

From: Gene Oliva
Carl Byoir & Associates, Inc.
380 Madison Avenue, (212) 986-6100
New York, New York 10017

For Immediate Release

Contact: Rhoda Kaufman, Assistant Manager
Corporate Communications
General Foods Corporation
(914) 683-2404

NATIONAL TRAIL DEDICATION

MARKS ARRIVAL OF HIKANATION

IN NORTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA

More than 50 backpackers will reach the midpoint in their 4,500-mile eastward trek across the United States Nov. 15, when they will join with federal and state officials in dedicating the Jean Pierre Chouteau Trail as a National Recreation Trail.

The dedication ceremonies will take place at Afton Landing Recreation Area, six miles west of Wagoner, Okla.

The Postum HikaNation odyssey, scheduled to end at the Washington Monument next spring, was organized by the American Hiking Society to call attention to the need for more and better hiking trails.

On the day of the dedication, the HikaNation hikers will set out at 8 a.m. from Lock and Dam 18 for a 10-mile trek along the Chouteau Trail to Afton Landing Recreation Area, accompanied by an expected 500 local hikers, Scouts, equestrians and canoeists navigating the waters of the Verdigris River that parallels the trail.

A ranking official of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior will officially designate the 69.7-mile trail at the 6 p.m. ceremony.

General Foods, makers of Postum instant grain beverage and co-sponsor of HikaNation with the Department of the Interior, will give a reception at 5:30 p.m. The reception and dedication will be held in tents erected at Afton Landing by the Oklahoma National Guard.

The dedication certificate will be presented to Col. James Harmon, district engineer for the Tulsa District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

(more)

A hand-carved map of the Chouteau Trail will be unveiled by the master of ceremonies, Rolland Handley, regional director of the HCRS in Albuquerque, N.M.

The map will be permanently mounted at the Afton Landing Visitor's Center, next to a plaque dedicated by Postum that bears the inscription: "May the beauty of this trail and the determination of these hikers serve as an inspiration to all who pass this way."

Abe Hessen, director of the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, will welcome the hikers on behalf of Gov. George Nigh.

The determined HikaNation walkers entered Oklahoma near South Coffeyville Nov. 8 and will take approximately two weeks hiking through the northeastern part of the state, passing near Nowata, Claremore, Catoosa, Wagoner, Muskogee and Stilwell. They will be traveling mainly along hiking trails and county roads.

A core group of 37 hikers has gone the entire distance since HikaNation began in San Francisco in early April, when 10,000 hikers accompanied them across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

"We have been walking through some of the most picturesque scenery on this earth," said Jim Kern, president of the American Hiking Society. "We hope these wonderful hikers will inspire others to help protect the nation's nature trails against the ravages of time and the unthinking few who have no respect for nature."

AHS officials sought to design a trail that would pass through the midsection of the nation, through states that were important in the settling of the United States more than a century ago when most hikers were traveling in a westerly direction.

The hike route within Oklahoma was laid out under the direction of Bob Smith, park ranger for the Army Corps of Engineers at Chouteau Lock and Dam 17. Smith and Curt Weddle, area engineer for the Robert S. Kerr area office of the Army Corps of Engineers, will also be guests at the dedication.

The other states along the HikaNation route include California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia.

Among the HikaNation group are John Stout, a 69-year-old retired aircraft machinist, and Jiamie (cq) Pyles, a year-old girl being wheeled across America in a specially designed "contraption" by her parents. Others on the hike include nurses, a longshoreman, a librarian and a television director, who have taken leaves from their jobs to discover America on foot.

The hikers are being provided with unlimited amounts of Postum by General Foods, as well as other supplies. General Foods also has given the AHS a grant to cover administrative costs associated with HikaNation.

"We are delighted to be helping the AHS in this wholesome and worthwhile undertaking," said Deborah Edwards, Postum product manager.

The hikers are eager to be joined by local hiking enthusiasts for segments of the trip. Anyone wishing to hike with them can determine the precise whereabouts of the HikaNation group by calling 305-251-0484. A regularly updated recorded message provides all relevant information on a 24-hour basis.