

# KSTP.COM — 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS

## Man Plans to Walk 300 Miles to Help End Hunger in Minnesota

Updated: 02/14/2014 5:26 AM KSTP.com By: Jennie Olson

A Minnesota man is planning to walk 300 miles from International Falls to the Twin Cities – all to help those less fortunate.

Gary Fitch will complete his "Minnesota Miracle" walk in an effort to raise a "Perpetual Fountain of Food" for those having trouble putting food on the table.

Fitch's goal is to raise \$30 million to end hunger in Minnesota; the money will be used to establish an endowment with the [St. Paul Foundation Donor Advised Fund](#), which will then be given to nonprofits for hunger relief.

According to Fitch, the \$30 million goal would mean \$1.3 million in interest, which could buy 10 million pounds of food each year.

"I haven't quit on anything I've started on, and I'm not going to quit on this," Fitch said.

Fitch started working on the Minnesota Miracle project about three years ago, and through a series of meetings and connections he was able to get in touch with leaders at [Second Harvest Heartland](#).

"They've been trying to do this for seven years, but every time they get ahead, the demand eats up what they've got," Fitch said about creating an endowment. "It's getting more dire every year."

To get funding for the endowment, Fitch decided to take his dream to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, known as the [AFL-CIO](#), which is the largest federation of unions in the United States. He wanted to see if they would be able to spearhead the movement, and he's spent the past year talking to AFL-CIO union leaders throughout the state of Minnesota, gathering support and donations.

"The union is spearheading this labor movement, and that's the way I'm putting it out," Fitch said. "We're inviting everyone who is blessed with a job, roof over their head, and food to feed their families to get on board. It's Minnesota taking care of our own – no politics and no corporate backing."

Fitch said they need \$25,000 to establish an endowment, and they just hit that goal a few weeks ago.

### Marching to the State Fairgrounds

The walk was originally scheduled from April 4 to May 4 but has since been changed to Aug. 2 through Sept. 1 because of some scheduling conflicts, Fitch told KSTP.com on Thursday. The date change will give the group more time to come up with fundraising and establish a marketing campaign.

During the Minnesota Miracle walk, Fitch will follow Highway 53 from International Falls to Duluth and then Highway 61 from Duluth to the Twin Cities. Community members are invited to join the walk at any point and continue for as long as they can. He's expected to arrive at the



Gary Fitch  
Photo: Photo: Courtesy of Minnesota Miracle



Gary Fitch  
Photo: Photo: Courtesy of Minnesota Miracle

Minnesota State Fairgrounds on Monday, Sept. 1.

Fitch said he will walk for about five hours every day and then spend the rest of the time in the community he passes through.

"I just want everyone to use this in any way possible to benefit the community around where I'm walking," Fitch said. "And everyone wants to be involved."

As for the long walk each day, Fitch said he isn't worried because he spent years delivering mail with the United States Postal Service before his retirement in March 2013.

"I walked 12 miles a day delivering mail," he laughed. "The walk won't bother me at all; it will be a lot of fun."

### **History of Giving**

This isn't the first major feat Fitch has taken on. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Fitch biked across the country and collected the hopes and dreams of more than 23,000 kids and [sent them up in the Atlantis Space Shuttle in 2009](#) with the help of NASA. Each child received a certificate of authenticity from NASA saying that their letter made it up to space.

He also biked from St. Paul to Memphis in 1974 raising money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and in 1989 he delivered 4,000 letters from kids suffering from cancer to former President George H.W. Bush.

Fitch said he wants to give back to his community because it's a miracle that he's even alive. In 1971, Fitch said he was run off the road by a drunken driver in Memphis, Tenn.

"I should have been dead and I'm not," Fitch said. "I'm meant to hang around."

The Minnesota Miracle is just one more way Fitch is working to help fellow Minnesotans.

"I'd love to spend the rest of my life finding out the needs of my community and everyone else around here," Fitch said. "I don't care if I'm walking alone for 30 days if I raise the funds I want to raise and establish the endowment I want to start. I couldn't care less if I'm a spot in the middle of a crowd or if I'm walking alone. This isn't me; this is everyone in Minnesota."

Community members can donate to the Minnesota Miracle project in three ways: directly through the [union](#), online through [Second Harvest Heartland](#), and through the [St. Paul Foundation](#).

For more information about the walk, visit [minnesotamiracle.com](http://minnesotamiracle.com).