

Walking Across America for Little Children: Anna Harrington



By Frosty Wooldridge

“For Jane Austen and the readers of *Pride and Prejudice*, solitary walks express the independence that literally takes the heroine out of the social sphere of the houses and their inhabitants, into a larger, lonelier world where she is free to think: walking articulates both physical and mental freedom...it connects one to the Earth.” [Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*](#)

(Anna Harrington stopping for a rest at the Buffalo Overlook on Route 40 five miles West of Golden, Colorado. She faces the Great Plains on the second third of her walk across America. Catch her on Facebook: Anna’s Walk Across America. Website: www.annaswalk.com)

When you take a walk, especially in the woods, you feel a connection to nature that transforms your energy, quiets your body and soothes your mind. Walking allows you to enhance your thoughts, feelings and ideas. Magic follows you on a walk.

But what if you decided during one of your walks to make a greater stroll into the world? What if you garnered a purpose for your journey? What if that trek carried you over 3,000 miles across North America? What if you turned out to be a woman? What if you walked for the children of the world?



Anna Harrington, 42, of Meridian, Idaho took a walk one day that gave her the courage to walk over 3,400 miles across America.

Harrington launched herself from a beach on the Pacific Ocean in Astoria, Oregon with a goal of Boston, Massachusetts on the Atlantic Ocean. Her reason: she crusades to raise funds to help Shriners's Hospitals for Children.

She looked back on the amazing care for her nephew when he developed scoliosis in 2005. She said, "Shriners medical care doesn't cost the families anything, but is funded in part by Shriners' clubs fundraisers, including the Shrine Circus."

A slim, curly-haired redhead with an infectious smile, Harrington averages 20 miles per day. She wore out one pair of hiking boots at the 1,000-mile mark in Utah. She wears bush pants and a light pack shirt. She carries a large water canteen.

My cycling friend and I met her at the Buffalo Herd Overlook in Golden, Colorado on Route 40. As we snapped pictures of the newborn bison babies, Anna walked up to us, "Could you guys give me directions to get into Golden?"

"Sure," Mike said. "Just take that paved road straight down

for five miles until you reach a red light. Take a left. Ask for more directions.”

“Where you coming from?” I asked.

“The Pacific coast in Oregon,” she said. “I’m headed to the Atlantic.”

“Holy catfish, on foot!” Mike said. “Wow, that’s way too cool.”

For the next 15 minutes, we took photographs and learned more about her walk across America coast to coast.

“A few years ago, I read somewhere that they were considering the closure of a couple of the Shriners hospitals, and I didn’t want that to happen,” Harrington said. “So I tried to figure out what I could do to raise money for Shriners. And then I recalled the walk – I’ve always wanted to walk cross-country. So, the two came together.”

The long journey:

“When you’re out there on the road you feel very vulnerable,” she said. “I had no idea what to expect. I have people come up to me, and they hear my story, hear what I’m doing, and they put me up in their home for a night, prepare me dinner or they get me a room for the night.”

At other times, Harrington breaks out the camping gear she carries in her three-wheeled stroller. She deals with “female” challenges on the road. Like in the barren desert of Utah.

“There’s like no tall sage brush, there’s nothing!” she said, chuckling. “I’m like, seriously, I’m getting a tent or something that I can go into.”

Along the route, Harrington expects to visit nine of the 22 Shriners Hospitals in North America. Her next stop: Kansas.

After leaving Denver, she faces the Great Plains. A thousand miles of nothing but prairie, wheat fields, small towns and the horizon. She faces burning prairie heat day after day.

“What do you like the most about the walk?” I asked.

“The people,” she said. “They are so funny, so kind and totally blown away by my journey.”

“Probably inspired to make their own journeys,” I said.

“Everyone faces obstacles in life,” Harrington said. “Just pull up your shoelaces and get moving.”

Follow Harrington on Facebook: Anna’s Walk Across America

Her website for support: www.annaswalk.com

As she grabbed her cart, she looked back at us with a huge smile on her face. “Thanks you guys,” she said.

“Safe journey,” we called out.

As I turned to my friend Mike, I couldn’t help but realize that Anna makes the world a better place for children. She inspires other women to pursue their own dreams. She touches people, encourages them and inspires them by her actions.

“I’ve come to believe that each of us has a personal calling that’s as unique as a fingerprint – and that the best way to succeed is to discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service, working hard, and also allowing the energy of the universe to lead you.” – Oprah Winfrey

As you read her story, Anna heads into a bright new day. She’s out there right now with the wind flying through her hair, her legs striding across the Earth. She feels connected. She renders her passion for the children of the world.

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