

He refuses to bow to debilitating MS



Matt Goodman and his wife Sandy stand outside of their home last week in Tabernacle with their dog, Jerry, who accompanied Goodman on his 1,600-mile trek on the Appalachian Trail.

BCT staff photo/MATT STANLEY

Tabernacle man chronicles his 'natural' fight against disease

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TABERNACLE — In 1997, Matt Goodman was employed as a personal trainer and was an avid hiker, skier and outdoorsman.

That same year, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a disease that could have threatened his very active lifestyle.

Yet, nearly six years after he was diagnosed, Goodman hiked 1,600 miles along the Appalachian Trail through Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Pennsylvania. His dog, Jerry, a pit bull-beagle mix, was his only companion.

Goodman, a Gloucester County native who now lives in Tabernacle, said his hiking trip is proof that a natural lifestyle is the best way to combat a debilitating disorder.

"I was a personal trainer. I was always the star athlete. I could run real fast, but I couldn't do that anymore," Goodman said during an interview at his home last week. "If I walked

too fast or too far, it would feel like there was a clamp on my legs."

Goodman, 35, was 25 years old when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a chronic, unpredictable neurological disease that affects the central nervous system.

He said he eventually decided to stop taking medication to treat the disease, so he turned to yoga, meditation and a strict diet of raw foods like vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds.

"I had a real bad flare-up (in 1999), and I stopped eating cooked foods," he said. "I felt that starting to eat raw food was the beginning of the self-healing (process). It took about six months before I started to feel a lot stronger."

In June 2003, Goodman began hiking a portion of the Appalachian Trail in Maine. He said he covered more than 25 miles per day and carried 40 pounds of supplies on his back. His multiple sclerosis never bothered him.

"I see MS as my guide," Goodman said. "It has forced me to find balance in my life. It's

about having harmony and being thankful."

After four months of hiking through 11 states, Goodman ended his trip in Virginia. He has since chronicled his experience in a self-published book titled, "Holy Sh!t: How I Did It," and speaks to others about his healthy lifestyle at events across the country.

"The MS will always be there," Goodman said. "My legs have been bothering me for months now, but I feel better than I did (when first diagnosed). It won't be debilitating if I don't empower it."

Goodman sticks to his raw foods diet and exercise program with the help of his wife Sandy, a raw foods chef.

He said he hopes his story inspires others and shows them that anything is possible.

"I don't tell people you can cure yourself, but you have to believe in it and work hard," he said. "I trust nature, spirit and God. You have to put your faith in that and trust your instincts."

For more information about Goodman's book, visit www.mypowerful.com