

One step at a time

John Hopf will hike 2,000 miles for a reason

by Liz Rhodebeck

Hiking the 2,175-mile-long Appalachian Trail begins with one step, plus about five million more. And that's just what John Hopf of Delafield will do this spring to bring attention to a serious worldwide need: clean drinking water.

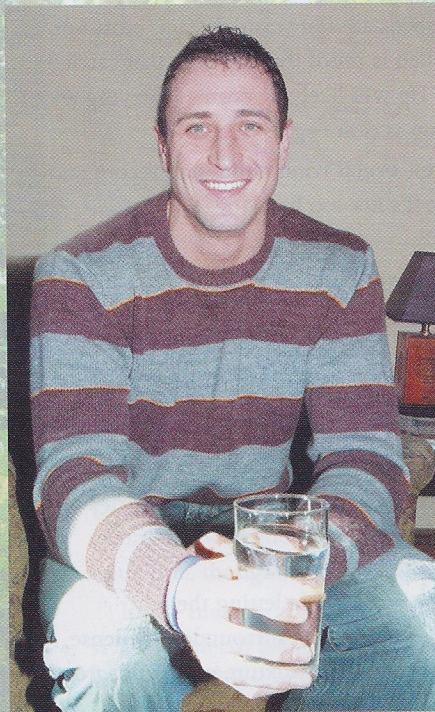
An active outdoorsman who enjoys camping, white-water rafting and mountain biking, Hopf wanted to try something different. "I wanted to get away and push myself – to do something hard and challenging," he says. Thus, he came up with the idea of hiking the Appalachian Trail, as he'd never done a long-term hike.

He also knew he wanted to do it as a fundraiser for a larger cause. He researched different ideas, but nothing clicked until he talked it over with fellow Rotarian Randy Otto, who suggested the water project.

"This was it," says Hopf. "Water is foundational to life; it made sense." The Oconomowoc Rotary Club has agreed to be Hopf's main support for the altruistic trek, which he has dubbed Hike4Water.

Seeking balance

Getting to this point was a personal journey for this 6'8" young man. Athletically talented, Hopf was a three-year starter in basketball for Winona State University, where he



MIKE SCHIRMER

John Hopf will spend five months hiking to raise awareness of the worldwide need for clean drinking water.

was named Defensive Player of the Year. He went on to get an MBA from St. Cloud State University, and had easily worked his way up the corporate ladder in the fitness industry.

But he came to feel that there had to be more to life than making money.

"I visited some friends in Colorado, and they had the attitude that you work in order to enjoy life; I had lost that balance in my life," says Hopf. "My faith also has a big piece of this; it's why I want to help people," he continues.

Clean water

To "get his feet wet," Hopf spent time this winter learning to use the HydrAid BioSand Water Filter, a compact device with nonmoving parts that can purify about 75 gallons of water a day for a family of eight to 10. (By comparison, each American uses about 100 gallons a day, mostly for bathing.)

He planned to join Hearts in Motion, a medical mission team, on a trip to Guatemala to teach the population how to use the filtration systems.

"Many health problems can be eliminated by having clean drinking water, such as the BioSand filters provide," says Hopf.

According to the Web site for HydrAid, which is made by International Aid, unsafe drinking water kills more people annually than AIDS and cancer combined. The basic 8-pound filter costs about \$32; a complete kit with sand and installation materials is about \$75.

Man with a plan

Hopf will begin his hike at the southern end of the Appalachian Trail at Springer Mountain, GA, on March 22, which is World Water Day. He will carry only 15 pounds of basic equipment (tent, sleeping bag, cook stove), plus a week's supply of food and

water. There will

Unsafe drinking water kills more people annually than AIDS and cancer combined.

be opportunities along the trail to go into town to buy more supplies, and to switch into fresh clothing at checkpoints.

"Buying some of my equipment was a bit of a challenge due to my height," Hopf comments. "It was hard to find long enough hiking poles, and I'll have to

use a two-man tent and sleep crosswise in it."

But all in all, he's looking forward to the experience, which should take about five months to complete, ending in Maine. Only about 20 percent of people who attempt to hike the full Appalachian Trail successfully complete it each year.

"Most hikers also get a little 'trail magic' along the way," explains Hopf. "People who live along the trail are very kind and helpful to hikers, sometimes leaving fresh fruit or treats or even taking in the sick or injured hiker."

Living in the moment

Hopf hopes to set up speaking engagements with Rotary Clubs, churches and other organizations along the route to talk about the need for clean drinking water around the world and to continue to raise funds for international water

JOIN THE VIRTUAL JOURNEY

To follow Hopf's progress along



the Appalachian Trail or to contribute to the project, check his Web site at www.hike4water.org

projects. His goal is to raise \$100,000, which will be used to purchase portable water filters and to construct water projects in Guatemala and Tanzania.

Hopf's plans after hiking the Appalachian Trail are undecided. "If you try to predetermine life, you may make a mistake," he says. "I'll see where I feel led. I know that Hike4Water is the right thing for me to do now." 🏔️

We will help you Express Who You Truly Are



Come visit our gallery of fine, custom handcrafted jewelry as well as some of Lake Country's most captivating art photography

Jewelry Repairs

Steven Paul
DESIGNS

Where it's all about you.

700 A Genesee St., Delafield
262.646.3310

Mon.-Fri. 9 am-6 pm, Sat. 10 am-5 pm, Sun. Closed
Available by appointment anytime
www.stevenpauldesigns.com

3272539

An Invitation



You're invited to easy living at Pine Terrace Condominiums. Includes Fowler Lake access with private beach, pier and gazebo. Close to charming downtown Oconomowoc. You could wake up to spring in this comfortable lake country haven. Only two-bedroom condo available.

Carol O. Manegold

PINE TERRACE Oconomowoc

Bringing the best ... home to you!

Carol O. Manegold

~ Lakes & Country ~

262-797-7600 x1348

cmanegold@firstweber.com

www.carolomanegold.firstweber.com



2750-A Golf Road
Delafield, WI

3272542