

*Thanks for your prayers...
BENCHMARK'S
Appalachian Trail Outreach
April 2-7, 2008*

So many memories... it has taken me a couple of days to process this trip. Thank you for praying for us. It was a rewarding experience. This space won't begin to contain all that I'd like to share.

Our ministry team included Kinley Winchester and his oldest daughter Karoline, my oldest son Christopher and I. Our 'Service Crew' picked up trash around 10 trail shelters and placed Bibles in each of them. These shelters were as far away as 4.4 miles or as close as .9 mile to the nearest road.

We encountered responses all along any continuum you'd like to choose. On one occasion there were two brothers in Christ who came out of the woods. We asked them our normal question, "Would you like an apple?" "Yes, we would!" they accepted, and once they saw our banner, their comment was, "This is ministry!!"

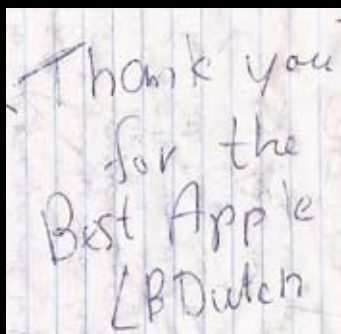
Along the way we experienced the joy of divine appointments. So there I sat, cooking breakfast one morning while listening to the heartache of a hiker who calls herself "You Go Girl." Often hikers on the AT choose a descriptive or humorous name for themselves while on the trail. She took on this name because when she had told her friends she was going to hike the Appalachian Trail, her friends responded with "You go girl!" She shared with us how she had cared for her husband for 17 years as he struggled with failing kidneys and then suffered a difficult death in hospice some four years ago. She communicated her deep love and the significant loss of her husband, the panic attacks she has developed and the hurt she still carries. "I just can't get over it", she said. With the group as she shared was another hiker known as "Sweaty Hog." He asked if we could pray and led us in the commonly called "Lord's Prayer" before leaving us to begin his day's journey. After he left, she and I talked a while longer. She literally cried on my shoulder as I prayed for her again before she hit the trail for the day.

Another meeting brought thankfulness from an older man who was hiking the Eastern Continental Trail, which uses the AT as a portion. He began his hike in Key West, FL and was now approaching the southern end of the AT at Springer Mountain in northern Georgia. That simple apple was simply appreciated.

For those who prayed, I am thankful. For those who decided to help fund this outreach by purchasing water, or apples, or bread or just sending a check to help (even one from the other end of the earth!), I am thankful. As "Sweaty Hog" reminded me, we never go alone... and sometimes other people join us.



Our reception area at Three Forks & the AT.



Simple Appreciation

We shared:

- 100 apples
- 52 - 8oz bottles of water
- 3 PowerBars
- 10 loaves of bread
- 10 Bibles at ten AT Shelters
- Our lives



The Appalachian Trail

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