

# The Great 46 Benefit Traverse

in support of  
the Aidan and Allyson McKenna Memorial Fund at Crouse Hospital

[www.mackenziefamily.com/46/](http://www.mackenziefamily.com/46/)

Begin Date: June 2009

## THE TRAVERSE

One continuous hike (route) over the rugged High Peaks (46 mountains in northern New York's wilderness traditionally considered at least 4,000 feet in height): Not a race and certainly not the shortest route, but nearly 200 miles and over 60,000 vertical feet; (the Empire State Building is 1,250 vert. ft.); of trails, bushwhacks and slides using only our legs. We'll take a little time for sleep, but will use no vehicle or trail support at any point. Cellular coverage is also extremely spotty at best. The mileage ranges anywhere between 14 to 27 miles per day with between about 5,000 to 10,500 feet of daily vertical gain/loss. Full details will be posted to our site after our completion.

## THE BENEFIT

Crouse Hospital: The Baker Neonatal Intensive Care Unit:

As a state-designated level IV regional perinatal center serving central and upstate New York, the Walter R.G. Baker Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Crouse Hospital provides a full range of services including cardiac, surgical and neuro-surgical care for the very sickest premature and full-term newborns in the area - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Other hospitals from throughout the region transport their most sensitive neonatal cases to Crouse Hospital, with patients arriving by ambulance, or often by Medevac helicopter service, with Crouse staff handling all of these transports. On a given day, more than 85 full-time staff members, plus many physicians and nurse practitioners, work around-the-clock to care for 45-55 newborns a day. Each year, more than 900 premature and critically ill newborns are cared for in the NICU, with another 200 a year admitted briefly for observation after birth. Monies raised will be donated to the Crouse Health Foundation to assist with the renovation of the Baker NICU's Family Waiting and Bereavement Rooms. These two areas serve as havens for NICU families as they wait between visits or if they need a quiet space to mourn the loss of a child.

## THE CHALLENGE

We are attempting the hike. Now, we challenge you, the community, to pledge on our effort or donate any amount you feel comfortable with to the Aidan and Allyson McKenna Memorial Fund. ALL donations using either method go directly to benefit the NICU. Show your support in one of two ways: 1. Donate now or 2. Make a pledge and donate after we finish. Submit your donation or pledge at <https://secure.crouse.org:49199/secure/Donations/ContributeCHF.asp>. In the section that says, "To be used as follows," select "McKenna Fund" from the drop down menu. If you are only pledging at this time, add "Pledge" before your name in the "List My Name As Follows" box. Your pledge will be processed upon the completion of our Traverse attempt. You may also write or phone your donation, pledge, or questions to:

The McKenna Fund  
c/o The Crouse Health Foundation  
736 Irving Avenue  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
(315) 470-7702

## MEANING BEHIND THE BENEFIT

Every benefit has a cause. Crouse Hospital is that cause, but Rico would like to share the meaning behind the cause.

*My wife had a very complicated pregnancy. Since her pregnancy was termed "at risk", we were transferred to Crouse Hospital as they had the only NICU in the area. Due to further complications, my wife had a hospital stay of over two months, followed by the passing of our twin newborns. The service and staff of the NICU were exceptional. There is no other way to describe the staff other than "angels on earth" and I thank God the employees of Crouse Hospital were there.*

*Even during our short stay, there were several other babies in the NICU, and several other parents going through the same hardships as we. According to the March of Dimes, "Premature birth is one of the most common, serious and costly problems facing America's infants, affecting more than 500,000 babies in the U.S. each year, and causing disability and death in too many cases. Recent government data shows preterm birth to be the leading cause of newborn death in the United States. In addition, over two-thirds of infants who died were born preterm."*

*The more support institutions like Crouse Hospital have, the better they are able to deal with situations like my wife and I endured. I can't change events in our past. I can, however, do everything in my power to make sure others continue to experience the best in care for their loved ones.*

*I tossed around several ideas of how I could give back even a little and combined my love of hiking with fundraising ideas. To this end, we now hike the 46, hoping that enough people will identify with our cause to make a difference for other families in need of this specialized care.*

## THE HIKERS

Rich McKenna (a.k.a. Rico, Walks With Blackflies): Project Engineer at Beardsley Design.

Kevin MacKenzie (a.k.a. MudRat): Assistant Registrar at St. Lawrence University and nature photographer.

We both have a rather adventurous attitude, which is further enhanced when we're together. The Great 46 Traverse idea was born from this attitude and became a future reality while hiking some slides on Dix in 2006. To our knowledge the particular route we've chosen has not been done before, though sections of it have most certainly been traversed by a multitude.

God Bless and Best Regards,

*Rico & Kevin*



**Pledge Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ / Donation Amt: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_