

Ex-DJ at WNKU hikes for a cause

By Howard McEwen • Enquirer contributor • August 7, 2010

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS - Forrest Griffen says the conditions are perfect for a hiatus to hike the Appalachian Trail - he is fit and healthy, not married, has no kids, doesn't own a home, is not locked into a lucrative career and has almost no debt.

The recently resigned morning DJ at WNKU has sold most of his belongings and moved from a three-bedroom, two-bath house with a garage to a 500-square-foot apartment.

So the stage is set for Griffen, 39, to spend six months on the 2,179-mile trail. He will start at Maine's Baxter Peak on Mount Katahdin and end at Springer Mountain in northern Georgia.

"I am at a point in my life when I can, and I am very grateful for that freedom," said Griffen. "I want to take advantage of it. I don't want to look back on this time in 20 years and wonder 'what if?'"

"What I think is part of Appalachia's undeniable appeal is its extraordinary ancient mountain range," he said. "The fact that it is one of the most biologically diverse regions in the country; the beautiful mix of hardwood trees, wildflowers, mountain balds, wild creatures great and small."

In doing his walk, Griffen hopes to raise money and awareness for Appalachian Voices, a non-profit organization that helped create iLoveMountains.org to fight mountaintop removal.

Griffen will provide regular updates through the organization's website at <http://appvoices.org/following-forrest>.

"I want to live like I've never lived before," he said. "I want to share that experience with anyone and everyone who will hear it. I want to broaden the awareness of the scourge of mountaintop removal mining, and in so doing, hopefully help to stop it."

Griffen said only about 500 people have hiked the complete trail southward. Over 10,000 have hiked the more traditional direction of northward.

"South-borders have a more solitary hiking experience," he said. "I don't mind that at all. I'm looking forward to it. I am hiking southbound mostly due to timing. Now is when I can hike. I don't want to start a hike in Georgia in August just as much as I don't want to finish a hike in Maine in February."

To complete the hike in the six months he's allotted himself, Griffen needs to average 12 miles a day, but figures he'll do approximately 14.

"I am purposely not planning every day, and every mile and every stop in town," he said. "This will be the experience of a lifetime. I don't want to schedule every mile of it. I want the freedom to stop and enjoy a vista, or an interesting town,

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