

RALEIGH, N.C. — Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail is thrilled to announce that the El-Genk family of Durham has completed the 40 Hike Challenge, hiking all 40 of the Great Day Hikes on the MST. Hussein and Nashua, and children Zakariyya, Ayyub, Kareema and Rasheed, ages 6 to 12, finished all 40 hikes in seven months. No other completions have been reported.

The family was introduced to the MST in 2020, when they needed to combat the extended screen time that they all were experiencing. Their next-door neighbors shared the announcement of the 40 Hike Challenge on the MST and the El-Genks began hiking in May.

The 40 hikes highlight special spots on the 1175-mile MST as it crosses through small towns, national and state parks, quiet backroads, and historic sites. The hikes have been carefully chosen for hikers of all experience levels and range from half a mile to 8.6 miles. The El-Genks admittedly experienced some challenges, including a torrential rainstorm during the longest and toughest of the hikes (#8 - Linville Gorge - Wolf Pit Road to Table Rock) but it was all part of the adventure.

“We loved doing the challenge, and it was so timely as it gave us purpose and structure in a tough year,” says Hussein. “There is something on the trail for everyone of all ages, abilities and interests; we would love to see others take on this challenge of diverse hikes across our beautiful state! We are immensely grateful for the hard work to establish, maintain and constantly grow and improve this amazing public resource. Every bridge, boulder hops across mud pits, fallen trees cut, or resting benches that we passed reminded us of all the efforts so many have put in year after year to make this available for everyone to enjoy and discover.”

The family also took time to explore the trail communities and learn about history, culture, geology, industry and nature across the state. Zakariyya, age 12, shared, “I learned about the different rock formations and shapes around the state, like Pilot Mountain is a quartzite monadnock, Stone Mountain is a granite pluton, Hanging Rock has quartzite knobs and ridges, Linville Gorge was eroded out by the river, and Falls Lake is on a fault line.”

Long time trail volunteer and member of the Friends of the MST, David Thoenen, shared his congratulations for the family, “I’ve always felt that the trail belongs to ALL of us, the hard core, the weekend warrior, the after work/school exerciser, the seeker of tranquility. That a family with small children should be first to complete the Challenge underscores that it is OUR trail (and sets a dramatic example getting off one’s butt and enjoying it). My congratulations and thanks to the El-Genk family!”

The 40 Hikes are profiled in *Great Day Hikes on North Carolina’s Mountains-to-Sea Trail*. This official guide from Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail is a go-to companion for exploring all the trail has to offer, showcasing everything from scenic mountain vistas to surprising escapes in the state’s Piedmont region and the wonders of coastal plain pocosins. The book is published by UNC Press is available wherever books are sold and from the [Friends’ webstore](#).

To complete the 40 Hike Challenge, all 40 hikes from *Great Day Hikes* must be completed by March 31, 2023. All who complete the challenge will receive a special patch. Firsthand accounts from hikers taking the challenge are archived along with full details on the Friends of the [MST’s website](#).

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CONTACT:

Betsy Brown
919 518-1713

bbrown@mountaintoseatrail.org

<https://media.visitnc.com/Durham-Family-Completes-Friends-of-the-Mountains-To-Sea-Trails-40-Hike-Challenge>