

HikaNation celebrates 35 years since historic cross-country hike sponsored by AHS

By Paula Guerrein

Calling all HikaNation participants to the 35th reunion at Mary's Lake Lodge, Estes Park, CO, Sept. 18-20, 2015! Reunion coordinator Janet Parsons-Hartowicz said that in addition to the reunion, a 3-day hike-in is planned over the Continental Divide in Rocky Mountain National Park, prior to festivities.

There will be a panel discussion of the history of HikaNation, as well as pictures, movies, and scrapbooks of the cross-country hikers. Good food, good times, don't miss this event!

For more information, go to the HikaNation Facebook group or www.HikaNation.com

How it all began...(a compilation of articles from AHS/HikaNation leaders)

Back in October 1976, leaders in the hiking community got together and signed organizational papers forming the American Hiking Society. It was the culmination of several meetings of Appalachian Trail Conference Executive Director Paul Pritchard, Florida Trail Association Founder Jim Kern and William Kemsley Jr., Backpacker Magazine publisher. Yes, at last, an advocate organization for national hiking trails in the halls of congress!

At the AHS annual meeting in March 1978, Jim Kern was elected founding president. It was at that meeting that Glenn Seaborg, a Nobel Laureate and hiking enthusiast, offered to help with the California piece of the cross-country hike they called HikaNation. HikaNation goals were many, but primarily to increase awareness about hiking trails and an event like none other to generate media for the cause.

Backpacker Magazine promoted the hike, and the San Francisco, CA kickoff took place with 87 committed cross-country hikers April 12, 1980. Other hikers and advocates participated in the nearly 4, 500-mile journey, which ended 13 months later with a celebratory boot-dipping in the Atlantic Ocean at Cape Henlopen, DE.

Lessons learned from HikaNation contributed to the inspiration and development of the American Discovery Trail.

For more information, check out HikaNation at www.HikaNation.com or the HikaNation group on Facebook.

