

The journey begins: Gary Fitch kicks off 30-day, 300-mile walk

By EMILY GEDDE Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, August 6, 2014 8:00 am

Teachers, nurses, representatives of several unions and other community members laced up their walking shoes Saturday morning to follow a man with one goal in mind — eliminating hunger in Minnesota.

Saturday kicked off a 30-day, 300-mile effort Gary Fitch is calling “Minnesota Miracle,” which he hopes will raise \$1.5 million to help end hunger in the state.

“The reason I’m here is because everyone who has come on board cares,” Fitch said.

The retired postal worker spent time Saturday at the Bob Walls Memorial Union Hall — where the walk began — talking to, thanking and taking photos with the about 30 people who walked with Fitch to the city limits line. Several people in return, thanked Fitch for taking on such a task.

“It’s great what you’re doing,” Kristie LaVigne, a teacher at Falls Elementary, told Fitch.

For the next 30 days -rain or shine — Fitch will walk 10 miles a day until Sept. 1 when he reaches the Minnesota State Fair to join the labor parade.

“It’s a grassroots labor movement,” he said of Minnesota Miracle.

Since the more than two years after the idea of Minnesota Miracle began, Fitch has partnered with Second Harvest Heartland, the largest hunger relief organization in the Upper Midwest, and he has also gained support from the AFL-CIO, the largest federation of unions in the United States. The effort has also gained support from the Koochiching Labor Assembly, which represents unions working in Koochiching County.

While he didn’t know exactly how much has been raised so far, Fitch said about \$40,000 is already sitting in the Minnesota Miracle Ending Hunger Fund. The fund, he explained, will be set up as an endowment to generate additional dollars off interest.

“The money (Minnesota Miracle) raises won’t even be touched,” he said. “We’re going to make things happen just using the interest.”



Kicking it off

At left, Mike Holden, president of the Koochiching Labor Assembly, and Gary Fitch, start a 300-mile walk along Third Street Saturday. During the next 30 days, Fitch will walk from International Falls to St. Paul in an effort he is calling, “Minnesota Miracle.” The goal of the effort is to raise \$1.5 million to help eliminate hunger in state.

For now, Fitch will be taking in the sights of Minnesota as he fulfills a mission that started as a dream.

“I’m excited,” he said. “It all comes down to this. I want other states to look and see what Minnesota can do. We’re going to set some examples.”

Anyone who wants to walk with Fitch can track him using a GPS device set up on his website, www.minnesotamiracle.com.

“Anybody can come out and walk with me,” he said. “I’d be honored to have them. They’ll know where I am.”