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CONTACT: Karin Pouw
(323) 960-3500
media@Scientology-News.org

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Meet a Scientologist—Cross-country Run to End Youth Violence, Drugs and Crime

In his run across America to promote The Way to Happiness, Scientologist John Radich was bolstered all along the way by the beauty of the country and the new friends he made.

Just as the sun was setting on November 23, 2010, an elated if exhausted 56-year-old man with the wiry build of a long-distance runner dashed across the Atlantic City boardwalk, down the steps, and onto the sand.

Slipping off a well-worn pair of running shoes, he plunged his feet into the bitter cold of the Atlantic, taking the final step in a journey he first conceived 40 years before at age 16 and finally began in Santa Monica, California, on the 4th of July, 2010.

The runner—John Radich, a Scientologist since 1973.

The event—the completion of his run across America.

The purpose—to give kids in cities and towns across America a chance to grow up without drugs, gangs and violence by disseminating *The Way to Happiness*, a non-religious, common sense guide to better living written by L. Ron Hubbard.

Radich is no stranger to long-distance running. He is one of a rare breed of athletes who compete in ultramarathons—longer than the 26.3-mile races. Radich is a nine-time finisher of the legendary Badwater Ultramarathon, known as “the world’s toughest foot race,” where competitors have 60 hours to run 135 miles from the searing heat below sea level in Death Valley, California, to the top of Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the United States excluding Alaska. His love affair with long-distance running began when he was a teen.

“I was in high school when I read a book called *The Bunion Derby* about a race from Santa Monica, California, through Chicago on Route 66 and on to Atlantic City, New Jersey. It was a great story,” says Radich, who still lives in Monrovia, California, where he was raised and went to school.

“I dreamed of running the same route,” he says. “But my coach said ‘not at 16 you’re not. Wait until you’re older, and you should have a purpose for doing it when you go.’ So I held off. But that was what planted the seed.”

Radich also followed his high school coach’s advice of running for a purpose—he has promoted many causes and raised more than \$100,000 for charities through his running efforts since then.

For five years, beginning in 1998, Radich participated in a series of annual long-distance runs through Europe, co-sponsored by the Church of

Scientology, to raise awareness of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Radich's favorite cause is *The Way to Happiness*—with its character-building precepts such as “be industrious,” “set a good example,” and “seek to live with the truth.” As captain and coach of The Way to Happiness Running Team, he and his team promote the book by participating in 10Ks, marathons and other races throughout Southern California.

“I have been supporting The Way to Happiness Foundation since 1985,” says Radich. “We get kids off drugs, and reduce violence in schools and neighborhoods by restoring their pride through common sense values. Running across America was great, but to know you're helping save lives with what you are promoting—that is what really motivated me,” he says.

To support him in his cross-country mission, the manager at the Orchard Supply Hardware Store where Radich works promised to hold his job open for him.

To transport his water, food, sleeping bag, tent and supplies of *The Way to Happiness* booklets and DVDs, he devised a clever solution. He used a three-wheel “baby jogger”—the kind active mothers use to run with their babies—to carry his gear.

A fellow Scientologist and long-distance runner from California took some time off work, and for the first leg of his journey she carried the jogger and all his equipment in her car and worked as his crew, accompanying him from Santa Monica to Needles on the California/Arizona border. Then

Radich pulled out the jogger and ran, pushing it in the humid 120-degree heat along the Colorado River, across Arizona, and over the Continental Divide near Flagstaff, the highest point of Route 66 at 7,300 feet.

“Running through Native American lands in Arizona and New Mexico was an incredibly peaceful and spiritual experience,” says Radich. “I would often run at night by moonlight. I felt so in tune with the country.”

Throughout the trip, any time of the night or day, people would stop to offer Radich water and food and thank him for what he was doing. Truck drivers would honk and wave. Families would insist on buying him meals or invite him to their homes for dinner and a bed to sleep in when they heard why he was doing the run. On other nights it was a motel room or a sleeping bag on the ground.

Radich kept up the pace, running 35 to 50 miles a day, taking “time out” northeast of Grant, New Mexico, for a 6-mile run with one of his fans to the top of Mount Taylor, and to compete in the Philadelphia Marathon.

“Sometimes it was dangerous,” says Radich. “Running through thunder and lightning, on highways with such narrow shoulders I would be just inches away from the trucks as they roared by and drenched me in their backwash.”

He would often stop at police stations along the way to tell the officers on duty about *The Way to Happiness* and share with them how the booklet has brought down the crime rate wherever it is used.

“They loved the program and would take copies to pass out in their precincts,” Radich says.

Some of those who followed his daily progress on Facebook came out to help him as he approached their towns and would run along with him for a stretch of the road.

Traveling Route 66 to Chicago and Highway 30 from there to Atlantic City, brought Radich through several cities with Scientology Churches and he stopped by to brief parishioners on what he was doing. Invariably, one or more of the Scientologists he met would volunteer to be his crew for a few hundred miles, driving alongside with his gear as he continued his journey.

Although finishing his four-month-and-20-day run across America was the achievement of a lifetime, he has no plans to rest on his laurels. In July Radich will compete in his 10th Badwater Ultramarathon, and he is planning a run from Fairbanks, Alaska, to Baja, Mexico, in 2012.

Radich credits Scientology for giving him the edge when it comes to long-distance running, whether a "mere" marathon, a 3,500-mile cross-country journey or anything in between.

"When you are running across America or competing in an ultra marathon, you don't win as much with your legs as with your mind," he says.

Watch [an excerpt from *The Way to Happiness* DVD](#) and video profiles of more than 200 Scientologists at www.Scientology.org.

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The popular "Meet a Scientologist" profiles on the Church of Scientology International Video Channel at Scientology.org now total more than 200 broadcast-quality documentary videos featuring Scientologists from

diverse locations and walks of life. The personal stories are told by Scientologists who are educators, teenagers, skydivers, a golf instructor, a hip-hop dancer, IT manager, stunt pilot, mothers, fathers, dentists, photographers, actors, musicians, fashion designers, engineers, students, business owners and more.

A digital pioneer and leader in the online religious community, in April 2008 the Church of Scientology became the first major religion to launch its own official YouTube Video Channel, which has now been viewed by millions of visitors.



Scientologist John Radich began his run across America on July 4, 2010, in the Pacific Ocean at Santa Monica,

California.



John Radich pushed his gear in a baby jogger for more than 1,500 miles of his 3,500-mile run across America July 4 – November 23, 2010.



Completing his run across America, Scientologist and ultramarathoner John Radich reached Atlantic City, New Jersey, on November 23, 2010.



John Radich (right) in the Swiss Alps in a 1998 run across Europe to promote human rights