

Wow! I will be pinching myself for a long time, basking in the glow of finishing the trail. For many of my working years, I was sitting in a cubicle analyzing and reporting insurance data while gazing outside at the changing seasons in the view over the city. Hiking was not an option due to other responsibilities but I did collect every news clipping about the Ice Age Trail. The day that I met thousand miler Ruth Sommers changed my life. She was manning an IAT booth at the Rosholt Fair and contacted me from time to time while I was still working. My first week of retirement, she took me out on the trail. That was the beginning of a wonderful journey into nature, friendships and like minded people who prefer walking on a trail rather than walking in a mall.

There are many people that have impacted or made a lasting impression on me through my travels. I offer a few words on them:

A few years ago, the IAT conference was held in Chippewa Falls. The keynote speaker was Dr. Eva Selhub, who spoke about her book "Your Brain on Nature". She talked about the positive effects that nature-based therapies can have on the brain. Her presentation was so inspiring, I'd like to hear her again.

My mentor, Ruth Sommers, and her thousand miler hiking partner, Dianne Genz organized a group of women, LAEGO's. Ladies Actively Exploring the Great Outdoors. An article in the Spring 2019 Mammoth Tales describes the group's mission. These 2 mentors have inspired several members who are Thousand Mile Wannabe's and 4 (including me) who finished this fall.

I am humbled by the level of commitment by the staff in Cross Plains to the volunteers in the local chapters. Their dedication to the mission of the IAT is boundless. Wisconsin will continue to have a unique walking trail through the state because of them. I wish that everyone could take their brain on a vacation and walk a trail in nature.

*Gail Colrud*

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