

For Immediate Release:

Dryden's Joe Dabes Honored for Finger Lakes Trail Work

Sometimes a hundred and fifty marathons is just about enough. At least that's what Dryden's Joe Dabes decided (with a little encouragement from his body), so he decided to walk more.

Dabes recently finished his seventh end-to-end hike of the 562-mile Finger Lakes Trail. At its 2007 annual meeting, the Finger Lakes Trail Conference presented him with the Wallace Wood Distinguished Service Award.

“Java Joe” first learned of the Finger Lakes Trail in the early 1970’s when he moved back to the area from eight years studying and working in California. Dabes grew up on a farm in the Groton area, liked the outdoors, and was active in Boy Scouts. As a physics and math teacher at Tompkins-Cortland Community College, and leader of the TC3 Outings Club, he picked up the Guide to Hiking Trails in the Finger Lakes Region and thought that the FLT only went from Dryden to Watkins Glen! He soon learned that a trail existed in Virgil -- but only on paper. He became the trail sponsor, and with Ray Kuzia and the TC3 Outings Club, went out and built it. At one time he and Ray maintained 17 miles, but now they are down to about 10. Dabes became so convinced of the trail’s value that he bought land in Virgil and donated a trail easement to the FLTC.

After he retired from teaching Dabes learned ArcView, THE mapping tool, and proposed that he convert all the FLT maps to ArcView. He contributed \$3000 to make that happen, and has enjoyed it immensely, spending thousands of hours bringing all 52 of the FLT Maps into the 21st century and hiking miles and miles of the FLT plus numerous re-routes wearing a GPS unit.

Besides being a very active member of the Cayuga Trails Club, “Java Joe” served two terms as an FLTC Board Member. He is a trail advocate, donating time, expertise, and money to the system.

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference awarded Joe Dabes the Clar-Willis Distinguished Trail Volunteer Award in 2005 for his extensive trail work over many years. Besides building the trail in Virgil, with his long-time trail pal Ray Kuzia he has spent many work weeks with the FLTC, including building at least three lean-tos. Dabes helped close six gaps in the original FLT, creating miles of new trail over the years, and remaining Trail Steward for nearly thirty years on the FLT in the Virgil area.

Not only has Dabes been a tireless trail worker, but he also shares his knowledge about backpacking, storytelling and the Finger Lakes Trail. He has organized and led hikes, cross country ski trips and trail runs on the Finger Lakes Trail with a number of hiking groups and organizations. Dabes became End to End Hiker #2 when there were lots of road walks because permission across field and forest land hadn’t been found yet. He used his fourth end-to-end as an FLT fund raiser, raising hundreds of dollars, personally donating a dollar a mile.

Joe, who with his wife Kathy now hikes in Florida and New York, continues to work to improve the trail system. He is a strong advocate for more loop trails as he believes people will use and enjoy them more than hiking out and back.

The Wally Wood award is presented each year to the person or persons who have made outstanding contributions to the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. Wallace (Wally) Wood came up with the idea of a long distance footpath across New York State and founded the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. Joe Dabes follows in Wally Wood’s footsteps with his valuable work with the FLTC over many years.

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference, headquartered in Mt. Morris, coordinates the maintenance and mapping of over 880 miles of hiking trails in New York State. More information about the Finger Lakes Trail may be obtained by visiting their website: www.fingerlakestrail.org or by calling 585-658-9320.

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