



A lot of steps in her spring

In April, an Indian Hill mother of three will set out on a 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail hike



The Enquirer / Glenn Hertong; top photo provided

In preparation for her Pacific Crest hike, Denise Hill has been working out with personal trainer Walter Cherry at the TriHealth Fitness and Health Pavilion. She previously walked the Appalachian Trail, reaching Maine in September 2004 (top photo). The hikes honor her sister's memory.

By John Johnston
Enquirer staff writer

Denise Hill has a long walk ahead of her. She'll trek through hot, dry desert and snowy mountain passes. She'll be on the lookout for rattlesnakes, scorpions, mountain lions and bears. And she'll marvel at breathtaking vistas.

On April 20, the 49-year-old Indian Hill mother of three will embark alone on the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail, which stretches from Mexico to Canada through California, Oregon and Washington. She expects to complete the hike by mid-October.

She's no hiking novice. In September 2004, using the trail name "Ladybug," she completed a five-month, 2,174-mile trek of the Appalachian Trail, which runs from Georgia to Maine.

Her hikes – called Walking for Walden – honor the memory of her sister Cheryl Rose Walden, who died of breast cancer in 1998 at age 44.

Hill's sponsors are Hospice of Cincinnati and

TriHealth Fitness and Health Pavilion, where she trains. Two years ago her hike raised about \$15,000 for Hospice. This time she's hoping for at least \$100,000 in donations.

She has the support of her children, who are 23, 22 and 19, and her husband, Bruce. He will join her somewhere on the trail in July to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. But mostly she'll be alone with her thoughts.

The hike is "an opportunity to immerse myself in the natural world in communion with God," she says. "It's just me and my pack walking north with each dawn presenting new discoveries and heightened senses."

Each year about 300 people attempt to hike the entire trail, and about 180 finish, the Pacific Crest Trail Association says. The trail traverses seven national parks and 24 national forests. It climbs nearly 60 major mountain passes, descends into 19 major canyons and goes past more than 1,000 lakes.

Hill, who will turn 50 during the hike, plans to cover about 20 miles a day.

She's ready. "I'd go tomorrow if I could."

About the walk

Denise Hill's hike begins April 20. Updates will be posted at www.walkingforwalden.com.

Donations can be mailed to: Cheryl Rose Walden Foundation, c/o Hospice of Cincinnati Inc., 4380 Malsbary Road, Suite 100, Cincinnati, OH 45242.

E-mail jjohnston@enquirer.com

Pacific Crest trail



The Enquirer/Rachel Richardson