

With just a backpack filled with supplies, dehydrated meals and an iPod, Koning started his hike in March and is now in northeast Tennessee. All along the trail, hikers drop supplies and other trinkets, such as footballs, in bins for other hikers to use.

"I live with anything out of my backpack," said Koning, who sleeps in a tent or in shelters along the trail.

A typical day of hiking ranges from three miles to 22 miles depending on the weather and what sight-seeing destinations lay ahead, said Koning.

"It depends on who you see and what you see," he said.

Koning has met several fellow hikers from across the country and often spends a few days hanging out with them before moving along the trail.

While hiking is Koning's main focus, he has spent several days exploring events off the trail, such as taking in a bluegrass festival in east Tennessee.

"If you hike all day, every day, you're not experiencing everything," he said. "You just take your pack off and hang out all day."

Since embarking on his journey, Koning's favorite experiences have been hiking in Tennessee's Smoky Mountains and meeting other hikers, but he expects more adventures and hopefully donations for Andrew's Helpful Hands to await him along the trail.

"It's just a different experience," said Koning. "It's pretty cool."

For information on Andrew's Helpful Hands visit www.andrewhelpfulhands.com.

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Read more: <http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/x715756042/Hudson-native-hikes-AT-to-raise-money-to-fight-bone-marrow-cancer#ixzz2UhcSojk5>

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