

Kris "Hair Tie" Van Handel
Thousand Miler Essay
2/11/23-5/7/24

I've hiked the trail 5 times. On this completion I hiked with 77 people and 4 dogs. I hiked with many of those people more than one time and hope to hike with many of them again. I have met so many great people on the Trail. I have friends I would have never had without the Trail. There were many new portions of trail this time around, which was exciting. There's always something new to see or experience on the Trail.

My last hike included sun, rain, thunder, hail, rain again, more hail, and finally sun to end the hike. Maybe my next hike of the IAT will include more inclement weather, but I hope not!

I am dedicating my 5th hike to Jenny Garibaldi, who passed away at the young age of 45 on March 10, 2024 after a long fight with cancer. I met her when I lived in Oconomowoc. I didn't start hiking the IAT until I moved to Madison, so I did not get to hike with Jenny, but I feel she experienced my hikes through the pictures I posted on Facebook. Many times she told me she enjoyed seeing my pictures. Jenny did hike some segments of the IAT in Waukesha County.