



Walk for Health

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Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers to Be Honored at Museum Opening on June 5 - PR Urgent

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Appalachian Trail Thru-Hikers to Be Honored at Museum Opening on June 5 PR Urgent Hikers who have hiked the 2179 miles of the Appalachian Trail end-to-end will be honored at the opening of the Appalachian Trail Museum on June 5. ...

GARDNERS, PENNSYLVANIA -- Covering 2,179 miles on foot, over often rugged mountainous terrain that crossed 14 states from Georgia to Maine, takes about six months. When completed, those who succeed are known as Appalachian Trail thru-hikers.

Officials at the Appalachian Trail Museum Society estimate that roughly 10,000 people have thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail since it was opened in 1937. The first was York, Pennsylvania, native Earl Shaffer who hiked it end-to-end in 1948. He thru-hiked it again in 1965 and 1998.

When the Appalachian Trail Museum opens on Saturday, June 5, at 11 a.m., Shaffer will be honored along with Gene Espy, the second thru-hiker, who is still in possession of the gear he used during his hike in 1951, Grandma Gatewood, who, in 1955 at the age of 67, became the first solo woman thru-hiker and later became the first person to hike the trail more than once, and Ed Garvey of Falls Church, Virginia, who popularized long distance backpacking in the 1970s.

"It is only appropriate that we are opening the museum and honoring thru-hikers on National Trails Day," said Larry Luxenberg who thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail in 1980 and then wrote *Walking the Appalachian Trail*. He also is president and founder of the Appalachian Trail Museum Society -- the not-for-profit organization that was formed in 2002 to establish a museum to honor the thousands of men, women and families who hike and maintain the trail. "Every thru-hiker is invited to attend the opening, and we hope they will."

Part of the museum will be a hiker welcome center for current thru-hikers. Here, Luxenberg said museum visitors and hikers can interact. "Thru-hikers are fascinating, and to be able to ask about their experiences at roughly the mid-way point of the trail will be a unique opportunity," he added. The official midpoint of the Appalachian Trail is located two miles west of the museum in Michaux State Forest.

Like at shelters and other locations along the Appalachian Trail, there will be a permanent thru-hiker trail register in the Hiker Center. This is where thru-hikers can record their progress, make notes and leave messages. Registers from the past that will be on display in the museum will provide a glimpse into everyday life on the trail. A special museum opening-day thru-hiker register will be in the Hiker Center, along with a commemorative poster for all visitors to sign.

Also in the Hiker Center, there will be an ongoing slideshow presentation featuring digitized photos of Appalachian Trail hikers. Nearly 13,000 images of signed and annotated Polaroid photographs representing approximately 18,600 individuals are being incorporated into a searchable online database that will be hosted by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy website (www.appalachiantrail.org). The project to scan and preserve the original photographs and make them available via the web was funded by the Quimby Family Foundation of Portland, Maine. Terry Harley-Wilson, vice president of the Appalachian Trail Museum Society and organizer of the photo display, said the pictures were taken over the past 30 years of Appalachian Trail hikers as they stopped at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy headquarters in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Located in Pine Grove Furnace State Park near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the Appalachian Trail Museum will be in a 200-year old grist mill that is being restored to house exhibits and other museum attractions. The museum's board of directors is working with volunteers nationwide, architects, display designers, historians and donors to prepare the building for the June 5 opening.

Information about how to support the Appalachian Trail Museum is available at www.atmuseum.org.

About the Appalachian Trail Museum Society

The Appalachian Trail Museum Society, a 501-C-3 not-for-profit organization formed in 2002, is organizing volunteers and fundraising nationwide to establish the Appalachian Trail Museum as a tribute to the thousands of men, women and families who have hiked and maintained the 2,179 mile long hiking trail that passes through 14 states from Maine to Georgia. The museum is located in the Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Gardners, Pennsylvania, approximately 15 miles west of Gettysburg. Additional information is available at www.atmuseum.org.