

Living large with Parkinson's/ hiking the Pacific Crest Trail

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Background: Parkinson's can feel like an incremental yet accelerating loss of participation and dreams. Living large in the world and tackling these limitations in the body and mind created the idea to hike a beautiful and demanding section in Washington State on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). The PCT is recognized around the world as an icon of bold and spectacular hiking extending from Mexico to Canada. It symbolizes a challenge requiring strength and courage to dream BIG. Soloing this dream was not an option for one dealing with the advancements of Parkinson's. Sharing a common desire and overcoming adversity together with a community of Parkinson's (PD) folks and other support people became the objective.

Objectives: There are several objective layers to the hike. The physical challenge is to hike 72 miles from Stevens to Snoqualmie Pass on the PCT in the Cascade Mountains as a team of Parkinson's folks and support hikers. We are also increasing awareness of PD through community and organizational outreach by utilizing our website as well as individual communication within our networks. And, through our efforts we are encouraging fundraising opportunities in support of such organizations as APDA, TEAMFOX and others.

Methods: For awareness and fundraising our broad outreach continues months before the actual hike in Aug. 20th - 28th, 2016. Our website; www.passtopass.org provides a platform for explaining our goals while individual communication continues within our various professional and personal communities.

The physical challenge of the hike in wild and remote terrain with roughly 18,000' elevation gain requires additional support by adding pack animals. Every Parkinson's hiker will have 1 support person for a 1 to 1 ratio of hikers with a maximum of 12 folks. We will hike roughly 9+ miles per day for 8 days with an avg. 2250' elevation gain per day. We will practice 'leave no trace' camping.

Results: Everyone completing the hike with no major injuries or issues is defined as a success. Certainly increasing much needed funding support to help Parkinson's organizations committed to finding a cure or easing the burden is a success. Finally, increasing awareness around the issues of Parkinson's is defended as a success. Perhaps a deeper measure of success, though less tangible, is taken step-by-step. It is the individual's powerful inner courage and determination to say YES to living LARGE and WELL with Parkinson's which offers an example for others.